

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 28th September, 1943.

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

QUESTIONS (2).

RAILWAYS.

As to Rolling Stock Brakes.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Railways—

(1) Has his attention been directed to a letter which appeared in "The West Australian" on Tuesday, September 21st, under the heading "Suburban Train Travelling" and signed by "A.R.D." described as an engine-driver, wherein it is stated, among other causes, the over-running of platforms is defective brakes, and, at night, defective lighting of platforms?

(2) Also that while railway regulations stipulate that there must be 100 per cent. brake power on passenger trains, some years ago four brake blocks were removed from all suburban 12-wheeled coaches?

(3) In addition that other statements are made, all of which aim to prove that brake power is deficient, in fact "nearly useless"?

(4) Further, that if drivers observed regulations "they would put the train into a siding and refuse to continue the journey until the defects had been rectified"?

(5) In view of the statements made will he advise the House if the statements made have any justification, and if so, what steps are proposed to protect the public and rolling stock from what appears to be a very serious state of affairs?

The MINISTER replied—

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) Yes.

(4) Yes.

(5) The regulation regarding 100 per cent. brake power on passenger coaches is rigidly adhered to, and the statement made by "A.R.D." in his letter with reference to the removal of brake blocks from six-wheeled bogie coaches does not in any way affect the regulation. In 1931 tests were carried out on this type of bogie and the brake blocks on the centre wheels were removed for the following reasons:—

(a) Complaints from drivers re dragging brakes.

(b) To overcome difficulties in replacing brake blocks and adjusting brake pull rods, etc.

(c) Ease of detecting defects in brake gear generally.

In reducing the number of brake blocks it was necessary to readjust brake leverages on six-wheel bogies to retain equivalent brake power, and those alterations were carried out.

Brake power is not deficient and, generally speaking, over-running of platforms can be attributed to injudicious handling of brakes by the enginemen. Isolated cases may occur of defects on individual coaches but these are rectified as soon as reported. The regulations are clear as to the enginemen's duty when defects in brakes occur. There are many cars in service with six-wheel bogies which have never been fitted with other than four brake blocks per bogie, and these date back to 1906.

With the relaxation of the blackout restrictions normal lighting has been reverted to at all suburban stations and there are no grounds for over-running platforms from this cause.

There is no justification for the statements made by the anonymous "A.R.D." in the letter referred to and there is no need for apprehension as to the safety of either the travelling public or the rolling stock through the causes stated.

ELECTORAL.

As to Rolls for General Election.

Hon. N. KEENAN (without notice) asked the Premier: In view of the fact that elec-

toral rolls will not be available in some cases before Wednesday, the 29th September, and also of the fact that the last day for correcting any mistakes in such rolls and for making any additions thereto is fixed at the 30th September, will he consider the postponement of the date for the general election from the 20th November next to the 4th December next, thereby allowing an interval of 14 days after the issue of the rolls in which to correct such mistakes and make such additions?

The PREMIER replied: The responsibility for enrolment is cast by statute upon the elector. In order to ensure that the rolls will be as accurate as possible, the Electoral Department has within the last month or so conducted an extensive canvass of the metropolitan and some country electorates, amongst which is the Nedlands electorate, and the rolls now being printed are based upon the results of that canvass. In these circumstances it is considered that the Nedlands roll will be in a satisfactory condition and will not require the postponement of the general election.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Last Saturday I tried two streets—

The Premier: The hon. member had not seen the new rolls.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

BILL—MINE WORKERS' RELIEF ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—MOTOR VEHICLE (THIRD PARTY INSURANCE).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS [4.37] in moving the second reading said: The measure now submitted is substantially the same as the 1939 Bill introduced by me and includes, with two or three exceptions, the amendments passed in the "other place," together with amendments approved in this House. Members are aware that requests extending over several years have been received from numerous organisations, including the Royal Automobile Club—representing the motorists who will have to foot the bill—various hospital authorities, the Commissioner of Police and the local government associations, for the introduction of legislation. This is the fourth Bill introduced by me on the same

subject, and I hope that this much-needed measure will now become law.

Mr. Doney: We have not much time for its consideration.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Similar measures have been introduced since 1939, and during that period improvements have been made. Western Australia is now the only Australian State without such legislation, which is important. The general principle laid down in the Bill is that before a license can be issued a policy of insurance must be taken out by the owner of every motor vehicle, which will cover the legal liability of any person driving the vehicle, whether lawfully or unlawfully, in the event of death or bodily injury occurring to any third person. The Bill does not relate to insurance against damage to property. Having regard to the desirability of obtaining reasonable uniformity, the measure is based on the South Australian Act of 1936 and subsequent amendments, and on the more recent Acts of New South Wales (1942) and Victoria (1939). All of the principles in this Bill are included in similar legislation in the other States.

