

get at." A pays the whole of the damages and B goes scot free, because there is no contribution between joint tortfeasors. The old law was that a person could not derive a benefit from a wrong. Having committed a wrong, a person cannot ask another to pay for half of his wrong. The usual example given is that of two thieves who have stolen a watch. The owner may recover damages from one thief but that thief could not claim half the amount from the other thief. He has to pay the lot. Things have altered very considerably nowadays, as members will appreciate.

In the case of motorcar accidents, damages can be claimed against the owner and the driver, the court deciding what proportion each shall pay. A person can recover the whole of the damages from the owner or the driver, and then either tortfeasor can collect from the joint tortfeasor. Further, if a person elects to proceed against a man of straw, he still has his remedy against the other, who is not a man of straw. This measure will bring the law into line with the English law. I suggest to members that they read the Bill, and if they have any doubt as to the meaning of a clause, I will do my best to explain it in the Committee stage.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are sure the title to the Bill should not be "Fees for Lawyers"?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am trying to point out that this Bill will deprive lawyers of fees, because at present the law is much more complicated than the Bill proposes to make it.

Hon. G. Fraser: It will make the claim much more complicated than it is today.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Then it will be good luck to the lawyer; it is the first luck he has had for a long while. I commend the Bill to the House. For the benefit of Mr. Fraser, I may say that this law was approved and brought in by the present socialist Government in England. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. G. Fraser, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 14th October, 1947.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Rural Relief Fund Act Amendment.
- 2, Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment (Continuance).
- 3, Unclaimed Moneys Act Amendment.
- 4, Supreme Court Act Amendment.

QUESTION.

SUGAR.

As to Inadequacy of Supplies.

Mr. LESLIE (on notice) asked the Honorary Minister:

(1) Is she aware of the fact that householders are unable to obtain adequate supplies of sugar from their usual suppliers?

(2) That the quantity being supplied to householders and families is much below actual normal requirements and much less than the amount which was available to householders and families when sugar rationing was in force?

(3) Is the above circumstance due to—

(a) a shortage of sugar stocks in Western Australia?

(b) stocks being withheld by manufacturers and/or distributors in anticipation of a likely increase in price?

(4) Will she investigate the present very unsatisfactory position and take appropriate action to ensure that adequate supplies, and being not less than the amount

available to householders and families when rationing was in force, are released and made available to families immediately?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) I have heard that some could not obtain supplies but have not found it general.

(2) No.

(3) (a) No. (b) Manufacturers distributed 15 per cent. more sugar in August and 27 per cent. more in September than during those months under rationing last year.

(4) Answered by 3 (b).

BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 9th October. Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on recommitment after Clause 7 had been further considered and agreed to.

Clause 14—Amendment of Section 347:

Hon. E. NULSEN: I move an amendment—

That after the word "State" in line 6 of paragraph (b) the words "and (if not repugnant to the law of the State or country in which the company is incorporated) of members resident elsewhere" be inserted.

I understand that the Attorney General approves of the amendment. It will mean that foreign companies will be compelled to keep a register, except those companies in countries where the law is repugnant to this being done. This will apply to England and perhaps some of the Australian States, though I believe we have reciprocity in Australia with regard to companies being required to keep a register in the States in which they are trading. This will give persons resident within the State an opportunity to register except where that would be repugnant to the law of the place where the company is incorporated.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I offer no objection to the amendment. It will overcome the most urgent difficulty which was represented by the wording of the present section—namely, the case of companies which were compelled by the section as it

now stands to do certain things but were not allowed to do so by the law of the country in which they were incorporated. I would have preferred the amendment in the Bill to remain, because as the section now stands, even though amended, it is a type of section which would be mainly of use to the people who have shares which migrate from State to State or from country to country. In other words, it would be mainly of use to those who want to dodge taxes or death duties in the State in which they live, and seek to transfer the registration of those shares from State to State or country to country where they think they can get the most favourable terms. If other States and countries adopt a similar section to ours, I feel that our State will run a chance of losing considerable revenue. The section as it now stands can lead to benefit chiefly to the very class of shareholder who is least deserving of our consideration. But as the most urgent consideration which is involved by the Bill has been met by the amendment, I do not oppose it.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 16—repeal of Section 359:

Hon. E. NULSEN: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 the word "repealed" be struck out with a view to inserting the words "amended by inserting after the word 'business' in line 1 the words 'of mining, or the acquiring, cutting or selling of indigenous timber, or the buying or selling of land'" in lieu.

Section 359 provides that a proportion of the issue of new shares or debentures be reserved for local shareholders. I feel that some consideration should be given to that matter. If people living in the State have shares in a foreign company that is trading in this State and there is an issue of new shares or debentures they should have the option on a proportional basis of being able to take up such shares. Section 238 has been in existence for some time in the 1893 Act. It provides for the reservation to State members of certain shares, but they have only two months after publication of the notice concerning such reservation to avail themselves of the privilege. If they do not take advantage of it by that time they forfeit their right. By deleting the section under consideration we take

away a privilege from the shareholders and debenture holders in this State. My amendment will meet the Attorney General half way.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I owe the hon. member and the Committee something of an apology in relation to this clause. When the matter was previously discussed, I said a similar section had existed in the prior legislation but had been confined to companies engaged in mining, in the timber industry or the buying and selling of land. I made that reference, when speaking in Committee, on the strength of notes supplied to me in connection with this clause. On examining the matter, I find that the reference to companies of that class was an error in my notes, as it does not apply in this regard, but to the keeping of a local register of shares. Therefore, the information I gave was not correct. The section in question, which is in the 1943 Act, has been brought forward from the prior legislation in exactly the same form. It meets a case where a foreign company has perhaps one million shares, of which 10,000 are held by people resident in Western Australia.

The object of the section is that in any new issue of shares the company shall reserve an opportunity to Western Australian shareholders to subscribe to the shares in the same proportions as they held shares in the original capital of the company. That is reasonable. The same thing applies to new issues of debentures by the company. The difficulty was that the section was so worded that it would seem to compel such a company to reserve a proportion of shares or debentures out of every issue, and members associated with mining know that in many cases an issue of shares made by a company all goes to the vendor of a mining property which the company issuing the shares is about to acquire. In that case, there would be no proportion of that issue of shares to go to any shareholders. The issue would all go to the seller of the assets to the company about to issue the shares. In the same way, a company may seek to raise capital by an issue of debentures, which are held by the institution or person advancing the money. In that case, also, no portion of the debenture issue would be offered to shareholders, including shareholders in this State.

The Bill proposes to delete this section of the parent Act in order to avoid complications but, after hearing the member for Kanowna and giving the matter further consideration, I wish later to submit to the Committee an amendment on the hon. member's amendment. The result of that amendment, if passed, will be to leave the section as it now stands, applicable to all classes of foreign companies having shareholders in this State, but inserting words to make it clear that the obligation to reserve a proportion of the shares or debentures for shareholders in this State will apply only when there is to be an issue of shares or debentures to which members of the company can subscribe. If those words are inserted in the original section, that will meet the difficulty involved when there is a share issue to go to a vendor or a debenture issue to go to a lender. It will preserve the intention of the section in respect of the issue of shares or debentures that can be taken up by shareholders generally. Section 359 of the Act now states—

Whenever a foreign company carrying on business in the State has passed resolutions authorising the issue of debentures or additional shares, the company shall reserve for the benefit of the State members a part of such issue proportioned to the interests of the State members.

With the consent of the Committee, I propose later to add, in line 3, after the word "shares" the words "to be received or taken up by its members." That will make it clear that the obligation to reserve a proportion of the shares or debentures for shareholders in this State is to apply only in cases where the issue of shares or debentures is that class of issue which is to be taken up by members of the company. It means, on the other hand, that where an issue of shares or debentures is not to be taken up by members of the company but is for some other purpose, such as to pay a vendor for property or secure a lender of money, the provision will have no application, as there will be no general issue to shareholders either in this State or in the State or country in which the company is incorporated. I suggest that the Committee might strike out the word "repealed" as moved by the member for Kanowna, and that I might then be allowed to move an amendment on the amendment to insert the words I have mentioned.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I desire to protect local shareholders, and after listening to the Attorney General I am satisfied to agree to his suggestion.

Amendment (to strike out word) put and passed.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I move—

That the words proposed to be inserted be inserted.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I move—

That the amendment be further amended by striking out all the words after the word "word" and inserting the words "shares to be received or taken up by its members" in lieu.

Amendment on amendment (to insert words) put and passed.

Amendment, as amended, put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Bill again reported with further amendments.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BUSH NURSING TRUST ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th October.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville) [5.7]: As the Attorney General remarked when he moved the second reading of the Bill, while I was acting as Minister for Health I was trustee of the organisation concerned. I agree with what the Minister has stated and can see no further use in continuing the debate. There is no reason why the suggested amendment should not be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th October.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [5.10]: This is a very small Bill in size and aims at achieving a not very large pur-

pose, but one that probably will enable the Water Supply Department to administer certain country water supplies more easily in the future and also to enable differential rating to be applied in sub-water districts which it will be possible to establish if the measure becomes law. The Goldfields Water Supply Act is much more elastic at present than is the Water Boards Act. The Bill is to make the latter Act as elastic as is the former with regard to the establishment of districts and sub-districts and also with respect to having the right to apply a lesser rate, or perhaps a higher rate, in certain sub-districts than can be applied today under the Water Boards Act where one area has existed and one rate has applied throughout the whole year, irrespective of what is the fair and just thing to do.

The Minister did not give us any concrete instance as to how the department would be advantaged or as to where consumers of water and ratepayers would be assisted under the Bill should it become law. He did suggest that the Busselton district might be one to which the provisions of the legislation could be applied in the event of its becoming law. I cannot imagine there has been any very great difficulty or injustice in the past because of the proposals contained in the Bill not having been part and parcel of the principal Act. Nevertheless the Bill is worthy of support, and is one that could not be opposed even if one were in the mood to look for some small ground upon which to base opposition. Therefore, I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—TOWN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th October.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [5.15]: In what this Bill actually contains, it is not nearly as important as the speech which the Minister made in introducing it would lead one to believe, nor is it nearly

as important as a sub-leader in "The West Australian" would have us believe. Most of the Minister's speech consisted of a recital of the history of an attempt by the Perth City Council to develop a town planning scheme for the metropolitan area. The Minister related that history in considerable detail and he indicated that much difficulty had been met by the Perth City Council in its endeavours to launch a scheme by means of bylaw. The first and main difficulty which the Perth City Council met was to get past the various Ministers for Works; the second was that raised by many influential ratepayers of the City of Perth. These influential ratepayers have an association through which they operate whenever the Perth City Council puts forward something which the members of the association consider undesirable or inimical to their interests as ratepayers and businessmen within the city boundaries.

I think it true to say that every Minister concerned was opposed to the idea of the Perth City Council launching a town-planning scheme under bylaw and was anxious that such a scheme should, when developed, be launched under the Town Planning and Development Act. In my opinion, this Bill contains one main principle, which is to give to local authorities the right of appeal in certain circumstances against any decision made by a Minister exercising his powers under Section 18 of the Act. By this section, as members will find if they read it, a local authority is empowered to prepare a town planning scheme. If such a scheme has been prepared by a local authority and has not been put into operation, the Minister has power to take steps to compel the local authority to put the scheme into effect.

The Bill also contains a provision which relates to the right of landowners to approve a scheme and try to have it adopted by a local authority. If the local authority refuses to take action along the lines desired, then the Minister can again exercise his rights under the Act and, by issuing the necessary order, compel the local authority to put the scheme into operation. At present, any order made by the Minister under Section 18 is completely binding upon the local authority concerned.

There is no appeal from the Minister's decision and consequently that decision has, up to the present time, always been final and absolute. Some complaints and protests were made from time to time about the binding nature of an order issued by the Minister under the section and over the years suggestions have been made that a right of appeal from the Minister's decision should be allowed. Evidently, the present Minister and the present Government have decided that the granting of a right of appeal against a decision or order of a Minister is right and proper, because this Bill proposes to provide in the principal Act a method of appeal of which the local authorities may take advantage if they are not satisfied with any decision of a Minister or with any order subsequently issued by him.

I do not think any member can find serious fault with this proposed right of appeal. On some occasions it may leave the Minister and those associated with him stranded to some extent, because the decision or order of a Minister might be upset on appeal. However, that happens to many other decisions made by Ministers and others, and it could perhaps be argued that the granting of the right of appeal is quite proper in these circumstances, because the local authorities, when the Minister makes a decision or issues an order under Section 18, have to shoulder a great deal of responsibility and expend a considerable sum of money. Consequently, it is the local authority in each case that is perhaps the main party involved, and so it might very well claim with some justification that the least Parliament should do would be to give all local authorities the right of appeal to a court if they were dissatisfied with a decision or an order made by the Minister.

The part of the Bill which deals with this point will also make it obligatory upon the Minister in future to serve a copy of any order which he issues upon the local authority, so that the latter will know that an order has been made, will know its terms and consequently will be in a position to decide whether to lodge an appeal or not. In practice, I think that has been done in the past.

The Minister for Local Government: That is so.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: However, as the local authorities has not had the right of appeal in the past, it has not been of

much comfort to them, and certainly of no value, to have the order. In any event, even though it has been the practice in the past, it might be wise, while we are amending this section on this occasion, to make the practice of the past the legal necessity of the future. I have no opposition to this part of the Bill. The only other amendment in the Bill—apart from a small one which is to remedy a typographical error of the past—is one which is designed to resolve a legal doubt that has arisen as to the actual meaning of Section 6 of the Act. It was considered in the past by most of those concerned that this section was all-embracing and gave to those in authority power to do whatever they desired in connection with each and every purpose set out in the section and in the Schedule to the Act. Evidently this legal doubt that has arisen is considered to be of sufficient importance to justify an amendment to the Act, so that in future there shall be no shadow of doubt whatever as to what is actually meant by this section. Therefore I do not think there can possibly be any opposition to this amendment. I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—LAW REFORM (COMMON EMPLOYMENT).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th October.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [5.29]: This is a Bill having for its object the abolition of the doctrine of common employment. The measure also proposes to repeal the Employers' Liability Act. As the Attorney General has said, not a great number of injured persons have taken advantage of the Employers' Liability Act over the last few years. That is due mainly to the fact that the amount recoverable under the Workers' Compensation Act is not a great deal less than that which can be recovered under the Employers' Lia-

bility Act. Under the latter Act, the amount which can be recovered is three years' wages. As the majority of industrial workers, who are prone to accidents, would not average more than £300 a year, it will be seen that the amount recoverable under the Employers' Liability Act would be about £900, while the amount recoverable under the Workers' Compensation Act is £750; and that can be recovered without litigation.