The necessity for legislation of this nature arises from the fact that it has been well established that in numerous cases of injury to third persons caused by the negligence of the drivers of motor vehicles, the injured persons and their dependants have been unable to recover any hospital or medical expenses or compensation for temporary or permanent injury, owing to the fact that the owners of the vehicles were financially unable to pay and were not insured.

Somewhat similar laws have been in operation in England, New Zealand, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania for some years. In Victoria the measure was passed in 1939 and came into operation in 1941; the New South Wales Act of 1942 operated as from the 1st February, 1943. During recent years hospital authorities have often directed attention to the losses incurred by them in treating motor injury cases owing to neither the injured persons nor the motor vehicle owners being in a position to pay the hospital expenses. Provision is made in the Bill substantially to meet this unsatisfactory position. At the 30th June, 1943, the number of motor vehicles licensed in Western Australia

totalled 54,600. Information as to the number of vehicles actually covered at present against third party risks is not available, but it has been estimated that probably only 50 per cent. of the vehicles on the roads are so covered.

In relation to the very important matter of premiums to be charged to motor owners, provision is made for the appointment of a premiums committee comprising the Auditor General (chairman), the manager of the State Government Insurance Office, two persons representing owners of motor vehicles, and two persons representing approved insurers other than the State office. If the Bill becomes law, I shall call upon the committee to investigate and report as to what premiums are reasonable and fair for the various classes of vehicles and, provided a satisfactory schedule is agreed to, the measure will then be proclaimed, but not otherwise. There should be ample time for the committee to inquire and report so that the Act could be brought into operation on the 1st July next—the commencement of the licensing year.

Premiums charged on private cars in other States and in New Zealand to cover the liability imposed by compulsory third party legislation are—

Victoria: Metropolitan 25s.
Country 14s.

Mr. Marshall: What does that represent?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is the total payment to cover third party risk.

Mr. J. H. Smith: What would be the value of the car carrying that premium?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are not proposing to insure property; the object of the Bill is to insure third party risk.

Mr. Marshall: What will be the total liability?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is no limit to the liability for private vehicles, but for passenger-carrying vehicles there is a limit which I will explain later. I was giving the premiums charged in other States—

South Australia: Metropolitan 25s.
Country 12s.

Experience of this legislation permitted reductions to be made in South Australia from the 1st August, 1941, from 27s. 6d to

25s. in the metropolitan area and 17s. 6d to 17s. in the country.

New South Wales: Sydney 28s.
Newcastle 23s 6d.
Elsewhere 14s 6d.

Queensland: 22s 6d.

Tasmania: 25s.

New Zealand: 16s.

The charge in New Zealand was recently reduced from 26s. to 16s. Thus we have the advantage of the actual working of similar legislation elsewhere to guide us, and that will be a check on the work of the proposed premiums committee. Premiums are subject to review by committees in South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria; in New South Wales, Queensland and New Zealand the premiums are fixed by regulation. The Bill provides that the insurance will "follow the car" whether driven by the owner of any other person. This is an important point; the car must be and will be insured regardless of who is driving it.

It is proposed that the State Government Insurance Office be given authority to undertake this class of motor vehicle insurance. The only reference in the Bill to this proposal appears under the definition of "approved insurer." A Bill to amend the State Government Insurance Office Act, 1938, will be introduced this session to authorise the State Office to undertake all classes of motor vehicle insurance. In New Zealand and in all the other States in which Government insurance offices are operating, they are authorised to undertake this class of business, and in New Zealand, Tasmania, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria the Government offices are empowered to undertake all classes of motor vehicle insurance.

In considering this phase of the Bill it should be remembered that a very substantial financial advantage will be conferred on the insurance companies by the introduction of compulsory insurance, and that in all forms of compulsory social charges it is essential that the service be rendered to the community as economically and efficiently as possible, and that all practicable safeguards be provided. While the Bill provides for compulsory insurance by the owners of motor vehicles, it does not compel insurers to undertake the business, and it is therefore deemed necessary to authorise the State office to undertake

motor insurance, notwithstanding that provision is made for a premiums committee. I think that is sound sense. We do not compel insurance companies to accept insurances; we compel the motor vehicle owner to insure. The only way in which that can be done would be to permit and authorise the State Government Insurance Office to insure also. I do not intend to enlarge on this phase now, as the subject will be fully dealt with in the Bill to amend the State Government Insurance Office Act.