Another thing that prevents workers from suing under the Employers' Liability Act, where the amount is not much higher than that recoverable under the Workers' Compensation Act, is that in the event of their losing the action, the defendant's costs can be taken from the workers' compensation payment. I know of one case at the present time where the dependants of a worker, who earned in the vicinity of £500 a year, and who met with a fatal accident, are taking action under the Employers' Liability Act. The claim will be in the vicinity of £1,500. Such cases are exceptional. Numerous claims for small amounts outside of the Workers' Compensation Act, have been settled amicably between the worker and the employer, where a claim would lie under the Employers' Liability Act. Generally the employer has paid the worker full wages and medical expenses while he has been idle. The Employers' Liability Act not only provides for a larger amount than does the Workers' Compensation Act, but it also gives directions as to how the Act shall be administered.

What does the Attorney General intend to do in regard to some of the sections of the Employers' Liability Act that are not provided for in the Fatal Accidents Act—the one known as Lord Campbell's Act, and adopted by this State? I think some sections of the Employers' Liability Act are very valuable. Section 5, for instance, should be included in this measure. It provides—

An action under this Act shall lie and may be maintained against the legal personal representatives of a deceased employer.

Under other Acts, to which this Bill applies, proceedings can be taken only against the person legally responsible for the injury. If that person died, action could not be taken against the estate of the deceased. That is a great disability, and would be very rough on the relatives of the deceased per-

son. Section 9 of the Employers' Liability Act states—

Where the personal injury to a workman who is illegitimate results in death, the same rights of compensation shall exist for the benefit of his mother, or of brothers and sisters by the same father and mother, as if he and such brothers and sisters were legitimate.

There is no similar provision in the measure with which we are dealing, or in any of the other Acts under which action may be taken. We have many instances of people living together as man and wife, without benefit of clergy, and rearing families. Very often the position is not known until one or other of the parties passes on. We should protect these people and give them the same rights as they would have if they were married and their children were legitimate. Even the Commonwealth Government does not make any distinction between a de facto and a legal wife; nor did the Army during the war. A widow's pension is paid in the first instance, and an allotment and a pension could be paid in the second. If the Employers' Liability Act were abolished, the parties would have no option but to go to the Supreme Court. Under the Employers' Liability Act, the parties can agree to go to the local court, and thus save expense. Section 14 of the Employers' Liability Act provides—

Every covenant, contract, or agreement hereafter made or entered into, whereby any workman or person binds himself or his personal representatives, either expressly or by implication, not to claim any benefit or enforce any right under this Act, shall be null and void.

That prevents contracting out of the Act. I do not know what the Attorney General intends to do in regard to that. I cannot see much wrong with the Employers' Liability Act, except the section which limits the amount recoverable. It limits that amount to three years' wages. This Bill will not affect the Workers' Compensation Act, nor will the regulations under the Workers' Compensation Act be made applicable to it. I would prefer to have the Act remain as it is. When we are in Committee, I intend to move an amendment to strike out Clause 2, which seeks to repeal the Employers' Liability Act. I also intend to move an amendment to Clause 3—I have not put these amendments on the notice paper, but they will be easily understood by the Attorney General—by inserting after the word "servants" in line 14 the words "or his dependants." Then I would like a definition of "dependants" included.

The mere fact that not many claims have been made under the Employers' Liability Act is no reason why we should strike it of the statute-book. Factory legislation is very strict at the present time, and has been for many years, and the employees themselves take every precaution to see that accidents do not occur. I would say that in the great majority of cases the only claims that injured workers would have would be those coming under the Workers' Compensation Act. I can see no reason for repealing this Act. Another point is this: If a man were critically injured, but did not die, he could not sue under the Fatal Accidents Act, although he might be entitled to the full amount of compensation under the Workers' Compensation Act. His dependants would not, however, be able to sue his employee under the Fatal Accidents Act if he died.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [5.38]: I hope the suggestion made by the member for South Fremantle will be adopted. It would be a pity if the Employers' Liability Act were repealed. Certain cases could be not be taken if we did not have that Act. Neither the Fatal Accidents Act nor the Workers' Compensation Act apply to them. The member for South Fremantle has said that there is a case pending under the Employers' Liability Act. Although there may not be many such cases, I do not think we should, for that reason, repeal the Act. I have discussed the matter with workers union officials and legal men, and they all seem to be of the opinion that it would not be right to repeal the Employers' Liability Act at present. When we get into Committee, I trust the Attorney General will agree to strike out of the Bill that portion which deals with the repeal of the Employers' Liability Act.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth—in reply) [5.40]: I thank members for their reception of the Bill. I do not, at this stage, propose to deal with the matters raised by the member for South Fremantle and the member for Fremantle. I will deal with them in Committee. I want to say that the Bill is designed to improve the remedies of the employee. There is no thought on my part that his redress would in any way be limited by the repeal of the Employers' Liability Act, and I have no objection to its remain-

ing. I think, however, it has finished its usefulness. I would be surprised to know of any action, such as that suggested by the member for South Fremantle, being brought under that Act today. I assure members that the last thing the measure intends is to curtail any remedy which the employee now has.

The MINISTER for Education: If the doctrine of common employment is abolished, is there any need for it at all?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the Bill is passed I think there will be no need for the Employers' Liability Act. In those circumstances, any such action as that referred to by the member for South Fremantle would be brought under the measure now being considered. However, I will deal with the matter when we are in Committee. I will not take the Committee stage today. I would be obliged if the member for South Fremantle would put his amendments on the notice paper so that we could consider them. In the meantime, I am indebted to him for an advanced copy of what he proposes.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with an amendment.

BILL—CHILD WELFARE.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 7th October. Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after Clause 73 had been agreed to.

Clause 74—Confinement expenses:

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: On the notice paper there is an amendment consequential on the earlier ones moved to Section 20. I move an amendment—

That in lines 1 and 2 the words "subject to Section 20, Subsection (2), of this Act" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 75—Attachment of property of persons against whom order is sought:

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I should like an explanation from the Minister concerning this clause. It seems to me we are getting

very close to national banking. Bankers will not say to whom certain money belongs. I should like to hear what the Minister has to say.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: What does the hon. member require me to tell him? I do not think there is anything unusual in the clause. It provides for some redress to be available by the department in the event of a person having assets and not being willing to disclose them for the purpose of paying his just dues. This particular section has been in operation in the existing law for many years and I do not think the hon. member can quote any person who has suffered injustice by reason of it. If he can prove injustice in any direction I am prepared to consider the matter but I suggest he is unlikely to quote any such instance.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: The fact that this section has been in operation for many years is not an argument in its favour. I was only trying to prevent private banks, friends of the Minister, from doing something he might not want them to do.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 76 to 125—agreed to.

Clause 126—Conviction not to be disclosed:

Mr. GRAHAM: When Clause 23 was under discussion the member for Fremantle made an attempt, which I was disposed to support at that juncture, to have inserted a provision that information relating to convictions should not be made available to Commonwealth or State public servants, the Armed Services or the Police Force. I had a consultation with the Minister and in view of his statement that he was prepared to give favourable consideration to the deletion of the words objected to, I feel sure he will agree to the deletion of those words from this clause. I therefore move an amendment—

That in line 5 the words "except with the consent of the Minister" be struck out.

The deletion of these words will achieve everything that is sought to be achieved by the member for Fremantle.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I have no objection to the amendment. I feel I am justified in agreeing to it, because there is no doubt that the consensus of opinion of members is that as little information as pos-

sible should be given in regard to convictions that take place in the Children's Court. While it may be said there are times when some discretion ought to be afforded to the Minister, such discretion may easily place him in an invidious position. By what right should he disclose information to A and not to B? There may come a time when an overriding law of the Commonwealth will require information to be given to a Commonwealth authority. Perhaps an officer of the Child Welfare Department may find himself in the position of being required by Commonwealth law to give information to Commonwealth authorities. If that position arises the officer will first make his protest that the law under which he works does not require him to give that information, and when he has been told by the superior authority that he will have to give it or take the consequences he will naturally comply with the Commonwealth law. I see no difficulty in regard to State transactions. There is nothing to prevent the law being used in the Children's Court because that is desirable from the magistrate's point of view. Beyond that we need not trouble to go, and I do not object to the amendment.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister has expressed himself as being quite satisfied, but I should like to know how the clause will work in practice. Once a child has been convicted, certain activity occurs in the department. Some of the officers need to know what has happened to a boy or girl who has been before the court. If they do not know, how can they act? If they are to know, they must be told.

The Minister for Education: That is covered by a previous provision.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But this one seems to contradict the other. The clause provides that when any child has been committed or convicted, the fact shall not be disclosed to any person. The secretary of the department might have to tell a probation officer that a child had been committed to an institution and that it is desirable that care should be taken to bring about a quick release of the child. How could one officer inform another of the circumstances if the clause were amended? I take it that the words "with the consent of the Minister" are intended to cover such cases, but if we lay down that the fact shall not be disclosed to any person, the provi-

sion will be unworkable. I am at one with the member for East Perth in desiring to prevent information from being given unnecessarily to other people, but I deem it essential that the clause be retained in its present form if the department is to function properly.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The member for North-East Fremantle will realise that the consent of the Minister is not necessary to enable an officer of the department to learn that a conviction has taken place. It is part and parcel of the officer's business to know. The consent of the Minister would be required before the information could be given to people outside. Under Clause 23, publication of any report of the proceedings is unlawful unless expressly authorised or is made by any person in the performance of his official duty pursuant to this or any other Act or regulations. I consider that the words "except with the consent of the Minister" would not apply to the ordinary procedure in the department, but would remove discretion to give information to persons outside which, from the consensus of opinion, seem to be the desire of the Committee. I am still of opinion that the difficulty suggested is hardly tenable because ministerial consent would not be required to impart such information to an officer of the department. However, it would be well to put the matter beyond all possibility of doubt, and I suggest that, if the words be struck out, the words "other than an officer of the department" be inserted in lieu.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister's suggestion does not fully meet my desires. When I referred to the consent of the Minister, I had in mind implied, not expressed, consent.

The Minister for Education: This means expressed consent.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: An officer of the department would be acting with the consent of the Minister because he is authorised by the Act to discharge certain duties. A probation officer, however, might take a child to a home to which it had been committed, and the manager of the home would want to know whether the child had appeared before the court and had been convicted or committed. Under the amendment, the officer would have to remain dumb or parry

the question. He could not say that the child had been committed or convicted. Therefore, the manager of the home could learn only by experience the nature of the child. That is not the right line to adopt in order to do the best for the child. The manager should know why the boy or girl had been sent to the home so that he could apply the proper corrective influence. If he were left to guess, he might do the child more harm than good.

It would not be in the best interests of the child to agree to the amendment. I admit that unauthorised persons, without valid reason, should not be given such information, but it is essential that persons who have to look after such children should be informed. To provide that the fact of a committal or conviction shall not be disclosed to any person would render the position ridiculous. The only persons who should be given such information are those who require it in the course of their work under the Act. These would include all officers of the department dealing with this section of the work and the managers of the institutions who would have to look after the children.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I repeat that there is some substance in the hon. member's observations, but I do not conjure up all the difficulties he does.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They are imaginary.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Not altogether imaginary. We should consider the functions of the department and of the managers and superintendents of institutions that are permitted to take care of such children. Those people are there to try to reform the children and, if we wish to reform them, it is necessary for the officials to know that which has to be reformed. I am still inclined to rely upon the provisions of Clause 23. Subsequent to my suggestion that the words "other than an officer of the department" be substituted for the words proposed to be struck out—

Mr. Rodoreda: If you retained the words, there would be no need to worry.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I cannot see why this should be a matter for ministerial discretion. We ought to lay down the proper way of doing things. The Attorney General has suggested the insertion of the words "other than a person who,

as part of his duties, is concerned with the custody or welfare of the child."

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: At the tea adjournment I was about to say that if the words proposed to be struck out were struck out I would move for the insertion of the words I read, because I believe those words will not only comply with the desire of the member for East Perth but also overcome the difficulty raised by the member for North-East Fremantle.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move an amendment—

That the following words be inserted in lieu of the words struck out:—"other than a person who as part of his duties is concerned with the custody or welfare of the child."

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 127 to 129—agreed to.

Clause 130—Penalty for desertion of child under certain circumstances:

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I find on looking up the definition that "near relative" means—

"Except as regards an illegitimate child, father, mother, step-father, step-mother, brother, sister, or any grand-parent of the child; and as regards an illegitimate child, the mother and the father of such child, and the husband of the mother of such child, if born before their marriage."

In an earlier clause we struck out the words "brother, sister, or any grand-parent, or husband of the mother." I do not see how we can do that hereto. We shall have to alter the definition of "near relative."

The Minister for Education: We struck out those words and those people are no longer near relatives.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: We did not strike them out of the definition.

The Minister for Education: To what clause are you referring?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Clause 130.

The CHAIRMAN: The definition is in Clause 4.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: We did not strike the words out there.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The words referred to were deleted from Clause 67 and that clause would apply in this case because clause 130 has relation only to near relatives liable to maintain a child and those near relatives are defined in the amended Clause 67.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 131 to 149, First Schedule—agreed to.

Second Schedule:

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It has become necessary to amend the name of one of the institutions mentioned in the Second Schedule on account of the fact that the religious organisation responsible has given a new name to it. In this connection I have received the following communication:—

When framing the additions to the Second Schedule, the new Anglican establishment at Stoneville was designated as follows:—

Swan Boys' (Anglican) Farm School, Stoneville.

Advice has just been received from the Diocesan Secretary that a new name has been given to the Home at Stoneville and in consequence, I am asking that the new title be incorporated in the Second Schedule when this particular item is under consideration.

New title: Padbury Boys' (Anglican) Farm School, Stoneville.

I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of the Second Schedule the word "Swan" be struck out and the word "Padbury" be inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed; the Schedule, as amended, agreed to.

New Clause:

Mr. GRAHAM: I move—

That a new clause be inserted as follows:—

"142. No police officer shall interrogate or question any child for any purpose whatsoever, other than for the purpose of ascertaining such child's full name, address, and age and the name of his school, except there be present continuously during such interrogation or questioning either parent of such child or the guardian or person for the time being having the custody or charge of such child, or, if the presence of such parent, guardian or other person as aforesaid cannot reasonably be obtained, then except there be present as aforesaid a schoolteacher, a minister of religion, a justice of the peace or a probation officer appointed under the provisions of this Act."

This proposed new clause has cost me a certain amount of concern, because I desire to

protect children and protect people who may become the victims of statements from children; but at the same time I appreciate it is possible to make such a clause restrictive to the extent that an officer of the Police Force could not properly perform his duties. It will be necessary for the words "other than for the purpose of ascertaining such child's full name, address, age, and the name of his school," to be included after the word "whatsoever" in line two of my proposed new clause, as unless that is done it will be impossible for a police officer to question a child, irrespective of what the child may be doing.

A case has been brought to my notice—there have probably been other similar instances—of a lad of 17 being taken to the police station by the local constable for questioning. He was interrogated for a period of two hours, and four days later he was again taken to a police station and interrogated, by the constable and a detective, for three hours. At the expiration of that period of intensive questioning he stated that his first statement was all lies. It is not for me to say which of his statements was true, but I daresay that any youth who had to stand up to an extended period of interrogation, particularly if questioned by over-enthusiastic officers might be made to admit all sorts of statements that bore no relationship to the facts. I do not for a moment suggest that the police indulged in third-degree methods, but I think there should be some protection for a youth—either a boy or a girl—through having present during the interrogation a person such as is mentioned in the proposed new clause.

In the case I have mentioned the youth was not the offender, but it was alleged that a certain offence had been committed against him, and he would therefore be the principal witness. When the case eventually came before the court the whole question would naturally rest on the statement made by the lad. I have listed certain persons, one of whom I think should be present, but I am not wedded to that list. There are others who might be equally suitable to be present at the interrogation. The idea of having present such a person is to ensure that there will not be any improper practices in the matter of interrogation, and that if the youth shows signs of strain there will be someone present to testify to

that fact, if necessary. In any event, the presence of such a person would have a restraining influence on over-enthusiastic police officers.

Once the police officer has ascertained the name, address, age, and school of the child concerned, the child can be taken to his parent or guardian or a school teacher, for the purpose of being interrogated. It is not sought to interfere with the normal processes of the law or to prevent a police officer asking questions in order to satisfy himself on certain points. I think that if there was any hardship possible in the application of this amendment we should err on the side of being generous to the child and to the person against whom the child might testify. I do not know whether, in the case I have mentioned, the youth's resistance was broken down till he succumbed to pressure, but the fact is that after his second interrogation, with no-one present but the two officers of the Police Department—I do not suggest any improper practice there—he was able to make a statement in direct conflict with that which he had made earlier. It is only logical to make certain deductions, but I do not wish to make any charges in that regard.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The member for East Perth desires to make it absolutely impossible in any circumstances for a police officer to exceed what we are accustomed to say is the limit of his duty. In no circumstances should he at any time use methods that are not generally recognised by the police in regard to the interrogation of witnesses, but in order to achieve that—as I have told the member for East Perth—he is, through this amendment, placing on all police officers a cumbersome procedure that I do not think is warranted. A fine example of the interest of the majority of police officers in children is seen in the activities of the police boys' clubs. There we have the antithesis of the state of affairs that the hon. member has in mind. Those officers are prepared to devote their spare time to preventing delinquency in children and obviating a state of affairs which might necessitate the intervention of police officers.

While there may have been cases such as that mentioned, I think they are by no means common. If the amendment is carried a police officer will be in the position

of having to ascertain the name and address of the parent or guardian or person for the time being having custody or charge of the child. He will then have to attempt to find that person—which might not be easy—and having found him he must conduct the interrogation in the presence of that person. An officer might wish to ask other reasonable questions of such a child. He could easily wish to ask whether the child had been in Barrack-street during the afternoon, but under the amendment he would be prohibited from doing so.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: He would not want to ask that question, as he would not be inquisitive.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The child might be suspected of having committed an offence in Barrack-street, or it might be a question of street trading, and in that case, if the child said "no" the officer would probably take no further action. Under the amendment he would not be allowed to ask such a question. I submit that we have no right to pillory the whole Police Force, as is suggested in the amendment, in regard not only to children under 14 years of age, but children up to 18 years of age, who might, in some instances, come into a category altogether different from that suggested in the amendment. I am compelled to say that I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment as it stands at present.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Like the Minister for Education, I agree with the member for East Perth that we should endeavour to ensure that there is no unfair treatment of young persons, but I fear the new clause may prove unduly restrictive. It applies to any child, and that includes young persons up to the age of 18 years. I can imagine many cases where this provision might be a serious embarrassment. The new clause says that a police officer shall not question a child for any purpose whatever. Take the case of the commission of a crime where speed might be essential for the apprehension of an offender! If the proposal be agreed to, no police officer could say to a child who might have seen the occurrence, "What did you see?" All he could do would be to ask the child his name and address and the name of his school, after which he would have to set out to find one or other of the persons mention-

ed in the hon. member's proposal before he could put any further questions to the child.

A police officer would be prevented from asking the child a simple question, the answer to which might lead to someone being brought to justice. If an offence had been committed against the child himself, a policeman could not ask what had happened, because one or other of the individuals required was not there. He could not say, "What did he do?" or "Where did the offence take place?" I can conceive circumstances under which the administration of justice might be impaired. If the member for East Perth would care to discuss the matter with me, I would be glad to consider the position and take it up with the Commissioner of Police with a view to seeing whether under the Police Act a regulation could not be framed for the guidance of police officers. Such a regulation might be highly desirable in certain cases, and it could be so framed as not to impede the actions of police officers where a few words from a child might be of inestimable value in enabling the constables to do their duty.

Mr. Hoar: Have the parents of a child the right to be present during an interrogation?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, but I am thinking more of cases that might occur in a country district. If it is necessary to secure the presence of the parents or someone else, I can imagine a considerable time elapsing before the police could carry out their interrogation. I think there is a germ in the amendment that is perhaps worthwhile for the protection of young people, and it might find some place in useful form in a regulation for the guidance of police officers.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If one wishes to defeat a proposal one can easily conjure up all the difficulties in the world, and I think that applies to the remarks of the Attorney General. I believe the difficulties are more apparent than real. Police officers do not just happen upon a child against whom a crime has been committed and promptly interrogate him. As a rule, they set out with the intention of finding the child after certain information of an offence has been obtained.

The Attorney General: That is one case, but there are others.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would like to hear of them.

The Minister for Works: It is conceivable that they may occur.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There may be one in a million, but we do not legislate for single instances. If an offence has been committed against a child, it is certain that information regarding the happening would reach a child welfare officer or the police. Having that information in hand, the officials would set out to find the child. If a constable stumbled upon a child, it would take time to find the people who should be present at any interrogation, and that might present some difficulty. But how often would that happen?

The Attorney General: Not infrequently.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It would not be difficult to get one or other of the persons mentioned in the amendment. We know that some persons can put the fear of God very easily into children, and that applies more especially to those who are in uniform. Unfortunately the practice over the years has been for parents who desire to discipline their children to refer to policemen as "big bad wolves" and they threaten to call in constables. That is quite wrong. The policeman is a friend of the child, and that is how parents and children should regard him. In the existing circumstances if a constable questioned the child, the latter would be so scared that he would be likely to say anything and it is no wonder that young people make conflicting statements. The amendment would provide a safeguard against that and would ensure that questions put to a child would be proper. If no-one else were present, a policeman might not be so careful.

I see little difficulty in applying the amendment. If adults are interrogated they have sufficient commonsense, when they fear that they may incriminate themselves, to refuse to answer further questions until they have consulted a lawyer. Surely the children should also have the benefit of protection, and that is what the new clause will achieve. Many interrogations of children take place at the schools and I have seen that happen often. Usually the policeman goes to the school as he would expect the child to be there; and if he does not find him there, he will look for him at his home.

What is wrong with an interrogation taking place in the presence of a teacher?

The Attorney General: Not the slightest. Put that in, and it would be all right.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It might be of advantage to the police officers if they were to take a probation officer with them. I do not desire to reflect at all upon police officers, but I should say that probation officers are much more awake to the situation regarding children and where they are likely to be than are policemen. If a probation officer were to assist in the work, it would save time and trouble. I hope the new clause will be agreed to.

Progress reported.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1947-1948.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 9th October on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £3,028:

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gaseoyne) [8.15]: I found the Budget Speech a factual statement as regards the past and, in a general way, an anticipation of the requirements of Government departments as supplied by them. I am pleased that the Premier was given the opportunity, on the occasion of his first Budget speech, of a hearing from this Committee almost without interruption, certainly without any hostile interruption, because I fully appreciate that the experience of a Premier in preparing and introducing his Budget is something in the nature of an ordeal. I appreciate very much from my point of view that the Committee gave him such a generous hearing. It is obvious to me that the Premier was extremely anxious to forget his anticipations of what his first Budget might be like. The Policy Speech anticipations and the Budget anticipations were not in any way kindred thoughts or ideas.

The Minister for Works: Was it ever otherwise?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Very much so, and I hope at a later stage of my remarks to interest even the member for Narrogin—although that may be difficult—by making a few short comparisons which appear to me to be pertinent.

The Premier: Does it take only three years to put a policy into effect? Did not the speech cover three years?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: As a matter of fact, it was stated to be an anticipation of an opportunity to apply some correctives that would have immediate results. I intend to analyse shortly—and I hope I shall not be judged wrongly by my demeanour—in a friendly way some of those anticipations which, even if 30 years were given for their realisation, could not be realised. Policy speeches will, as time goes on, become more and more interesting as documents. Without desiring to be at all brutal, I think I may safely say that the pipe dreams of some months ago have now to be forgotten by the Premier and his colleagues as they face realities. They had, I submit, used as an opiate their irresponsible hopes without realising that they would have to accept the responsibilities; they calmed their feelings, I repeat, by indulging in pipe dreams. However, I do not think the feeling of irresponsibility has passed.

The members of the Government find that they are unable to realise those anticipations and are realising that they will be met with failure after failure in their administration. As they do, I hope they will readily concede that at the time when those promises were made they did not appreciate what they were facing. It was the desire of members on this side of the Chamber to be kind, I think, that prompted the anticipation of something much more colourful in the Premier's Budget speech, because to me both the Budget and the speech were a great disappointment. There were some very interesting remarks made in the course of the speech, such as this—

We face the commencement of this financial year under conditions which are far from stable, and though the war has been over for more than two years it cannot be said that the economic conditions of the world have by any means reached a normal peace-time condition.

Later, the Premier said—

The whole of the world is in a state of economic uncertainty. We have not yet reached a state of stability.

Compare these two statements with those of "wartime excuses" made some months ago! Two statements taken out of the policy speech are—

The already worn-out excuse of wartime limitations, if advanced again by the Government, cannot be sustained.

It is no good saying there was a war and there was a depression.

It is very amusing! Is it not that the Government finds at this stage that there was a war and that there was a depression? The Government finds it is a reality that labour and materials are in short supply, that deferred maintenance is a legitimate reason and that shipping is a real difficulty, that inability to build schools, hospitals and public buildings is something which it is really sorry for. I am afraid it is the desire of the Government that we, too, should be sorry for them. But I simply remind the Premier that in an endeavour to be as helpful as we can in his period of difficulty, he can raise no objection at all if we point out to him that he must be realistic now where he was irresponsible before. We will not be as unkind, I submit, as was the Minister for Education, who had no qualms at all in expressing from this side of the Chamber that if in connection with 100 matters he criticised on 99 occasions, he would be very diffident about commenting in the other one case, because that would be the only case which would be quoted. The hon. gentleman will recall saying that.

The Minister for Education: Perfectly true, too.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If that still be true, I hope that the Premier and the Minister for Education will find this side of the Chamber very much more generous.

The Minister for Education: I still believe that to be good sound tactics.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It may be, if one wishes always to be immersed in politics, but in parliamentary procedure I submit that is a very bad habit. I submit, too, that in several references in his Budget speech the Premier was obviously translating to his credit the achievements of former Governments. These are two very interesting sentences. He said in his Budget speech—

During the past two years we have submitted claims to the Commonwealth Government through the Grants Commission for additional assistance over and above the grant recommended by the Grants Commission in its annual report.

In both years we were successful in receiving sufficient money to enable us to balance the Budget in the year 1945-46 and almost to balance the Budget last year.

The Premier: "We" is the Western Australian Government.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Premier said that in his Budget speech and it was definitely a bad slip in the preparation of the hon. gentleman's matter. Obviously, he cannot in any circumstances take any credit or any blame for what may have happened in that connection financially during those two previous years. Speaking of housing—and this is a gem—the Premier said—

The problem is truly a difficult one and will require all the good will, determination and energy of our people to overcome.

The Premier: You agree with that?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The hon. gentleman did not agree with that six months ago. If I knew what the word "Whacko" meant, I would say "Whacko," because if one compared that statement with the ridiculous utterances on this subject six months ago, it would indeed be very entertaining and amusing.

The Minister for Lands: That is what the electors said—"Whacko"!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I agree entirely that the problem is truly a difficult one. I am very glad that in that brief space of time, when he has found it impossible to build a house for which he signed the contract, although 1,000 homes have been built under the Commonwealth-State rental agreement—

The Premier: More than that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: —all the contracts were signed by the previous Government. I sympathise with the Premier in his discovery that at least the housing problem is a difficult one.

Mr. Styants: He is still struggling with the cobwebs.

The Minister for Lands: We are sweeping them away every day.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The trouble is to get the spiders out.

Mr. Rodoreda: It is an extraordinary thing that the present Government has not built a house in six months.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It may be extraordinary, but nevertheless it is true. A very interesting matter in making a comparison is to consider what has been said in this Chamber by the present Leader of the House and past leaders in relation to industrial development. There was an intensive campaign during past years by former Governments to afford opportunities for the

establishment here of secondary industries on a sound basis. We can all remember how the former Premier (Hon. J. C. Willcock) waxed eloquent on that subject. I will give members two guesses who said this—

In the field of secondary industries our prospects are also bright and I am sure that with a return to some stability in price levels, we can confidently look forward to Western Australia emerging from the condition of being mainly dependent upon primary production for our national income. While I am a firm believer in the policy of developing to the limit our primary resources I realise that an economy which is based almost entirely on this form of production must of necessity be one-sided and subject to all the vagaries and fluctuations which accompany such an economy.

The older members in this Chamber will, I am sure, 100 per cent. attribute that statement to the Hon. J. C. Willcock, when he was battling and trying hard against considerable opposition and much criticism to establish, with the concurrence of his Government and the assistance of the then Minister for Industrial Development, many industries which have come to this State. Those are not his words, but the words of the present Premier and it is fine to notice that we have so strong a convert in the present Premier, because those words were taken from his Budget speech the other evening. It is good, too, that the present Government is proceeding with the plans made by its predecessors for industrial development. There are anticipations regarding the fishing industry and also regarding the Kimberleys.

The present Government is carrying on with the good work on the foundations laid for it. I hope that is so. In very many respects, the Premier in his Budget speech made a virtue of necessity. There is nothing new in doing that, but the Premier does, in regard to many subjects, make it clear that things which are unavoidable and things which are popular have his unqualified endorsement. One of the gems is his attitude and reference to the 40-hour week. There is no doubt that the present Government did vary the instructions in that case. That cannot be denied. The papers were tabled, and the commencing telegram that was sent to Mr. Menzies, the Crown Solicitor in Melbourne, read as follows:—

Reference 40-hour week case new Western Australian Government desires to make submission to Arbitration Court on different terms from that already put forward by preceding

Government. New Government desires that Court should now be informed accordingly. Terms of new submission somewhat similar to terms already put forward by South Australia.