With regard to the question I was asked, the limit of compulsory cover for fare-paying passenger risk is £2,000 for any one passenger and £20,000 for any one accident. For accidents caused by other than fare-charging vehicles, the compulsory cover is unlimited as regards legal liability for personal injury or death, the point being that, whether this Bill passes or not, there is still the legal liability. Under this measure the motor vehicle owner would insure against legal liability, which is always present. That is the reason why the cover is unlimited; the amount will be whatever the court decides.

These coverage conditions are the same as those operating in South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and New Zealand. The compulsory cover limits are somewhat more restricted in Tasmania and Queensland. Provision is made in regard to accidents caused by "hit-and-run" vehicles and by uninsured vehicles. This provision has been based on that contained in the Victorian and New South Wales Acts. It is a most important part of this measure. No matter who is driving the vehicle, whether it is insured or not, the vehicle will be covered under this measure. It will be noticed that the Bill this session is for a separate Act and that it is not an amendment to the Traffic Act, as was the case previously. This course was followed in New South Wales and Victoria and it will provide for more convenient use by all parties interested. I do not propose to elaborate further on the measure. Similar Bills have been before the House on four occasions and I believe every member is convinced that the legislation is necessary. As I also stated earlier, this is the only State where third party insurance is not compulsory. For that reason the Go-

vernment, although pressed for time this session, decided to introduce the Bill.

Mr. McLarty: Does the Bill cover military vehicles? There are hundreds of these on the roads.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So far as those vehicles are concerned, the people behind them are not men of straw. We are insisting that those who may not be able to pay shall be insured. That is the whole point of the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Hill, debate adjourned.

BILL—ROAD CLOSURE

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS [4.55] in moving the second reading said: It is very unusual for a road closure Bill to contain only one principal clause. This is the smallest road closure Bill which has been introduced in the House for very many years. It refers particularly to land at Collie and affects lots 473 to 478, facing Medic street, which are backed by lots 481 to 482, facing Johnston street. A right-of-way runs between lots 477 and 478. All these lots are held by the Roman Catholic Church and, to enable the church to consolidate its holding, the proposal is to close the right-of-way and open another one between Lots 478 and 479. As is usual in these cases, the whole matter has been scrutinised by the Town Planning Commissioner and by the Surveyor General. The local municipality is also in favour of the proposal. All formalities have been gone into thoroughly and there is no question at all that to give effect to the consolidation will serve a useful purpose. The new right-of-way will be resumed from Lot 478 and the land in the existing right-of-way given in exchange therefor. There will be no hindrance to any other public interest. I am laying on the Table of the House a plan of the land referred to in the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—MORTGAGEES' RIGHTS RESTRICTION ACT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS** [5.0] in moving the second reading said: The continuance Bill introduced into this Chamber last year included a provision designed to ease the burden on those who were in need of the repayment of capital invested in small mortgages. That aspect was considered by the House but, after a good deal of discussion, it was found that there were many difficulties in the way, and it was decided to revert to a simple continuance Bill such as had been introduced into the House year by year. The Bill now before the House is to extend further the operations of the Act to the 31st December, 1944. The original Act came into operation in 1931, and it applies to mortgages and agreements for sale in existence at the time of its passing. Mortgagees cannot enforce their security without first obtaining leave from a judge of the Supreme Court, but there are many people to whom an approach to the court would be a burden. On examination I find that there has been a considerable reduction in the number of cases appearing before a judge. In 1939 the figure was 104. This year it is down to 22. Nevertheless, there is necessity for consideration to be given to those people whose savings are represented in small mortgages, and who find or anticipate they would find that the legal costs in applying to the court would impose a burden on them. I have had examined by three legal people the prospect of applying some other means to cover such cases, and it is thought that something might be done under the provisions of the Poor Persons Legal Assistance Act, under which the definition of "poor person" is also made to apply—

to any other person who proves that such circumstances incidental to his case necessitate legal attention which his means do not enable him to obtain.

I have inquiries in progress in an endeavour to give justice to the small mortgagees who are experiencing some hardship because of the restrictions under the Mortgagees' Rights Restrictions Act. On the other side of the picture there is no doubt that owing to the extensive financial operations connected with mortgages prior to the initiation of this legislation, chaos would develop if this Act were discontinued. Consequently, as there would be considerable dislocation in the event of the discontinuance of the measure, to discon-

tinue it would not be prudent and it is necessary for this continuance Bill to be passed in order that the operations of the Act may be extended for another year. As soon as investigations are complete in connection with facilities necessary to ease the burden of the poorer and almost indigent mortgagees who have been relying on the capital from these mortgages to support them in their old age, I intend to have the matter explained in a public way so that everybody will know what is to be done. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. N. Keenan, debate adjourned.