That was sent to Mr. Menzies and also to South Australia. Therefore it is useless denying that there was an instruction to vary the terms of the reference. It is no use, with a visible lump in the cheeks of Ministers, for them to pretend that because the 40-hour week decision has become such as it is, it receives their whole-hearted endorsement. I repeat, it is simply a case of making a virtue of necessity.

I do not wish to delay the Committee unduly with a trenchant criticism of the Premier's speech because of its lack of colour. I would rather make some analysis of the figures contained in the Budget to show clearly to members and to the Premier that he has, in many of his contentions, my support. First of all, to make a brief analysis of the figures in the Budget tables and in the Estimates, it is clear that with a total expenditure of £16,424,428, there is an increase over the previous year's Budget of £1,396,000. The total revenue is £15,742,650, which shows an increase of £761,755, and that results in the anticipated deficit of £681,788.

The Premier: I do not promise to keep within that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Premier did promise that. In the latter part of his speech, he made, in my opinion, some very unwise remarks in that connection. I will repeat them for him later. In going through the items, particularly where there is a variation of over £10,000, we find in the Premier's miscellaneous items one fortunate decrease in expenditure, namely, that in connection with war-caused expenditure. It is down by £28,402. But there is still a substantial sum remaining against that item. I am wondering whether the Premier will tell us why there is necessity for the continuation of such a substantial expenditure in that connection. I hope he will do that when the matter is being dealt with on the items. An interesting reduction in the Premier's miscellaneous items is that of "Interest on pastoralists' debts suspended." That reduction is over £4,000.

For the benefit of members who are new to this Chamber, and to whom the matter was formerly of little or no interest, it is necessary to recall that the diffi-

culties of pastoralists, particularly when there were long periods of drought, cyclones or floods, have received for many years the sympathetic consideration of Labour Governments. To assist hard-hit pastoralists who at the beginning of 1940 were still in the throes of a serious drought, which caused losses in my district alone of nearly 1,000,000 sheep, special legislation was introduced, not merely in connection with land rent remissions but to deal with debt adjustments. The total amount of remissions of rent now exceeds £500,000. That amount has been written off pastoral rents since 1939 by the previous Governments. The Government in 1940 appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the difficulties of the rent position of pastoralists and, based on its recommendations, the voluntary debt adjustment scheme came into operation, with the Government as a contributor, and that is what this item in the Estimates represents.

The Government was a contributor, with other creditors, to the voluntary debt adjustment scheme, and, as a result, there has been a reduction in debts of more than £360,000. Due to the operation of the two schemes, pastoralists have been relieved of debts amounting to almost £1,000,000. Fortunately, there has been a change in the seasonal conditions and in the price factor. We had cases in the pastoral industry of the North-West of properties owing up to £8 a sheep seven years ago, but today the owners are well on their feet. Low-quality wool is bringing £35 a bale and the best quality is fetching almost fantastic figures. The pastoralists themselves are as anxious as is the general public that the price of wool shall go no higher, but there will shortly be some more stable price over a long term of years rather than violent fluctuations.

I notice that there is a decrease of £4,442 in the special amount granted by the Treasury to the University. I would like the Premier to make some explanation of that reduction. I anticipate that in his general items, coming under miscellaneous services, the amount of £250,000, to allow for the 40-hour week, is included because the late announcement of that matter would have meant either the delaying of the Budget or a recasting of all the departmental votes.

The Premier: That is so.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is more or less a percentage of the total expenditure that has been added to the Treasury Miscellaneous

item. It can be a very close guess, but, like many other items, it can simply be an estimate of what it will cost from January to June of next year, in connection with Government wages, because of the 40-hour week.

The Premier: It will affect more than wages.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Of course it will. It may mean that more than £250,000 will be required. There will be a new item in the Treasury Miscellaneous accounts. It appears that the Government is anticipating a loss of £50,000 on the operations of the Electricity Commission. If the Commission were left to its own resources in its developmental years, I presume it would become bankrupt, so it is right and proper that whatever assistance is necessary for it to launch its undertakings and establish itself on a sound footing is a matter for Treasury consideration. I notice that there is a substantial increase in connection with the Government Printer, most of which is to be absorbed in salaries and the remainder in machinery. On the revenue side, I presume because of anticipated continuation of Commonwealth contracts, there is an expected earning of £11,000 more than last year. The Government printing establishment has become more or less the agency for the Commonwealth's printing requirements. I sometimes think it is unwise and to the detriment of the State service to accept contracts prejudicial to its requirements. It has often been the case in this Chamber that documents—and I am not including "Hansard"—urgently needed are delayed because of the inability of the Government Printing Office to cope with the work on hand. That is particularly so when Commonwealth reports are issued and at the change of the rationing year. At such times, work at the Government Printing Office is seriously congested.

I notice that there is an increase of £188,000 in the Education Department vote. Of that amount, salaries account for £116,000. The remainder of the increase, which will doubtless be explained by the Minister when he introduces his Estimates, is on the incidental item. When the Education Department estimates are being presented, I hope we will hear that progress has been made with the policy laid down by the previous Government for the consideration of the outback children by such matters as the wider application of the idea of itiner-

ant teachers in connection with correspondence classes. I hope that the experiment we conducted having proved to be a success there will be not just one or two itinerant teachers, but that assistance and relief will be available to all parents and children who can be contacted by them. The Premier did not mention migration. I am wondering whether the Minister will make some observations on the subject when he introduces his Estimates. There is an item of immigration depots expenditure. As I say, the Premier made no mention of any expenditure on this very important subject, and I hope we can anticipate a full explanation later. We can only believe at this stage that it is, for the support—there are more than current rumours in this connection—of the taking over of such places as “Graylands.”

The Minister for Lands: Point Walter in particular.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: And Point Walter, which was arranged a year ago, and that this expenditure will be necessary not merely for the taking over of such establishments but for the accommodation of migrants as they arrive.

The Minister for Lands: That work is proceeding.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I think the Premier was pessimistic in his anticipation of revenue from the Lands Department. In this year, which shows promise of good returns for most rural commodities, he is anticipating a reduction on the amount collected last year. I hope that is one of the items on the revenue side where his anticipations are very much astray.

The Minister for Lands: Land estimates are up £68,000.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If the Minister for Lands takes the net figure, he will find it is down about £4,000. In the Mines Department, the salaries item accounts for £11,799 of a total increased expenditure of £12,000. In the Public Health and Medical Department, because of the anticipated developments in tuberculosis treatment, there is a new item of £17,000. There is an anticipated increased expenditure of £17,000 in connection with the Goldfields Water Supply. One can only anticipate at this stage that that increased expenditure will depend on the availability of materials, which perhaps is a worry to the Honorary Minister at times.

Much expense of that kind will depend upon the availability of materials, and it may be physically impossible, both in connection with revenue and the Loan Estimates, to spend the amounts anticipated and budgeted for.

An interesting item in connection with the Railway Department is the belated repairs sum of £345,000. Through the years when we had very serious difficulties in this State, it was fortunate that provident Governments provided substantial sums from revenue to meet belated repairs when such repairs could be made. The same thing applies to maintenance of public buildings. Although I assume that the very large sum which was earmarked for repairs to public buildings and maintenance that had not been possible of attention, has been mostly expended, there was a considerable sum, considering the revenue of this State, though not measured by Australian standards, which was set aside by Governments that could not spend the money because of labour and materials being unavailable.

Although the position regarding labour and materials is still difficult, according to the Premier—something he has discovered—I am sure there will be an opportunity to catch up that lag and, therefore, in the railways alone, with an increased revenue of £270,000, he anticipates spending an increased sum of £405,000. I can only assume that the increased revenue of the Railway Department will be earned because of the locomotives that were arranged for and imported by the former Government. The Premier more than hinted at that in his speech. He said that the new locomotives were making possible bigger earnings, and therefore he estimates that the revenue thereby will be increased by £270,000. I think that now the department is conducting its own catering services and that these sums will be paid into revenue—some of them will be substantial—they too will swell railway earnings.

The increases in revenue anticipated are £423,000 from taxation and £732,000 from the Commonwealth grants under Section 96 of the Constitution, so that the total anticipated under Section 96 of the Constitution is £1,977,000. That is something that is to the credit of the former Government in stating the case to the Commonwealth for a £2,000,000 grant for the current year. I hope that when discussing at a later stage

the financial relationships between State and Commonwealth, I shall be able to interest members in my views regarding the very difficult years ahead and the very serious position owing to the big proportion of moneys coming from the Commonwealth.

In connection with decreases in revenue, I notice that the Premier expects that there will not be so many racegoers investing as much money as previously. He anticipates that totalisator returns will be down by nearly £33,000, which is a considerable reduction. I believe that the total during the war went to well over £100,000. The principal decrease in the Treasury Department revenue appears to be the Rural and Industries Bank. The bank last year paid £102,000 of its interest collections to the Treasury, but the Premier does not anticipate that it will pay under its agreement this year such a sum as a Treasury recoup. I intend to have a few words to say on the Rural Bank later on. Suffice it for the present to say that it seems that the Treasury does not anticipate receiving a recoup of interest to the extent realised in the former year.

The total collections this year and the sources from which they come form a basis for a very interesting analysis. If we take the two years ended the 30th June, 1947, and the 30th June, 1948, for comparison, we get the following figures:—

	Year ended 30th June, 1947. £	Estimate 30th June, 1948. £
Income Tax	3,384,000	3,807,000
Special Grant—Grants Commission, not revenue deficit ..	1,245,000	1,977,000
Additional Grants—for deficit	628,000	
Interest Contribution	474,432	473,432
	<u>£5,731,432</u>	<u>£6,257,432</u>

Increase or 1947-48 £527,000.

In spite of the fact that Section 6 of the Taxation Reimbursement Act has now gone, it not having been re-enacted when the Taxation law was introduced in the Commonwealth Parliament last year, and of that opportunity being lost to him, it seems that the Premier by an interim claim from the Grants Commission, intends to attempt to get the deficit repaid in order to balance the Budget. I assume that that will be his procedure. If the deficit for 1947-48 is also claimed from and paid by the Common-

wealth, the total of Federal assistance to revenue funds may reach £7,000,000. Of an estimated revenue of nearly 15¾ millions for 1947-48, the Commonwealth will be contributing nearly 44 per cent.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Good old Father Xmas!

The Premier: There is no Father Xmas about the Commonwealth.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The total needs from taxation this year, if we exclude the anticipated deficit, is 6¼ millions. I repeat that if the amount necessary to counteract the deficit is claimed from and paid by the Commonwealth, we shall receive £7,000,000 from the Commonwealth.

It is very interesting to note what the previous taxation collections were. If members are sufficiently interested in the Budget, they will find the figures in Return 3 of the Budget tables. An analysis of these figures shows that our best receipts from taxation in this State occurred in 1942-43, the year of the introduction of uniform taxation, and uniform taxation was based on the average for the three years, which was 2¼ millions. According to the same return, our highest receipts from the Commonwealth Government under special grants or Section 96 of the Constitution were 1¼ millions.

So, since the introduction of uniform taxation, if we are to collect £7,000,000 this year, we shall have jumped in taxation collections and special grants from about 3¼ million to 4 million pounds. No matter what we may think, we are certainly trending towards Commonwealth domination. The Premier, not six months ago, stressed the need for our ceasing to be puppets of the Commonwealth, but we find, according to this year's Budget, a serious drift in that direction when it is necessary for us, if we are to meet the requirements of this Budget, to get from the Commonwealth a sum approaching £7,000,000.

If members turn to the annual report of the Commissioner of Taxation, they will find that the total amount of income tax collected in Western Australia during the year ended the 30th June, 1945, was £5,725,000. These returns exclude the central office assessments. So the collections in this State, in a year when we expect to receive £7,000,000 from the Commonwealth in respect of income tax, will not, with the re-

duction of taxation made by the Commonwealth, exceed £5,000,000.

The Premier has had a review made from the angle of what is the national income of the State and, from the national income, what is the taxable capacity of the people, and I am certain that that review gave him food for very serious thought as to what his attitude would be in pressing to the limit for an immediate return of the taxation rights of this State. With the reduction in Commonwealth taxation during the last two years, with the Commonwealth's heavy demands and obligations to the tune of 40 millions or 50 millions for post-war needs alone, it is obvious that the Commonwealth requirements from State income tax sources will continue to make a heavy drain on the earnings of all people. With the rights of the Commonwealth firmly established in regard to its dominance in the field of income tax, State Treasurers are likely to be in a very serious position even if their taxing rights are returned to them and they have to accept what is left after the Commonwealth has made its levy.

According to the report of the Auditor General, our collections in a good year of high taxation were 5¾ millions, and so the financial position of a State like ours is going to be very serious indeed and the task of the Premier to finance it will be equally difficult. Since Commonwealth taxation has been reduced in the last two years and pressure is being exerted by all groups and interests to this end, the next 12 months will see further reductions and collections must drop. If the Commonwealth collections drop, I am sure that, when the shoe pinches the Commonwealth, that will be the time when the States will hear a suggestion from the Commonwealth for adjusting the amounts allowed to the States under the uniform tax allocations. I shall return to a discussion of the strictly financial aspect of Commonwealth and State relations shortly.

The references in the Budget speech to industrial development were indeed a tribute to the activities of the previous Government. They were very different references from those made some months ago. The Premier has found that, not merely is it a good thing to develop our resources so that we shall not be dependent upon one source for our prosperity, but that it is also sound

to encourage development in those avenues which the former Government took great pains to assist. I can only hope that the present Government will continue to be seized of the importance of continuing such development and encouraging to the full the introduction of industries, particularly those that are ancillary to our primary industries. If those are encouraged, I am certain this State, in an industrial sense, is due for an era of progress.

I would like to make one or two comments in regard to forestry. This important department comes under the Premier's control. We in this State are prone to boast of our forest wealth and to regard our hardwoods as the best in the world. We have control legislation which we say has no superior in any State of the Commonwealth. We have afforestation and reforestation policies which we contend lead the way in regard to these matters in Australia. During my short term as Treasurer, I was very concerned as to whether our natural and national wealth in the forests was being unfairly exploited against the State, and whether the State was receiving in return for the sacrifices of its forest revenue sufficient income in any one year. It cannot be denied that the Crown has sacrificed its heritage in land at rates which should give to landowners of today considerable increment and I fear that the same thing is happening in regard to forests.