BILL—EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT

Second Reading.

The **MINISTER FOR LABOUR** [5.6] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is related to the measure introduced this afternoon by the Minister for Works in connection with the proposal to make compulsory by law third-party insurance in connection with the ownership and use of motor vehicles. In this Bill it is proposed to extend the State Government Insurance Office Act for the purpose of enabling the State Government Insurance Office to transact all classes of insurance business associated with motor vehicles, including insurance in respect of third-party insurance business. The extension of the power of the State Office will operate only if third-party insurance is made compulsory by law, and would continue to operate only so long as such insurance remained compulsory by law. In other words, if the Bill at present before the House in connection with third-party insurance failed to pass, and this particular Bill did pass, this Bill would not have any effect. If both Bills were to pass and then, at some time in the future, compulsory insurance in respect of third-party risk were to be repealed, this extension of the power of the State Insurance Office would automatically cease to exist.

Members are already aware of the attempts made in the past to establish in West-

ern Australia a compulsory scheme in respect of third-party insurance. They are also aware of the complementary Bills which have been introduced to go with those measures for the purpose of enabling the insurance to be provided to motorists at the lowest possible premium rate, and under the most suitable administrative conditions. A Bill similar to the one with which we are now dealing was before Parliament in 1941, but was defeated. Subsequently a third-party insurance scheme was introduced into Parliament on the basis that the insurance would be provided out of a pool which would be administered entirely by the State Insurance Office. That proposal was unacceptable to Parliament as it was considered that the State Office should not have a monopoly of third-party insurance risk business. Therefore, this year, in an endeavour to obtain from Parliament approval for both third-party insurance and a method of insurance, we have introduced the third-party insurance risk Bill which was explained to members this afternoon, and on behalf of the Government I now introduce this measure to indicate the method which will be available to motorists to enable them to obtain insurance cover which it will be necessary for them to have if the other Bill passes into law.

This Bill does not propose any monopoly of the business for the State Insurance Office. It merely aims to give to that office the right to compete for motorcar insurance business, including insurance against third-party risk if such insurance is made compulsory by this Parliament passing the Bill which has been explained this afternoon. I do not think any valid argument can be advanced as to why the State Insurance Office should not be allowed to compete with the many private insurance companies in this field of motorcar insurance business. The granting to the State Insurance Office of the right to compete with the private companies for the business will give an added protection to the owners of motor vehicles, and will ensure that motorcar insurance business generally and third-party risk insurance in particular will be made available to motorists at the lowest possible premium consistent with the business of such insurance being made to pay. Therefore, this Bill is simple in its contents and I feel it will commend itself to the majority of

the members of both Houses of Parliament. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Watts, debate adjourned.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 21st September.

MR. DONEY (Williams - Narrogin) [5.14]: This is a very serviceable Bill and aims to give legislative effect to a number of requests that have been submitted on several occasions in the last two or three years by the association connected with State municipalities. I have made inquiries over the week-end and have examined the provisions of the Bill, and I see nothing to which to object although it may be necessary to call upon the Minister to make certain explanations in regard to three or four of the clauses.

The provision regarding the appointment of a commissioner appears to me to be quite sound. A similar provision already appears in the Road Districts Act and as far as my knowledge serves me, it has worked well. I see no reason why it should not work equally well under this legislation. I am glad to see that provision is made to allow town clerks, engineers, building surveyors and employees of that type the right of appeal to a magistrate. Such an appeal was previously made in somewhat similar legislation, but it was to the Minister. For reasons best known to themselves, members of another place decided that it was not fair, and perhaps undesirable, to load the Minister with such a responsibility, and so the provision failed to secure approval.

The Country Municipal Association with which the majority of the municipal councils are affiliated has now asked that the appeal shall be to a magistrate, and that certainly seems to me more desirable than would be an appeal to the Minister. The principal officers concerned are members of a body known as the Local Government Officers' Association of Western Australia, and are naturally keen on securing some method of appeal. I do not think it matters one hoot to them whether the appeal is to the Minister or to a magistrate, but, in

all the circumstances, they thoroughly approve of the proposal in the Bill by which the appeal will be to a magistrate. I do not know what the views of the metropolitan municipal councils may be. Possibly they may be disinterested, but, at any rate, they have not been vocal on this point.