I fear that if we analyse the expenditure and the returns of the Forest Departments of the various States the only conclusion to which we can come is that our State forestry activities, so far as returns are concerned, leave very much to be desired. For an expenditure, the second lowest in the Commonwealth direct from the Treasury—but of course, three-fifths of the revenue is derived under the Forests Act—revenue was derived to the extent of £227,000. From the Treasury £262,000 was received. Our forest production is fairly comparable with that of other States, but our revenue is very low.

Mr. Nimmo: To what year are you referring?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am speaking of all the years from 1938-39. During my term as Treasurer I was very concerned at the dissipation of our forest wealth in comparison with the return.

The Premier: What do you suggest should be done? Do you suggest royalties should be increased?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That is one avenue open to the Premier. But I think, as I thought a year ago, and the Premier will possibly know, without checking it up, that from the Treasury angle our forests are being seriously dissipated in spite of our boast that we anticipate having forests in perpetuity because of our reforestation policy. The value of our production is higher than that of South Australia, but very little higher in spite of that State having no natural forests. Our revenue appears to be exceedingly low. If the Premier will have a look at the position in regard to sandalwood—

Mr. Styants: A high royalty is paid on sandalwood. It is £9 a ton and only £18 10s. is received for sandalwood.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am not referring to the royalty. What I am referring to is to be found on page 90 on the Auditor General's report. Formerly the returns were paid to the Treasury, but with the lapsing of the Sandalwood Act, during the war years—and it seems that the Premier does not intend to re-enact it, or we would have had notice of that intention—three-fifths of the returns will go into forest revenue. The department now not only gets its amount under the departmental item, but gets by authority under the Act three-fifths of sandalwood revenue, and members can see the difference that it will make in the amounts available to it. If one considers the figures in the latest Commonwealth Year Book—that of last year—one can see the difference in returns in a comparison of the figures of the various States—and I am not thinking of any one particular item of timber, but of forest resources as a whole. The revenue from timber in this State includes £93,686 from sales of sandalwood which were in other years excluded by legislation from forestry revenue. The estimated revenue from sandalwood this year is not mentioned.

I notice that there was no mention in the Budget Speech of the medical school. I am wondering whether that was too sore a point or whether it has been impossible to reach agreement or come to a decision based on either the McCallum report, the desires of the Senate, or the ability of the Treasury.

I think that the availability of a suitable hospital may have something to do with it.

The Premier: It has a lot to do with it.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is an item that is giving the public much concern. At election time it was very prominent and it would have been thought that it would have a place in the Budget Speech, even if only a line of anticipation. There was a slight reference in the speech to the Rural and Industries Bank. I think that we on this side of the Chamber can claim that the institution of that bank will prove, if it has not already done so, a landmark in the history of this State, a milestone along the road of Western Australia's progress. As the one who had the responsibility of framing the legislation which led to its establishment and of piloting it through the House, I hope the bank will prove to be in our time one of the most important activities which has any association direct or indirect with the State's development. It is very interesting to me to note the paragraphs in the Auditor General's report dealing with the activities of the bank. As at the 30th June, 1945, there were 10,000 accounts on the books of the Agricultural Bank of Western Australia. It was changed to a trading bank in October of that year at a period when it was really an agency of liquidation, when thousands of the better accounts which had been made good accounts, by the activities of the institution, were, having been made solvent, attracted away from the institution to a trading bank, mortgage or current account—

The Premier: If nationalisation comes about they will be rushed off their feet and we are taking steps to meet the position.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They will be rushed off their feet when it is only a rumour.

The Premier: That has had an effect.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It must have an effect on that institution. I hope the Premier will be as enthusiastic as I was when I was more or less kicking against the wind with millions of pounds questionably invested in assets represented in farms good and bad, in the various parts of this State. A change has been made in the form of the bank from a liquidating institution to a progressive organisation, to one which has a limit of £12,000,000 credit provided in

the Act and which, as at the 1st October, 1945, had a capital in the Rural Department of £4,062,000 which has already grown to £4,404,311, and whereas in the Government Agency Department, where the accounts that were unsound were placed, there was £4,500,000 worth of securities at the 1st October, 1945, that amount has been reduced to £4,080,000. Over £500,000 worth of accounts have been transferred from the doubtful section to that of the trading accounts. As at the 30th June, 1945, there were 12 branches of the Agricultural Bank and today there are 22 branches and 11 receiving offices. In addition there are other agencies where at specific hours service is given to the general public. I hope the Premier, if he has not already realised it, will have a full appreciation of the important step it was to take, even at the late hour when many of the better accounts had left us, of converting that institution from a mortgage bank, liquidating accounts and passing them out to trading banks, to one with the prospects it has today.

Mr. Leslie: Was it not a case of necessity, to keep the bank operating?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: No. The alternatives were discussed. It was a case of letting it go by the board altogether and liquidating the accounts as they occurred, or taking the step we did. It was viewed in this Chamber and another place at that stage as being almost too late to attempt to do what we did. But I am pleased to say that the step taken will, I am sure, within our lifetime redound very greatly to the credit of this State and its administration. I hope the Premier is taking every precaution to be prepared for the rush of business that it must receive.

The Premier: We have taken steps to meet the rush should it occur.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am sure it will occur. The Premier, in a later part of his speech, said—

I feel that we have not over-estimated our revenue and we have not under-estimated our expenditure.

His anticipation really is that he will not get more revenue than he has budgeted for, but he may have a greater expenditure before the end of the financial year. It is obvious, if he continues in the way he is going, that his expenditure will be much more than

he has anticipated. I noticed this morning that a new item has appeared in regard to a subsidy on superphosphate. I think it is not a very great tribute to the farmers of Western Australia that it is necessary for the Government to take the step of subsidising them to the extent of a further £25,000 so soon after the beginning of the financial year, to induce them to do the proper thing in regard to superphosphate supplies. I am not going to discuss in any hostile way that decision of the Government, but I think that with all the considerations in connection with the haulage of super, it is stretching things to the limit to subsidise the farmers further to the tune of £25,000 for the next three months to induce them to do the right thing in their own interests. That, of course, must increase the deficit and mean, as I mentioned earlier, that the total required from Commonwealth sources must exceed £7,000,000 before the end of this financial year.

While I am not complaining about the necessity, in a general way, of budgeting for a deficit it is, I think, important for us to examine which way we are trending. Before getting to that point, I would like to analyse—again, this information will be found in the Budget table, return No. 5—the incurring of deficits within the State by different Governments. If we take the period of 30 years from 1916-17 to now, there were Liberal Governments in power from 1916 to 1924, and in those eight years there were deficits totalling £4,779,000. From 1930 to 1933, in extraordinary circumstances, there were deficits amounting to £3,842,000. There was not a surplus in those years. The total deficits, the interest on which is still an annual charge, for those eight years was £8,621,000. For the 20 years during which Labour Governments were in office, there were seven surpluses, and the total deficits amounted to £2,500,000 in round figures.

The Attorney General: Does that include the period 1924 to 1930?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes, it includes every year from 1916-17. The Attorney General can refer to the Budget table No. 5 to check the accuracy of my figures. As I say, the years 1930 to 1933 were very difficult ones, but if we include the deficit for that period, which approached £4,000,000, it is significant, especially for those who are apt to criticise Labour's handling

of finance, to learn that in the 11 years of Liberal Government the deficit amounted to £8,621,000 and in the 21 years of Labour Government it was £2,500,000.

The Premier: Did not we accumulate these large deficits during the depression years because we were not able to borrow?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I stated in my speech on the Address-in-reply, and also a moment ago, that they were difficult years, and I make no unfair criticism of the administration in that connection. I simply point out that it is pertinent to observe that the interest on the deficits in the 30 years is an annual charge of, I think, about £90,000.

The Attorney General: Have you the loan borrowings?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: They are an entirely different item. They do not become so serious a burden, particularly if they are reproductive, as do deficits which exceed revenue and may have no possibility of being recovered into revenue. If we were to dissect the loan expenditure in those years, in such districts as that represented by the Premier, we would find that, although the charges were extremely low for the facilities provided, the State has benefited tremendously from such loan expenditure. While I do not wish to be unfairly critical in regard to the incurring of deficits, I repeat that any trend towards getting more and more money from the Commonwealth puts us more and more in the power of the Commonwealth. I look with great concern to the future financial arrangements between the State and the Commonwealth. Even if the Estimates are not exceeded, the Premier will need 44 per cent. of his revenue this year from the Commonwealth. In order to carry on, we are very close to needing 50 per cent. of our finance from Commonwealth sources.

The Premier: Under existing circumstances, how can we avoid greater dependence on the Commonwealth as time goes on?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That is what the Premier was going to show us—how to avoid greater dependence. That was the high-sounding note of the Premier's policy speech—how we were to cease to be babes of the Commonwealth, and how we were not to demand from Canberra for any purpose revenue which we could raise and manage from this State.

The Premier: We have started by asking the Prime Minister to call a convention, to which every State Premier agreed, but the Prime Minister wiped it off.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Premier knows—I think he has conceded—that I set the example in that connection in being successful in arranging for the first review to be made by Treasury officers of Commonwealth and State finance. It started a long time ago, in the days of Hon. P. Collier, even before Hon. J. C. Willecock took over. All of us—if we are concerned as to the future of Federation—must regard the present position with considerable alarm. The Officers' Convention, which was moved for at the 1946 Premiers' Conference, took place. That conference resulted from my motion, but I do not know whether the Premier has had the report of the conference. I presume that the officers have analysed all the changes in the financial status of the States, and that officers, both Commonwealth and State, have presented a report, of which we all should know the details. I would like, even as an act of courtesy, opportunity of viewing the report of the officers who conferred and reviewed all the changes—particularly changes in financial status—as between the Commonwealth and the States.

The Premier: I will see that you get that report.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I will be pleased to have it. The Premier has followed this up and has been able to get the Commonwealth—if not Mr. Chifley—to agree to send a representative. The question of the convention has been carried, and I understand that it will take place.

The Premier: The Prime Minister said he would not be represented—that the Commonwealth Government would not be represented. That is what his spokesman said.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: There is some doubt as to whether the Prime Minister said it.

The Premier: Yes, it was the Government spokesman who said that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I hope the Commonwealth will not take a view that will prejudice it materially in giving consideration to Commonwealth-State relationships regarding finance, by not sending a representative to that conference. When we review more recent happenings such as the

application of uniform taxation, there is no denying that the Commonwealth decided to apply uniform taxation for the duration of the war and 12 months thereafter. When all the Premiers, with the experience of the past giving them doubt that ultimately this might prove to be a permanent plan, raised their voices in query, they were seriously rebided by the then Prime Minister as being doubting Thomases. The handing over to the Commonwealth—even under protest—of the right to impose taxation, was tantamount to the completion of an agreement between all parties—for the successful prosecution of the war—for the arrangement to continue for the duration of the war and 12 months thereafter.

Western Australia has, perhaps, been relieved of certain burdens in the matter of social services but I say—I have said it on many occasions—that that contract was entered into by all the parties, and even though the States tested it in the High Court of Australia, and the result of that testing showed that the Commonwealth has a prior right in the field of taxation, instead of being told that the States would not have their rights returned to them, consideration should at least have been given to the position of the States. I hope, in the interests of Federation, that when the convention takes place next year the Commonwealth will not only be represented there by its officers but will give them authority to facilitate discussion and assist in every possible way the deliberations that are to take place.

Of course, while the present system remains—as from his recent interjection the Premier must realise—we have no alternative but to have recourse to the privileges that are given to the States under Section 96 of the Constitution, but, in the words of Sir Robert Garran, “In the income tax field the Commonwealth owns the only cow, and does all the milking.” I would point out that it is foolish for members of this Parliament or of this community to think there would be a difference in the attitude of any other complexion of Commonwealth Government in this matter. The Premier and his colleagues have said much in criticism of the present Commonwealth administration in this regard, but if there were a change in the Commonwealth sphere tomorrow I believe there would be no softening of the

heart towards the States by the new administration.

The Premier: I think that is doubtful.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I had experience, at various Premiers' conferences and conferences of Commonwealth Ministers, of the attitude, irrespective of Government. There was little difference in it. I clearly recall the attitude of Mr. Menzies towards the States, when discussing the international wheat agreement in Melbourne at just about the time when war broke out. I realised his attitude and intention, and his protection of what he called Commonwealth rights. I suggest to the Premier that that is an aspect to which he should give serious consideration. We all know that a citizen of this State—even if a member of this Parliament—may change his place of residence and representation and quickly cease to be a State-righter, becoming instead a strong advocate of Commonwealth rights. No matter what sort of Commonwealth Government there is I believe there will always be a tendency there to believe that in the Federal scheme of things the States are mere excrescences.

While we have the present situation, either under uniform taxation or the obligation of State Governments to develop their internal resources, we can have no variation in the set-up or in the claims that the Constitution gives us the right to make. The position of the claimant States has been more satisfactory as the result of the work of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, but it is fundamentally wrong that a body, appointed by the Commonwealth and not elected by the people, should have such great responsibility and authority. The claimant States now generally receive grants sufficient to enable them to balance their budgets on a basis comparable with those of the standard States, but that assumes that the position of the standard States is satisfactory. That is not so.

I think it can be said that, after the cessation of the application of the Braddon clause, the stability of the States declined. It is true that from 1927-28 to 1938-39 Australia suffered a depression but, even without the depression, I think it would be found, if an analysis were made of the figures of the States, that all of them could not have balanced their budgets. So there is a need for a readjustment of the

financial relations as between the Commonwealth and the States.

The Attorney General: Otherwise they would all be claimant States.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I believe that even the States called standard States will shortly become claimant States under the Constitution. The history of Federation has shown an increase in the Commonwealth financial strength and a decline in the strength of the States. The drafting of the financial provisions of the Constitution no doubt occasioned the Convention and the framers considerable thought, and it is clear that when they decided, under Section 87 of the Constitution, to make available a portion of the Customs collections to the States for a period of 10 years, they anticipated that the Commonwealth would have added responsibilities at the end of that period and that the adjustments would need to be reviewed. Although the framers of the Constitution were not endowed with the gift of prophecy, there is no doubt that they were actuated by a desire to protect the States and ensure that they had ample revenue.

It will be remembered by those who have given this subject much study that a crisis was almost occasioned in New South Wales because the effect of Section 87 of the Constitution was feared. Elections were precipitated because of the pressure in connection with that section, and I think it is plain that the fears which were in the minds of the political leaders at the time Federation was being considered have materialised, and that each change in the financial relationships has been to the advantage of the Commonwealth and to the disadvantage of the States. If we consider the periods in four groups we can take the Braddon clause, the per capita payments, the financial agreement and the uniform taxing system, and on every occasion the position of the States has been rendered worse and the position of the Commonwealth has been strengthened.