Another matter included in the Bill that should meet with approval concerns the postponing of the annual meetings from November to December. I think that alteration is highly desirable. Whenever I have spoken about that question to parties concerned, they have always indicated that there were sound reasons why the annual financial statement could not always be prepared satisfactorily in time for an annual meeting held in November. A hastily prepared, half-baked statement submitted to an annual meeting is of little use to a municipality, the auditors or anyone else. It is unfair to the town clerk and unfair to all concerned. The other provisions in the Bill are of such a nature as to make it unnecessary for me to speak of them, and I certainly hope they will be accepted. Any further comment I have to make on the Bill I shall reserve for the Committee stage.

MR. NORTH (Claremont): The appointment of a commissioner to act should a council be short of the requisite number of members seems to me to raise the question as to whether power exists to enable the Government to step in should a council get out of hand. It will be remembered that in Sydney the affairs of one municipal council got so out of hand that the Government had to appoint a commissioner to take over the municipality and place its affairs in order. I was wondering whether we have any legislation that would enable a similar course to be adopted here. Action along those lines has been required in other parts of the world. It has even been taken regarding a Parliament. I refer to Newfoundland. I believe the Government was set aside there and the administration of the country was taken over by representatives of the Bank of England or of the British Government, and they controlled the affairs of the country for some years. I would like the Minister to indicate whether power exists to enable the State to take over and administer a municipality should the local governing body get out of hand. Mean-

while, the member for West Perth has requested me to support the measure on behalf of the National Party.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands): I desire to offer a few observations on a matter of principle embodied in the Bill, which seeks to constitute a higher court to determine whether an employee of a municipal council should be removed from his office. When the parent Act was passed in 1906, it contained a provision giving every municipal council the right to employ a town clerk, a treasurer and such other officers as were deemed necessary to assist in carrying out the provisions of the Act and empowered the municipal council, at any time, to remove any such officer and to appoint another in his place. That condition has obtained for 37 years, and I do not know that there has ever been any great outcry against the jurisdiction of the local governing bodies that enabled them to employ or terminate employment at any time they thought fit. However, it is now said that the municipal councils should be deprived of that right—a right that is held by every private employer who employs anyone, by every private company insofar as it employs any person. The right to determine employment at discretion has been enjoyed over the years and still obtains.

Apparently there is some ground unknown to me for supposing that municipal councils have abused that power, and Parliament is now asked to prevent the possibility of any such abuse of power. I must confess complete ignorance of any case where such abuse has occurred. I do not know that there is any such case likely to crop up. Nevertheless, we are asked to take away from local governing bodies a right they have enjoyed for over 37 years, apparently without any abuse of any reprehensible character. If we are to do anything of the sort, surely we ought to limit it to the principal officer—the town clerk. Possibly, if necessary, it could also be applied to the town engineer. The Bill goes far beyond that and takes in even the building surveyor. I would like to know from the Minister why the Bill stops at that point. Why give municipal councils the right to dismiss the foreman or the ganger? Why stop at the building surveyor? It seems to me that if any such interference with the rights of the employer is justified,

we should go the whole distance and apply the principle to all employees.

I assume the proposal is based on some belief that some local governing body has acted unfairly or not honestly with its employees, or, at least, that there is some risk of that sort of thing happening. If that is the position, then surely there is necessity to make the provisions of the Bill apply all round. Why are only these specially named officers to be exempt from the control of a body in whom for 37 years we have vested the right to employ persons or to dismiss them?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (in reply): The Road Districts Act already provides that no road board secretary can be dismissed without the approval of the Minister. Municipal councils have asked that that principle should be extended to municipal councils, and so this proposal comes from the councils themselves. It has also come from the local authorities' association. As to the officers selected, it must appeal to the House that men holding those particular positions are the ones who come into contact—possibly into conflict—with the public, with their employers, or possibly with their future employers. We do not know who may be elected to a seat on a municipal council. The Bill simply means that these officers shall have the right of appeal to a magistrate against their dismissal. A former Bill provided that the appeal should be to the Minister, whereas the present Bill provides for the appeal to a magistrate. When we consider the position of town clerks, city engineers and building surveyors, we should remember what has taken place. For instance, there is the building committee of the Perth City Council. In that case the employers of the municipal officers are contractors in private life, or they may be architects or businessmen. Undeniably, they would have a personal interest in building and in permits. Municipal officers may have to stand up against their employers and even enter into conflict with them. To say that because certain conditions have operated for 37 years they should stand for all time, does not seem to me to be any argument at all.

Hon. N. Keenan: Do you know of any single instance where that power has been abused?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: If there were such an instance, what chance would a building surveyor or even a town clerk have of displaying independence? The officer would have to swallow his independence. There certainly have been instances of members of municipal councils putting the screw on municipal officers and trying to influence them. The member for Nedlands knows perfectly well that that has occurred in regard to valuations. The councillors themselves asked that a board should be appointed. We know what happened since the appointment of that board; the Perth City Council got £3,000 more revenue, and the Water Supply Department got an additional £4,000 per annum. The council deliberately altered the valuations of its experts. It did not alter the whole schedule, but it altered certain specific valuations. The provision now in question may be extended to foremen and all employees alike; certainly the grand old system of indiscriminate sacking has gone by the board, as in the Public Service. The Perth City Council, under this Bill, will still be able to dispense with the services of the Town Clerk or engineer or building surveyor.

Mr. Patrick: The Perth City Council does not deal directly with other employees.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. But the men to whom the provision applies come between the council and the public; and councillors have private interests, and sometimes their private interests dominate their public interests. I called attention to that circumstance in this House some time ago in connection with subdivision of land. Occasionally civic employees come in conflict with their elected masters.

Hon. N. Keenan: Did you pick the engineer and the Town Clerk?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I was pointing out that in the other States all these officials have the right of appeal. First of all the suggestion was an appeal to the Minister—I may say that he was not anxious for the position—but that was objected to in another place. If other officials are considered to be similarly circumstanced, well and good—they can be included. It is to be understood that all local government legislation has been entirely non-party, and mostly passed at the request of local government bodies. I am not too sure that the Minister should be the court of appeal, al-

though that is asked for. I am quite sure, however, that the proposal of a magistrate as court of appeal is acceptable.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—New Division added to Part III; Power to appoint commissioner where there is no council or quorum:

Mr. DONEY: The provision as to remuneration of the commissioner, I think, would cover travelling allowances and any overtime work done by him. I suggest the commissioner be restricted in the matter of travelling expenses to something like £100 per annum. In connection with most road boards the position would be only a part-time or week-end job. Would there be power to pay a commissioner his salary and expenses without reference to the Government? In my view, the power might be limited by adding to Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 36A the words "as provided in the last preceding subsection." With regard to proposed new Section 36B, which provides that if at the time the commissioner is appointed to any district the mayor or any councillors are in office, such mayor and councillors shall thereupon go out of office; occasionally the retirement of several members might leave an insufficient number to carry on, and then a commissioner has to be appointed. I know of a case where such a commissioner carried on for some time, managing to collect rates and pay debts although he had found everything in a bad way. Thus the local governing body was placed on a proper footing. Since then an election has taken place, and the new local body is carrying on. Payments made to the commissioner would be whatever was necessary. In connection with some of our well-known councils the commissioner appointed could be the Town Clerk, who might be a very capable man, and presumably would carry on at his stipulated salary and all expenses would have to be met. I do not think that in this State there could be anything so spectacular as occurred in Sydney, where commissioners carried on the administration for years.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We can get a very effective method of government under a commissioner, but we are a democratic people and like to get back to the system of elective persons. I think it will be found that this particular provision has worked exceedingly well in respect to road boards. The experience we had last year showed us, however, that there was no provision like this in the Municipalities Act for dealing with a situation that may arise of a council going out of existence. This provision merely enables the Governor in such circumstances to appoint a commissioner who would receive such remuneration as was just and equitable. That remuneration could not be specified here, for we do not know for how long a commissioner would be in charge. In the Sydney case that was cited the remuneration might have run into many thousands of pounds. The affairs of the local authority would be under the control and supervision of qualified auditors. All we propose to do is to take the power that is already contained in the Road Districts Act.

Mr. SAMPSON: I hope the Minister will agree to amend Clause 3. It is unreasonable that because trouble has arisen in a municipality the mayor and councillors, who possibly have not been guilty of any irregularity or misdemeanour, should go out of office and have their places taken by a commissioner. Those men would then have to face another election. Although that might be an ordinary thing for members of Parliament to do, it would be quite a different matter in the cases of a mayor and councillors. We are said to be a democratic people, but it does not seem democratic to put the mayor and councillors out of their positions, to which they have been elected, merely because something has happened. Why not permit them to continue holding office, though not stitting as mayors and councillors, and when the commissioner has fixed up the temporary difficulty—

The Minister for Works: That would be a vicious form of dual control.

Mr. SAMPSON: They would not be carrying out the duties of their office.

The Minister for Works: Nor would they be doing so under this measure.

Mr. SAMPSON: I want to encourage qualified citizens to accept these positions,

and do not want them to be thrown over a cliff. Once these honorary workers are put out of office they may not care to stand again lest a similar situation should arise. The Minister should postpone further consideration of the clause with the object of submitting an amendment that will give greater consideration to mayors and councillors. The public service rendered by these people is very useful. If we pass legislation that will mete out to them the savage brutality that lies in Clause 3 we shall discourage these people from standing for offices of this kind.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The brutality referred to so spectacularly by the member for Swan will be found in Section 30 of the Road Districts Act under which the hon. member has worked for many years, but which he probably has not read.