The Attorney General: The biggest factor has been the two wars.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I have said that even those who had the responsibility of framing the Constitution were not endowed with any gift of prophecy. The two wars undoubtedly brought to the Commonwealth very great responsibilities which

the States, not having the interpretation of the Constitution that they have today, were anxious should be retained to the Commonwealth to ensure that it had the requisite finance. A very profound statement and one that I should like members to listen to intently was made by the Hon. Alfred Deakin, who was prominent in the Commonwealth sphere when the Constitution was framed and was Prime Minister immediately prior to the Surplus Revenue Act. Writing to the "Morning Post" in April, 1902, 45 years ago, he said—

As the power of the purse in Great Britain established by degrees the authority of the Commons, it will ultimately establish in Australia the authority of the Commonwealth. The rights of self-government of the States have been fondly supposed to be safeguarded by the Constitution. It left them legally free, but financially bound to the chariot wheels of the central government. Their need will be its opportunity. The less populous will first succumb. Those smitten by drought or similar misfortunes will follow, and finally even the greatest and most prosperous will, however, reluctantly, be brought to heel. Our Constitution may remain unaltered, but a vital change will have taken place in the relations between the States and the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth will have acquired a general control over the States while every extension of political power will be made by its means and go to increase its relative superiority.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He was a prophet.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Undoubtedly he was a prophet. That statement, made in 1902, was a profound one, and Alfred Deakin was a man who, as Prime Minister, signed the agreement between the States in 1909 to alter the conditions under Section 87 of the Constitution—the Braddon clause—to the provision for the per capita payments. Under the Surplus Revenue Act of 1910, which was introduced by the next Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, it was obvious that, notwithstanding the change of Government, there was still a desire to preserve to the Commonwealth its dominance in the financial structure. Although the Surplus Revenue Act of 1910 provided for per capita payments of 25s., it also provided that any surplus should be divided between the States. Of course there has never been any surplus. It reminds me of the child who was eating an apple and, when a mate asked for the core, replied that there was not going to be any core.

The Attorney General: The Commonwealth invented trust accounts.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: All sorts of things were done. At any rate, the Commonwealth spent all the money and there was no surplus revenue for the States. That system continued until the financial agreement came into operation. Although the financial agreement was really only a borrowing instrument, it had the effect of limiting the spending of money by the States. While, to some extent, that might have been a very good thing to have under control, it certainly gave the Commonwealth certain rights to apply strictures to State finance. A very interesting document is the report of the Commonwealth Government on the national income. This report shows very great buoyancy in the national income, but I should think that if an income based on excessive spending in a period of war and on unreal buoyancy after the war is to be taken as a criterion, then as the national income falls, particularly on account of lower returns from overseas sources and increased costs, we are due to see in our time a very serious recession.

We are due to see what may or could be a depression comparable with the last one. That, again, is something which warrants the close attention of all who believe in the federation of the Australian States; because, with Commonwealth commitments pegged at a very high level and with the States depending upon the Commonwealth for an amount approaching 50 per cent. of their money requirements for revenue, when there is a shrinkage of income in the Commonwealth sphere I am certain, if history repeats itself—and it has a habit of doing so—that when a new arrangement is made to meet the conditions of the present, there will be a variation sought should the arrangement become onerous on the Commonwealth, and that new arrangement will not in any way benefit the States. The attitude I am adopting is, I submit, a realistic one.

The Honorary Minister: Mr. Chifley says it will never come.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am not prompted by any desire to be pessimistic but by a desire to suggest to the Government that the more claims that are made against Commonwealth revenue for many of the items which in the past were considered to belong to the States and to be the responsibility of the States, the more we shall be

in the pocket of the Commonwealth when the time comes for an adjustment if there should be any suggestion of a collapse. So long as Australia is governed by seven Parliaments, it seems impossible to make a permanent arrangement for financial adjustments, and it is very necessary, if the Commonwealth is not prepared to meet the States in the matter of a financial adjustment, that the States certainly should have the matter examined thoroughly.

I am not intending in any way to forecast that unification is close to us because of the present financial circumstances. I am not forecasting that because of the present financial situation State Parliaments cannot continue for very many years; but I am prepared to forecast that there will be serious embarrassments to State Premiers unless they take the stand which our Premier—and I hope he was not only pretending—suggested he would take when he was on the hustings in February last. Now he finds that it is not as easy as all that, and that the alternatives open to him are not many. There must be some doubt in his mind as to how far he should press for the return to him, at this stage, of his own taxing rights. There must be in his mind considerable agitation as to whether or not the alternatives include even secession. When he is in his calm and placid moments, after spending a day analysing his Treasury trends, there is no doubt that what I have expressed must be paramount in his mind. Therefore, I hope that while the present Government does not show recklessness, it will be prepared to admit that some time ago it was quite unrealistic and is prepared now to accept the position as it is and to pave the way, within its ambit and scope, for the best thing that can be done for the benefit of the people of Western Australia.

In passing from the strictly financial aspects and trends of the Budget, I would like to say a brief word on the question of controls. Control regulations which were so vital to our well-being during the war have of necessity been continued in the transition period. Although their continuance into peace time finds strong objection by all sections of the community, it is essential that the regulations in regard to prices should be most rigidly enforced. Unfortunately, however, every time a regulation is introduced, it seems to be the first

duty of every citizen to analyse it with a view to ascertaining how it can be evaded. There seems to be a kind of morality abroad which regards legislation and regulations designed to restrict in the national interest the activities of the individual as being something which the individual should fight most strenuously in order to escape responsibility. At one time it was considered the proper and smart thing to outwit the Commissioner of Taxation; but today there is ample scope for people to evade controls which they regard as being against their personal interest.

I hope that during the strenuous times through which State Governments must pass, the responsibility upon them not only to the British people within the State and within Australia but to the British people outside the Commonwealth, will not be overlooked. Although the major conflict in which the world was engaged ceased over two years ago, it appears from the headlines in the daily Press that, except for the organised slaughter of humanity, there is very little alteration in the turmoil and strife throughout the world. People and nations are still in bitter conflict. Starvation and other causes of revolution stalk what we regard as the civilised world and Great Britain is still the most important mediator. This nation which suffered most—no nation made more sacrifices, no people showed greater courage or helped others more—appears to be the popular choice of people who wish to make complaints against her and press her in her serious plight.

All of us remember Great Britain's war-time difficulties as regards food; and, although her food position is approaching the desperate, she stops in her tracks and in her days of difficulty to consider the plight of the people of Europe as well as of people in other parts of the world. It is no tribute to the nations, who stood off and remained neutral and who have sterling balances of great magnitude, that they should be the greatest oppressors of the British Empire at the present time. As I said very recently in this building, although Australia has benefited materially from Empire preference, the time is almost overdue when the British Commonwealth of Nations should give some preference to the Empire and its heart.

I would support, for the sake of the heart of the Empire, which has suffered the most, a continuation or a resurrection of this country of controls that might mean sacrifices, if such sacrifices could make a contribution to the Empire. I hope the Government has a full realisation of its responsibility in those circumstances to stimulate the production of goods that would give us exportable surpluses, even to the extent of a threat in some cases of over production. I hope that the Government is fully seized with the responsibility for a better use of land to enable us to achieve those things and for the development of our industries—mining and rural—to the extent of the maximum being available to export even under credit circumstances, provided they are despatched to Empire countries. In its trusteeship for the community I hope there will be some show by this Government of a full realisation of its responsibility to serve the people and that it return all individuals in every sphere will realise their responsibilities to the community.

Progress reported.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th October.

HON. E. NULSEN (Kanowna) [9.53]
I have not very much to say on the Bill but I intend to support it because I feel that owing to the powers of the Commonwealth being limited in accordance with the Constitution, and if its proposals met with opposition from any of the other States, we might not get a Bill that would effect stabilisation or one that would be helpful to the farmers generally. I feel that we should have something in reserve and that is why I propose to support the measure. Farmers of this country have made sacrifices in producing real wealth under hard adverse conditions and Parliament should see that they receive greater protection in the future than they have had in the past. A Royal Commission to inquire into this matter was appointed by the previous Government and seeing that the personnel of that commission was chosen by the previous Government, I feel that the members of that Party have some responsibility in con-

nection with the report. It has been said that farmers want everything; that they want it both ways. I consider that farmers are entitled to a just price.

Under the restriction of acreage plan, farmers received about £1,900,000. That was a very small sum considering that their produce was sold at very much under production cost. That has not been going on for a few years, but for as long as I can remember. The member for Irwin-Moore mentioned that in 1934 the farmers of Australia owed over £150,000,000. If that be so, and seeing that they had been producing wheat under cost from 1934, until the time when the war was in full operation, that amount must have been increased very considerably. There has been a good deal of criticism of farmers but it has usually come from those who have not had practical experience. They should realise that farmers do not work eight hours a day, but from 12 to 16 hours. I am not going to say that all farmers are competent, or have made a success. But we find failures in every walk of life. The farmer, however, has to stand by his failures.

People in different organisations are protected by those organisations and if they are not up to standard they are carried on by means of that protection. But generally speaking the farmer, although he has worked long hours, if he is not successful, has to leave his property and someone else takes it over. Nevertheless there are many farmers in this State who have worked hard and who would have been very successful if they had been able to receive a reasonable price for their produce. But first of all they had to deal in the world's market and accept world parity. On the other hand, they had to pay a high tariff on machinery and other requirements. The businessman does not sell his goods under cost, but the men on the land, who produce the real wealth and who are the backbone of the country, have had to sell their produce for many years very much below the cost of production.

The Minister for Agriculture: Hear, hear! That is the stuff!

Hon. E. NULSEN: I would probably not be speaking in this strain had I not had practical experience, and had I not observed in my district first-class farmers and first-

class men who were unsuccessful, but not through any fault of their own. I have heard people complain that the tax-payers have to keep the farmers. That is quite erroneous. A farmer is entitled to the basic wage. But has he got it? Of course not! If he had received a return in accordance with the work he did, then generally speaking he would have been successful. I do not think it is quite fair, as has been suggested in this House, that the farmer should see that the price of bread is not too high, and that butter is sold at a reasonable figure, and that eggs, bacon and milk should be provided at a certain price as a result of sacrifices made by him. If that were the case and it did apply to other industries, we would have a terrible outcry.

I feel that the primary producers of this State and Australia have had a pretty raw deal. I have heard it said that quite a number of farmers die and leave a lot of money behind. If we went into statistics, we would find that there are only a few such farmers, and that in their cases terrible sacrifices had been made in prior days. It is quite possible that some primary producers settled in this State 100 years ago and others perhaps only 20 years ago, and they did not get any benefit from their enterprise, but that the rising generation, after these people had made sacrifices, is showing a profit as a result of the properties being now unencumbered. There are some very good areas in this State where farmers have been progressive and have made money. But on the average, the farmer who has an encumbered property has been selling his produce at very much under cost. I think we should have a State pool, just for an emergency. I do not think any farmer or primary producer in this State wants a State plan, but a Commonwealth one. However, in case we do not get a satisfactory Commonwealth plan, we should have some other means of looking after those who are producing the rural wealth of the country.

The Minister for Agriculture: The pool is only for that purpose.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I understand that that is so. If we fail to reach agreement with the Commonwealth and do not get the co-operation of the various States, it might mean that there would be no plan for the farmers not only of Western Australia but of Australia. We in this State want to see

that we have something in reserve to protect the people who are doing a wonderful work here. I did not intend to speak to-night but, as no-one else rose, I did not want to lose the opportunity to do so. I want to compliment the Government on bringing down something that might be helpful. I hope it will not be necessary to have to make use of this measure or the plan which has been introduced, but that we will have a Commonwealth plan which will be more helpful to the farmers.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [10.5]: The speech by the member for Kanowna is a refreshing one to come from that side of the House.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What is wrong with this side of the House?

Mr. LESLIE: It is such a change to hear someone from that side admitting that the farmer has had a difficult spin in the past.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We have never said anything else.

Mr. LESLIE: It has only been saying, instead of doing something about it.

Mr. Triat: Nonsense!

Hon. A. H. Panton: We have more gas to the square yard from you about it than from anyone else who has come into the House.

Mr. LESLIE: When an attempt is made by the Government to ensure that the wheat-growers are not left in a morass of difficulty, should certain circumstances eventuate, we have the member for North-East Fremantle, who, as an ex-Minister for Agriculture should know better, putting forward a case which, to be charitable, could only have the effect of misleading the growers as to the need for this measure.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Tell us something about the morass.

Mr. Rodoreda: Tell us something about the need for it.

Mr. LESLIE: The member who has just resumed his seat has told you that.

The Minister for Agriculture: If you give him a chance, he will tell you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LESLIE: I can quite understand why there is a desire to leave the wheat-growers in a state of uncertainty and doubt as to what is going to happen.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They have always had that.

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, but it is no use making it worse than it has been in the past. I can understand the desire to leave them in a state of doubt so that when the position does arise something will have to be done in regard to the orderly marketing of their products, sooner than revert to the stage which applied before the war. Rather than leave the farmers unprepared should certain circumstances arise—which I suggest the member for North-East Fremantle knows very well will probably arise—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Will they arise in South Australia as well?

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, throughout the Commonwealth.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What will they do in South Australia?

Mr. LESLIE: I am concerned with Western Australia. This State is proposing to make certain that wheatgrowers will not be stampeded into having to accept something which they do not want.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: This morass will occur here only, and not in South Australia.

Mr. LESLIE: It will occur everywhere—in Victoria, too, where, at Warraeknaheal, the meeting to which the hon. member referred was held. The farmers of Victoria too, are concerned about the possibility of a difficult situation arising should the Commonwealth be obliged, as there is every possibility it will be, to vacate the field in regard to organised marketing of wheat. If the Commonwealth can leave the position to the last minute so that it will be able to stampede the farmers into accepting anything rather than the old order which previously prevailed, the farmers undoubtedly would accept it. They would throw the whole position into the hands of the Commonwealth Government, at that Government's desire, and the wheatgrowers would be entirely at its mercy. They would have no guarantee that they would reap a reasonable return for their labour.

Hon. A. H. Panton: According to the Budget, that is where they are now.

Mr. LESLIE: That is the position most likely to arise if a Bill of this nature does not become an Act, and if the State is not prepared to step in to make certain, as the

member for North-East Fremantle said, that chaotic conditions may not arise.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Will not arise, not may not.

Mr. LESLIE: Will not arise. But undoubtedly they will arise. What is going to happen should judgment be given against the Commonwealth in the case now pending in connection with a just price for wheat? What will happen when the Commonwealth Government is obliged to vacate the field?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The same as happened before. We have not previously had such an Act.

Mr. LESLIE: No, and the growers were not content with the conditions then prevailing. Wheat was then sold at less than 2s. per bushel. The purpose of this Bill is to ensure that in the event of the Commonwealth vacating the field of wheat marketing the growers will not again be left at the mercy of wheat speculators, but that there will be an organised system of marketing.

Mr. Reynolds: Is that the capitalist again?

Mr. LESLIE: They were all in it, not only the capitalists. Although the member for North-East Fremantle made no reference to the contents of the Bill during his speech—

Hon. A. H. Panton: You have not said much about them yet.

Mr. LESLIE: That is the position that exists.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LESLIE: I was surprised to hear the speech of the member for North-East Fremantle. He should have knowledge—owing to the position that he occupied—of the risk the growers are facing today with the possibility of the Commonwealth Government having to vacate the wheat marketing field.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Could the private speculator operate today if the Commonwealth did vacate that field?

Mr. LESLIE: What is to prevent him doing so?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: There is a lot to stop him.

Mr. LESLIE: There is not.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Nonsense.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LESLIE: The whole question as to the constitutional powers is so involved that neither I nor the member for North-East Fremantle can say what the Commonwealth is able to do at the present time.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I referred to private speculators.

Mr. LESLIE: If the Commonwealth goes out of this field and we have no legislation ready, where will the private speculator be?

The Minister for Education: On top of the world.

Mr. LESLIE: Of course.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The private speculators could not charter ships.

Mr. LESLIE: They can overcome many difficulties when the occasion demands. I think the Bill is necessary and the Government is wise in introducing it. The hon. member referred to the meeting at Warracknabeal, and I do not know whether he was misinformed—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I would not say much about that meeting, if I were you.

Mr. LESLIE: I will tell the member for North-East Fremantle where he mis-stated the case. The meeting held there was attended by a large number of representative growers.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Are you reading from "The Primary Producer"?

Mr. LESLIE: It is from the "Countryman," which is a very sound publication from Victoria. It gives the position, not as the hon. member tried to convey it, but as reported later on to those who were responsible for calling the meeting. Mr. Teasdale did not call the meeting, as the member for North-East Fremantle suggested.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Did I say that?

Mr. LESLIE: The hon. member implied that the meeting was called so that Mr. Teasdale could put his ideas before it. On the other hand, the report in the "Countryman" says that the meeting was a success, that it was instigated by the Country Party and followed a resolution from the annual conference demanding a just price for wheat. The Just Price for Wheat Committee co-operated in organis-

ing the meeting. So great a success was the meeting—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Socially?

Mr. LESLIE:—in every way, that a considerable sum was contributed to the fund created to fight the test case in the High Court. Two hundred and eighty pounds was given spontaneously at that meeting towards that fund. I would not for a moment suggest that the purpose of the meeting failed or that those who organised it did not achieve their objective.

The Minister for Agriculture: Mr. Stott must have misinformed the member for North-East Fremantle.

Mr. LESLIE: Mr. Dunstan, M.L.A., a man who would give a true report of what happened at the meeting, said—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Why drag him out of the cupboard?

Mr. LESLIE:—that the speeches of Messrs. Teasdale and Robertson were a gratifying feature of the meeting, and that there were no dissentient voices. He said that the meeting had given the people of Victoria some idea of the importance of the wheat industry and its needs. That was the whole reason for the meeting—to discuss the entire wheat situation, the case before the High Court and what, in the event of the Commonwealth being obliged to vacate the field, should be done to meet the position.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: How long did the meeting last?

Mr. LESLIE: I have not a full report in that regard.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Mr Teasdale took up 1½ hours with the State Pool.

Mr. LESLIE: There is no question about the State Pool in either this or the other report. The purpose of the meeting was to secure for the growers, in whatever way possible, a just price for wheat. The resolution carried was—

In the event of the Commonwealth Government because of Constitutional or other difficulties vacating the wheat marketing field this meeting is strongly of the opinion that in order to preserve orderly marketing necessary action should be taken by the State Government for the implementation of legislation for the establishment of organised marketing under growers' control.

That resolution was carried without a dissentient voice, and one can naturally expect,

as a result of that, that when a change of Government takes place in Victoria after the 8th of November—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is wishful thinking.

Mr. LESLIE:—we will find a Bill similar to this being brought down to make sure that the wheatgrowers of Victoria are not left lamenting.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What is preventing a similar measure being brought down in South Australia?

Mr. LESLIE: I presume that the South Australian Government will see that its growers are not left out in the cold.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: This measure cannot become operative for another 16 months even if it is passed.

Mr. LESLIE: I am not sure that that applies.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The Commonwealth has given an assurance that it will continue under the transitional powers legislation for another 12 months.

Mr. LESLIE: The present harvest is arranged for, but there is another harvest. That is all the present Wheat Board can provide for.

The Minister for Agriculture: The Commonwealth Government said it was going to market this crop.

Mr. LESLIE: But if the price should not be considered fair, what will be the position from the growers' standpoint? What will be said then?

Hon. A. H. Panton: They will say the same as Gladstone did!

Mr. LESLIE: The question of wheat has been played with politically by almost every nation in the world down the centuries. Why they should pick on wheat, I do not know. There are other products equally as stable as wheat, but it is the one commodity that Governments, political organisations—

Hon. A. H. Panton: And speculators.

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, that is so.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Speculators have made more out of wheat than any Government.

Mr. LESLIE: I would not say that.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I am telling you. You are very young!

Mr. LESLIE: I would like to know what the Commonwealth Government has made out of wheat. It is the one commodity that some Governments have been too afraid to deal with although, of course, other Governments have been game to tackle it to a dangerous extent. Wheat is a commodity the control of which would undoubtedly give any Government considerable power, and in saying that I take into consideration even the control of gold. The wheatgrowers feel that because of the power the control of wheat production will place in the hands of any Government, the Commonwealth is anxious to secure that control. We know that at present the Commonwealth Government is seeking long term markets outside Australia for our wheat. If it is able to make long term contracts for the disposal of export wheat then, because of a provision in the Constitution, the Commonwealth Government will secure control over the export of all wheat and, in consequence, will also have in its hands the direction internally of wheat supplies. Possibly that is one means whereby the Government hopes to be able to secure control of all wheat marketing.

The growers are quite satisfied that the Commonwealth Government desires to secure that power and to introduce some form of orderly marketing under its jurisdiction—but not under conditions that will guarantee to the grower the return that he might reasonably expect. It is because of their fears in that respect that they are not prepared to hand over power to the Commonwealth willy nilly, without conditions. The Commonwealth Government is no doubt prepared and is anxious for the States to transfer the requisite power, but the growers are not so anxious for that transfer unless they are guaranteed a just price for their product.

Mr. Reynolds: What do you regard as a just price?

Mr. LESLIE: One that will return to the grower his cost of production plus a reasonable profit.

Mr. Needham: What is a reasonable profit?

Mr. LESLIE: What would the hon. member regard as a reasonable profit?

Mr. Needham: We are asking you what you suggest it would be.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Yes, we put the question to you.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You are the expert. You know all about it.

Mr. LESLIE: If I were prepared to say what I regard as a reasonable profit, the hon. member might have other views. The position is that the wheatgrowers have regard to the profits secured by other sections of the community, such as that mentioned by the member for Irwin-Moore when he referred to the wharf labourers who were paid 12s. each time they reported for work and there was none for them.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How much do you think they should get?

Mr. LESLIE: If the wheatgrowers had 12s. a day added to what they are to receive, it would be handy.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How much per bushel should they get for their wheat?

Mr. LESLIE: The cost of production—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: And what is that?

Mr. LESLIE: That is a poser I am not prepared to answer.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You do not know! Now you are telling us! Why did you not say that half an hour ago?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LESLIE: A commission has been appointed by the Commonwealth Government for the purpose of ascertaining what is the cost of production. If Opposition members are not aware of the fact, I am informing them now. The commission has been in Western Australia collecting evidence. For my part I cannot say what the cost of production is.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The member for Irwin-Moore is an authority.

Mr. LESLIE: And he is entitled to speak on that subject, because he has investigated the problem carefully. I have read reports and evidence tendered by various people before commissions and other investigating bodies that have been appointed to deal with this problem. That is all I have done. I have not gone into the evidence as fully as have others, and I certainly am not prepared to set myself up as an authority. On the other hand, I am prepared to say that if the home consumption price of 5s. 2d. is

based on pre-war production costs, it certainly does not represent the cost of production today. I leave it to members themselves to work out the difference between the purchasing power of a pound in these days compared with what it was in earlier times, so that they can estimate what additional amount wheatgrowers should receive above the 5s. 2d. to bring them into line with those in receipt of the basic wage, for whom the purchasing power of the pound is adjusted from time to time.

Mr. Reynolds: Have a wild guess and tell us what you think is the cost of production.

Mr. LESLIE: I shall not do that because I have no desire to mislead the House. I prefer to deal in actual facts.

Mr. Reynolds: As a farmer, what return would you like?

Mr. LESLIE: I would like to get as much as the hon. member would—as much as he jolly well could get. As to the Bill itself, I am pleased that, in spite of what is in these days described as the recession in conditions, it contains nothing calculated to enable restriction upon production to be regarded as within the powers of the board to be set up. That matter will be in the hands of Parliament.

Hon. A. H. Panton: But it does not guarantee anything.

Mr. LESLIE: No, it is an orderly marketing Bill. I am afraid, however, that, as with some other Bills such as were introduced by the member for North-East Fremantle, it may, while not guaranteeing anything, impose a restriction upon production, which is something to which I could not agree and to which greater authorities than I am opposed. The Leader of the Opposition spoke tonight about increasing our production in order to assist the starving people of the world and to use our disposable surplus in that direction. I am happy about that, because I do not think that stage will be reached for years. Many of us are wedded, particularly in connection with wheat, to the old idea of supply and demand. That theory has gone out of existence, or at any rate should have done so.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Yes, "should have done so." I do not think your colleagues in the Liberal Party would agree with you there.

Mr. LESLIE: Scarcity and plenty are relative only to the extent of the needs of the people.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There is no amendment to the law of supply and demand appearing on the notice paper.

Mr. LESLIE: No, possibly there is not. I believe we are steadily approaching the stage when the needs of the people will be put first. It is of no use talking about over-production of wheat in Western Australia during the depression period and painting a gloomy picture and telling us that the aftermath of this war will be the same as the aftermath of the 1914-18 war, and that, because in 1930 we had a 50 million bushel harvest, we could not dispose of the wheat and yet there were people in this State who could not buy a loaf of bread. Those conditions will not recur because we have grown wiser.

Mr. Reynolds: It was because the money was tied up.

Mr. LESLIE: It was not a question of money being tied up; it was a question of understanding the needs of the people. One feature of the Bill that I welcome is that, unlike other measures that have had organised marketing for their object, this one does not propose to give the power to restrict production. If there were any restriction of production of wheat, the easy way would be taken in future as it has been in the past, and this would result in a gross injustice being done to a considerable proportion of the most productive area in this State. The so-called outer areas would be the first to suffer; they would be singled out as the ones where production was to be restricted.

How wrong that would be I can illustrate by referring to the figures of the Acting Government Statistician published in "The West Australian" on Monday. According to the return, the so-called outer areas—the areas that have been condemned for wheatgrowing because of insufficient rainfall or rainfall that does not occur at the right time—in the two years given have recorded a production in excess of the State average. The Wyalkatchem district, for instance, which is on the fringe of the outer areas, had an average of 13.5 bushels per acre, the second highest in the State for last year. Although the State average was 9.8 bushels, the following averages were re-

corded in the several districts:—Koorda, 11.4; Kununoppin-Trayning, 12.2; Narrogin, 12.7; Mt. Marshall, 11.1; Mukinbudin, 11.9; Nungarin, 11.1. The overall average for the Northern Division—the one considered to be uncertain for wheatgrowing—was 10.3 bushels in 1946-47 and 12.4 bushels in 1945-46. The figures for the South-Western Division—the allegedly safe wheatgrowing division of the State—were 9.1 in 1946-47 and 9.9 in 1945-46.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You are telling only part of the story, are you not?

Mr. LESLIE: I am telling sufficient of the story, and it should convince members that it would be wrong to apply any restriction to wheatgrowing in this State and equally wrong to apply a restriction to an area that has been unjustly condemned as unsuitable for wheatgrowing. It may be unsuitable for wheatgrowing entirely; any part of the State is.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You will surely admit that the last two seasons were very favourable to the northern wheatgrowing areas.

Mr. LESLIE: I admit that they were favourable and brought the figures well up, but the averages for the previous years were seldom far below and generally equal to the State averages. A very small section of the district involving four or five farms, which were affected by purely local conditions, has been held up as an example and the whole district has been condemned as having had a crop failure. The nature of the soil, the prevalence of pests and all sorts of conditions enter into consideration and affect the result. To say that because a few farms suffered an adverse season, therefore the whole area should be condemned as unsuitable for wheatgrowing, is wrong. I look to the day when this idea of restricting production—

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is not in the Bill.

Mr. LESLIE: But I am mentioning it, because I hope that any talk of restriction, even in the outer areas, will cease. No matter how hard we may work or how intently we may apply ourselves to primary production, there is a lot of leeway to be made up if we are to provide a reasonable standard of living and nutriment for the people of the world. We cannot quickly

overtake the leeway that has occurred over many years and today is worse than ever, a leeway that will continue unless a special effort is made to increase production.

There are two points in the Bill that I wish particularly to refer to. One is a provision that will permit any person authorised by the board at any reasonable time to enter any place or premises where wheat may be stored and to inspect it and any stocks of wheat and the books and accounts held there. I do not know whether the Government intends that the powers that could be exercised under such a provision should be used. The Bill provides that the wheat shall remain the property of the farmer until it is delivered to the board. Potatoes become the property of the Potato Board even before they are dug—

Hon. A. H. Panton: We have no potatoes, so why worry about them?

Mr. LESLIE: —but the wheatgrower retains the ownership of the wheat until it is delivered to the board. While it is on his farm, it is his property. Therefore it would be most unjust to permit a provision so wide to become law, because an inspector could enter any farm and inspect the wheat, the books and accounts and everything else.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Your interpretation cannot be right; look at Clause 34.

Mr. LESLIE: That clause refers to any person having wheat the property of the board in his possession. The wheat I am referring to does not become the property of the board until it has been delivered to it. I am satisfied that the Bill otherwise will meet my wishes as well as the wishes of the growers. The growers are not prepared to say that the Government should have such great powers. When speaking to the Bill the other evening, the member for North-East Fremantle said—I may have misunderstood him; he may have been referring to the report of the Royal Commissioner or to the Bill—that power was somewhere given to growers to remain outside of the compulsory pool; we wanted the compulsory pool, but would allow the growers to remain outside it if they so wished.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I referred to the Royal Commission's report, where it declared itself in favour of a compulsory pool

for marketing. If there was to be any stabilisation scheme it was to be voluntary.