Mr. Sampson: On a point of order! I question whether the Minister, kindly natured as he may be, is justified in saying that I have not read the Road Districts Act.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is bringing forward no point of order and will kindly resume his seat.

Mr. Sampson: It is a personal affront.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: An old road board chairman should have better manners. Section 30 of the Road Districts Act says that in case at any time there is in any district an insufficient number of members of a road board to form a quorum, the Governor may by order in council appoint some fit and proper person to be commissioner of such district. I doubt whether the hon. member has suffered any inconvenience under that section. If it becomes necessary to appoint a commissioner in any local authority that will be done without publicity, and with the utmost consideration for the chairman and members of the board. If they are unable to form a quorum they cannot carry on, and in such circumstances the request comes from them for a commissioner to be appointed. There is nothing new in this proposal, which has been in operation for many years.

Mr. SAMPSON: Is it implied that there is any possibility of amending the Road Districts Act at this juncture; if not, is it of any use to tell us what has happened in connection with it, however well founded the argument may be so far as this dictatorial suggestion is concerned? I am grieved to note the desire to throw aside all the rights,

honours and privileges which mayors and councillors have enjoyed, perhaps after a strenuous election campaign, by reason of their being thrown out of office and replaced by a commissioner. After the commissioner has done his work those gentlemen may graciously be permitted to re-nominate for their positions.

The Minister for Works: Has that sort of thing happened in your wide experience?

Mr. SAMPSON: I daresay I shall have had such an experience, although I hope not. If I were chairman of a road board and was treated in this fashion, I would bring to my aid all the equability of temperament of which I am possessed and try to avoid any feeling of being upset. I hope the Minister will bring down an amendment with a view to maintaining the strength of local government in this State rather than that anything should be done irretrievably to injure it.

Mr. DONEY: The explanation of the Minister does not go far enough to cover my objection. Because of the failure to form a quorum mayors and councillors are to be turned out of office. That is not a sufficient reason for such action. There is always a certain amount of ignominy attached to such a thing. The Minister quoted a very extreme case when he referred to what happened in Sydney. We are considering a case where members of a council have been guilty of no wrong doing and yet are to suffer this extreme punishment. Proposed Section 36B deals with the appointment of a commissioner. I suggest that after the word "district" the words "except for the reason that there are insufficient councillors to form a quorum" be inserted.

The Minister for Works: That is already included in the proposed new Section 36A. It all hangs together.

Mr. DONEY: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of proposed new Section 36B after the word "district" the words "except for the reason that there are insufficient councillors to form a quorum" be inserted.

Now that I have moved the amendment the Minister will have the opportunity to show where the provision is included, and exactly how it hangs together.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The objection to this amendment simply is that it is already in the Bill. The position can only arise where there is no council or no quorum. It is provided for at the begin-

ning of the clause. I know of cases where, in order that a road board should go out of existence, a sufficient number of members resigned. In that case it automatically went out of existence. When that occurs we appoint a commissioner. Where the position has been deliberately brought about that there are insufficient members to form a quorum, does any member suggest that the council should carry on illegally? It would not be permitted under the Road Districts Act. At the present time we have very little power over municipal councils, but we can deal with the road boards. If the contingency provided for here should arise it can be attended to in the same way as we now deal with the road boards. This is based on the Road Districts Act. It is only when it becomes impossible for the council to carry on that the local government authority interferes.

Mr. WATTS: The impression given by Clause 3 at first sight is that its intention is to invest the Governor-in-Council with the power to dismiss the council because it has done something wrong. The references made by the Minister, in an admirable exposition of the working of the clause, to the Sydney Municipal Council, did not take away any of that impression, but rather the reverse. I believe the Minister is perfectly correct. On close examination we find that the clause does not contain provision for dismissing the council because it has done something illegal. If that situation did arise the Government of the day would do what the Government in Sydney did, namely, pass a special Act to dismiss the council which, while it preserved its quorum, indulged in illegal acts. Under this provision the council can only be dismissed when a quorum cannot be formed. In that case the Governor may appoint a commissioner. There is no need for the amendment moved by the member for Williams-Narrogin. The Road Districts Act has for years had a similar provision to this, and while I do not know of any difficulties or unhappiness that have arisen as a consequence, nevertheless the fact that an innocent mayor and councillors have to submit themselves for re-election because the majority of the councillors resign or die, or otherwise go out of office so that a quorum cannot be formed, brings about an unfortunate state of affairs.