Mr. LESLIE: We are not dealing with stabilisation, but only with the question of orderly marketing. That question will, however, bring stabilisation in its train, so I shall leave that aspect. I did not clearly understand what the member for North-East Fremantle was referring to. I thought he was referring to the clause in the Bill which provided that the measure was to continue until 1951 and that a ballot was then to be held to decide whether the growers preferred a voluntary pool or would continue under the marketing scheme, if it came into operation. If that was not the hon. member's reference it is unnecessary for me to proceed with that point.

I desire to support the Bill, and I reaffirm that the growers believe it essential to have this measure on the statute-book. For the information of members, I desire to mention that at the land conference of the R.S.L. the question of wheat marketing came up for discussion. A resolution was carried which clearly indicated the desire of the wheatgrowers in connection with wheat marketing. The resolution was to the effect that the conference desired the Commonwealth Government to accept and implement the 15-point plan of the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation; failing that, the conference approved of the introduction of a State marketing scheme as submitted by the Royal Commission.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You can consider it done.

Mr. LESLIE: I think members will agree with me that the land conference of the R.S.L. would not deal lightly with such an important question. The decisions at which it arrives are the result of mature consideration and are uninfluenced by any party which might desire the conference to proceed in a direction not in the best interests of the growers. I hope the House will pass the Bill.

MR. NALDER (Wagin) [10.44]: I desire to congratulate the Minister responsible for introducing this measure for his understanding and foresight in safeguarding the interests of the wheatgrowing industry and giving the farmers some sense of security. There has been growing concern throughout the country districts because of the in-

activity of the Commonwealth Government in this matter. The Commonwealth Government has since announced, however, that it intends to retain control of the marketing of wheat by virtue of the powers given it by the Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act. Nevertheless, I consider it a wise move to have this legislation ready for enactment should the necessity arise. I cannot approve of the "wait and see" attitude suggested by a member opposite. I have listened to the debate with considerable interest, particularly the remarks made by the member for North-East Fremantle. After acknowledging the fact that the Bill closely follows the unanimous findings of the Royal Commission on wheat stabilisation, appointed by the previous Government, the member for North-East Fremantle went on to say—

It seems to me that conditions which formed the assumptions on which the recommendations were made have so changed as to make the introduction of the Bill no longer necessary.

While that may be true to a minor degree the basic marketing position in peacetime has not changed. When war broke out, all marketable wheat was acquired by the Commonwealth Government under the National Security (Defence) Regulations, which provide—

For securing the public safety and the defence of the Commonwealth and the Territories of the Commonwealth, for the efficient prosecution of the war, and for maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community, the Minister may, from time to time by order published in the "Gazette," declare that any wheat described in the order is acquired by the Commonwealth and that wheat shall thereupon become the absolute property of the Commonwealth.

Members will note that no mention whatever was made of marketing. The wheat was confiscated by the Commonwealth on a totalitarian basis in order to defeat the totalitarian powers. The United Nations were forced temporarily to adopt such methods in order to preserve our democratic way of life. The war has now been over for two years and, by the time the present harvest has been disposed of, three years will have elapsed since the cessation of hostilities. That was the basic condition when the Royal Commission made its inquiries and it is the basic condition today. Despite all that the hon. member has said no wheat marketing plan or stabilisation plan has been hammered out by any of the

States of the Commonwealth. No-one would claim that the Commonwealth could organise wheat marketing in peace-time without some support by the States.

What are the prospects in regard to the other States? Let us take New South Wales first! At the recent Agricultural Council meeting, Mr. Graham, the Minister for Agriculture in New South Wales, elaborated his plans which he had already placed before the various farmers' organisations of New South Wales. Briefly, Mr Graham was dissatisfied with what he termed remote control. Quite obviously, the proposal would have to run the gauntlet of a ballot in that State. Apparently the right of interest in the wheat was passed by growers to the State board, and it was suggested that the State unit would join others in the creation of a selling organisation for the conduct of oversea business. The differences between Mr. Graham's ideas and those in this Bill are of detail rather than of principle. Coming now to the State of Victoria, we find that Parliament there has been dissolved, and the issue is whether Australia shall or shall not make a major step towards a perpetuation of totalitarian forms of organisation or whether the forces of democratic freedom shall prevail.

Mr. Fox: The Legislative Council is a very democratic body, is it not?

Mr. NALDER: Who can say at this juncture what will be the outcome of this struggle? If we are to judge from the reluctance of the Commonwealth Government and the Victorian Government to accede to the suggestion that an appeal should be made to the people, we may assume that the chances of the Labour Government being returned in Victoria are very remote and may be rather discouraging to the Party bosses. Under any circumstances, the attitude of the next Victorian Government towards wheat marketing cannot be defined. That is not likely to be the case till the end of this year. What can be said about the position in South Australia? As members will recall, a ballot of growers was taken in that State some time ago on the wheat plan propounded by the Commonwealth Government. It failed to secure a majority vote. Is it at all likely that the growers of that State would change their minds? Since the ballot was taken, the truth has been told about the New Zealand wheat sale

which has been universally condemned by wheatgrowers throughout the Commonwealth.

Mr. Triat: Why?

Mr. NALDER: Perhaps the result of that disclosure will prove what the old Book says that, "The truth shall make you free".

Mr. Triat: Tell us why they are dissatisfied.

Mr. NALDER: Less than a month ago, the Premier of South Australia, speaking to a conference of wheatgrowers in Adelaide, said that any plan of stabilisation to have his support would be subject to the following principles:—(1) The scheme must be controlled by the growers themselves; (2) it must be constantly sound; and (3) it must be supported by the industry itself. Members favouring control of marketing and stabilisation by the Minister for Commerce will have difficulty in finding any solace in that declaration. On top of these uncertainties, we have the fact in front of us that a challenge has been made in respect of the field-pea case in Tasmania and the claim for just terms for compensation lodged with the Full Court by the Nelungaloo Pty. Ltd. Finally, we must consider the 15-point plan put forward by the growers.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Is that Tasmanian case based on the right to export?

Mr. NALDER: I was referring to the Tasmanian field-pea case.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The basis was the right of free-trade between the States, was it not?

Mr. NALDER: I will mention some of the terms of the 15-point plan, one or two of which were referred to by the member for Irwin-Moore.—

Item 6: The home price for wheat for human consumption in Australia to be retained upon its original principle, viz., cost plus, but subject to immediate and periodic review and adjustment in accordance with fluctuation in cost.

Item 7: The Federation opposes any sales of wheat for internal use at concessional prices by Ministerial direction excepting wheat used for human consumption, unless the Australian Wheat Board is reimbursed to export parity by the Government.

Item 13: The Australian Wheat Board not to be subject to Ministerial direction in the exercise of its function to sell the wheat to the best advantage unless the Board be reimbursed for any losses on concessional sales either internally or for export.

Item 12: A compulsory referendum to be taken of all licensed wheatgrowers before any stabilisation scheme became operative.

I would like to refer—and reference has already been made by others—to the statement of the member for North-East Fremantle regarding the meeting of wheat-growers at Warracknabeal on the 16th September last. Members are aware, I think, that Warracknabeal is the centre of wheat production in Victoria. Prior to the date I have mentioned, the meeting was widely advertised throughout the State, and in consequence large numbers of farmers flocked to the town to discuss problems of wheat marketing. Although the shire hall had a seating capacity of 1,250, the audience was so large that an adjoining hall had to be hired to take the crowd.

Mr. Smith: You would not have thought they would have the time!

Mr. NALDER: It was probably the biggest meeting held in the Victorian wheat-belt since the outbreak of the war. A number of leading Melbourne papers felt it necessary to send correspondents up to 200 miles to take a report of the proceedings. As members already know, one of the speakers was Mr. J. S. Teasdale, who was appointed by the Leader of the Opposition, then Premier, as chairman of the Royal Commission on Wheat Marketing and Stabilisation. The member for North-East Fremantle asserted that Mr. Teasdale—

spoke 1½ hours on the advantages of a State pool, but I am told they voted against him, with two dissentient voices. Out of 2,000 present, he could find only two supporters for a State pool.

The facts have been replied to in a letter, or a statement, appearing in the Press on Saturday morning from Mr. Teasdale himself. The resolution which secured only two votes was moved by a Mr. Forrester, a farmer of Warracknabeal. The motion he moved called for an immediate restoration of the open market. Immediately after it had been put and rejected, with only two in support of it, Mr. Robertson and Mr. Teasdale spoke. After those two gentlemen had spoken, the resolution already read to this House was carried unanimously. To make sure that the resolution mentioned here was the correct one, a wire was sent to the secretary of that com-

mittee in the Eastern States and the reply is here stating that the motion was carried unanimously by the 2,000 farmers present. Prior to the meeting, prominent members of the wheat and woolgrowers organisation of Victoria tried to do what they could to spoil and blanket the meeting. The magnitude of the meeting proved that their efforts were not a success. It should be noted that this particular organisation has a number of its executive officers on the pay roll of the Victorian and the Commonwealth Governments. Whilst I fully appreciate the fact that the member for North-East Fremantle would not deliberately try to mislead this House, it is not fair to allow that statement to pass without challenging its correctness.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He is the villain of the piece all right!

Mr. NALDER: Clearly it is the success of the meeting which brought about the necessity for misrepresentation to combat its effect. It would be just as well for members to appreciate the fact that the chances of the establishment of a Commonwealth pool, so arranged that the Minister for Commerce can dominate every vital decision of the Wheat Board, are becoming more slender every day. The Commonwealth Government attempted to secure unbridled control of the produce of the wheat farms by an approach to the front door of the industry under a disguise. The growers of South Australia decided not to allow that entry. However, this totalitarian form of government was not entirely defeated by one setback. It is at the present moment trying to get this power by some other method. Let me tell those persistent Canberra bureaucrats that they are already under observation. Another point about which the member for North-East Fremantle appears to be under a misapprehension is in regard to the price at which wheat could be charged for home consumption flour.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Whose letter are you reading?

Mr. NALDER: The Royal Commissioners made certain recommendations in respect of flour wheat, but members should note carefully that those particular recommendations apply only "in the event of the Commonwealth Government continuing

to control wheat by means of continuance of the Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act." Those recommendations do not apply if this Bill is proclaimed.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What happens then?

Mr. NALDER: If members will read paragraph 53 on page nine of the report they will see that in the event of a State pool being instituted, the price of wheat consumed within Australia—and that applies to stock feed wheat as well as to wheat gristed for flour—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is not in the Bill.

Mr. NALDER: —is definitely placed under the control of this Parliament.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is right.

Mr. NALDER: Could anything be fairer than to have the power placed in the charge of this Parliament? There is no justification for the view advanced by members opposite that the farmers want it both ways. We have heard that story on a number of occasions. What they are unanimously asking the Commonwealth Government at the moment is for a proper adjustment of the basic level in relation to the present cost of wheat consumed as flour. As regards wheat for stock feed, this Bill recognises that stock feeders could not accommodate themselves to a sudden increase from 5s. to 17s., and so it makes provision for this Parliament to fix the price. In passing, I point out that never at any time prior to the war did stock feeders pay a price higher than world's parity, and wheat farmers had to content themselves with that price. The hon. member opposite who occupied the position of Minister for Agriculture knows that to be correct.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Yes, but do you think stock feeders ought to be paying world's parity now?

Mr. NALDER: I do not think they should.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I thought you were advocating it.

Mr. NALDER: I did not advocate it.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What does the letter say?

Mr. NALDER: His suggestion that farmers want it both ways is grossly unfair. As a matter of fact, the whole of his

reference to prices constitutes a plea for cheap wheat, to provide cheap flour, butter, eggs, bacon and the rest. If the Bill comes into operation, that position will continue within this State to the extent laid down by this Parliament. This Parliament will have that power. I see no reason why we in Western Australia should carry the bag for those in the Eastern States.

Mr. Hoar: Do you agree with the member for Mt. Marshall that there should be unrestricted production?

Mr. NALDER: The member for North-East Fremantle made reference to the possibility of establishing a voluntary pool in an emergency. The Royal Commission has stated that that could be done, but members must realise that it could not be set up overnight. Some considerable time must be taken to allow of the necessary machinery being provided for it to function properly.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It is there already. The Commission says so.

Mr. NALDER: I noticed the hon. member's statement, "There is nothing to prevent the successful operation of a voluntary pool." In paragraph 42 of the report the commissioners make a similar assertion and the report continues as follows:—

There is, however, a strong desire amongst farmers that all growers should be brought into a common organisation.

In deference to that desire, the commissioners have recommended the formation of a pool on lines set out in this Bill. However, members opposite do not really want either a State pool or a voluntary one—at least, some of them do not. They want one in conformity with the totalitarian plans of the Labour Party.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You are presuming a lot to say that. You have no right to say it.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Only two members over here have spoken, and one of them was right in your corner.

Mr. Styants: That is what Mr. Teasdale thinks, anyhow.

Mr. NALDER: They want to give the farmers any old price which may be decided by the Federal Labour Caucus.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is not right, either. Neither you nor Mr. Teasdale is right in saying that.

Mr. NALDER: Of course there has been a lot of talk about a guaranteed price. The Bill is for an Act to terminate in 1951, unless it is extended by this Parliament. All members will appreciate that the guarantee of 5s. per bushel f.o.b., backed by the tax of £15,000,000 of the growers' money, will not cost the Government—nor was it intended to cost the Government—a brass farthing. It is noticeable that some members have said little or nothing about the proposed stabilisation. That stabilisation should and would be provided entirely by the farmers themselves.

Such a scheme brings no new money into the industry, but merely imposes a compulsory saving on the farmers, yet the Commonwealth Government did not provide any savings certificate for the individual farmer. However, the fund is already in hand as the result of the tax, and there is neither need nor power for the State Government to provide machinery—within this Bill—for its distribution. The idea of a stabilisation fund is not entirely new, as we have had it in the flour tax since 1935. The distribution of that fund took place when open marketing was functioning. There are other points that could be enlarged on, but at this stage I would leave them to other members who have something to say on the matter. I support the Bill.

On motion by Mr. Triat, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.13 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 15th October, 1947.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS.

As to Safety Devices for Leighton Crossing.

Hon. G. FRASER asked the Minister for Mines:

In view of the number of serious accidents that have occurred at Leighton railway crossing, will the Government install safety devices at this crossing at the earliest possible moment?

The MINISTER replied:

Leighton is included in a list of crossings under consideration for equipping with flashlight signals and will be given a high priority in the next programme of crossings to receive attention.

MILK.

As to Royal Commission Terms of Reference.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP asked the Minister for Mines:

What were the terms of reference extended to the chairman of the Milk Board when appointed a Royal Commissioner?

The MINISTER replied:

That an enquiry be held to ascertain what is a fair price to the producer of whole-milk and what is a fair margin to