The mayor and councillors should be suspended for the period during which the commissioner is in office because, obviously, the council cannot function without a quorum. When the commissioner decides to hold an election those councillors, who might have a couple of years to go, should not have to submit themselves for re-election. It is possible that the mayor's term might have expired in the interim in which case he would of necessity have to stand for election. The provision contained in the Road Districts Act that the whole of the members should go out of office because of the lack of a quorum has never struck me as a reasonable proposition. I would like to submit an amendment to suspend the terms of office of these men, but an amendment of that character would be substantial and would undermine the principle of the whole clause. No matter what may be said to the contrary, a stigma would attach to these people under these circumstances, even though they had carried out their duties faithfully. Usually these troubles arise after a quarrel, and it might so happen that those standing for election after such an event would make things unpleasant for the mayor and the councillors who remained at their posts.

Mr. DONEY: The Leader of the Opposition has submitted good reasons why, not necessarily this amendment, but some similar amendment, should be accepted by the Committee. He has shown that the punishment proposed by this part of the clause is too harsh. This punishment, for want of a better word, should be considerably toned down, and that is what I have endeavoured to do. I admit that my amendment is a cumbersome method of procuring that result. I have tried to frame a suitable amendment, but for lack of time have been unable to do so. I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. SAMPSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 of proposed new Section 36B the words "thereupon go out of office" be struck out and the words "continue to hold office but, pending the completion the work of the commissioner, shall not exercise the offices for which they were appointed," inserted in lieu.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Amendment of Section 147:

Mr. DONEY: I move an amendment—

That in the proposed new Subsection (1a) the words "in an honorary capacity" be struck out.

The reason for the amendment is obvious. If a councillor is doing work in an honorary capacity, it is unnecessary to say that he shall not be paid any remuneration for his services.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There are certain honorary positions for which an honorarium is paid. The object of the words is to make it quite clear that a councillor acting as treasurer shall not be paid any remuneration and shall not receive an honorarium.

Mr. DONEY: The dictionary meaning of "honorarium" is, "A fee paid to a professional gentleman for professional services." That would rule out payment of an honorarium to a councillor acting as treasurer.

The Minister for Works: The same words have been accepted in Clause 4.

Mr. WATTS: The words proposed to be struck out are redundant. If a councillor is not to be paid any remuneration he is denied the right of receiving an honorarium or payment in any other form. An honorary Royal Commission is on the same plane.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are amending the principal Act, Section 39 of which makes the position of a councillor plain. A councillor may not be appointed to any position if it carries only a small remuneration. The object of the subsection is to affirm that he shall not receive any remuneration, and the words make that position quite definite. To that extent this is good law, and therefore I oppose the amendment.

Mr. DONEY: If the proposed words are struck out, would the meaning be altered in any way? Certainly not! The Minister is not justified in raising any objection to the amendment. Perhaps a consequential amendment will be required in Clause 4, but that could be done on a recommittal.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. N. KEENAN: An amendment I propose to move would have the effect of bringing all officers appointed by the council within the protection of this clause. Subclause (b) is an amendment of Subsection

(2) of Section 147. While agreeing with the Minister that times have changed since the principal Act was passed, I do not think the subclause should apply to the restricted class of officers appointed by a council. I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of the proviso to proposed Subsection (2) the words "the town clerk or" be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is a sound reason for giving the town clerk, the engineer and the building surveyor the right of appeal. If the provision is not to be confined to the officers stated, then it should apply to every employee of the council. The officers mentioned are liable to come into conflict with the councillors themselves, but that would not be so in the case of the other employees.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The definition of "officer" in the principal Act includes many who do not come into contact with the members of the council, but there are other employees who would be likely to fall foul of it. For instance, the collector; who is a more objectionable man than the collector not only to the council but to the public as well? The same applies to the pound-keeper.

The Minister for Works: Are the officers you mentioned appointed by the council?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes. I do not wish to press my amendment if the Minister thinks it will endanger the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think it will. The officers referred to in the proposed proviso are appointed by the council; they hold important positions, which are advertised. I am afraid another place will reject the measure if the amendment is passed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 8 to 11, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (WAR TIME) ELECTORAL

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE [8.3] in moving the second reading said: This is another wartime Bill to give to members of the Forces an opportunity to vote for the Legislative Council. The operation of the Bill is for the duration of the war and 12 months thereafter. It is a similar measure to that introduced recently to afford members of the Forces an opportunity to vote for the Legislative Assembly. The amendments made in Committee in connection with that Bill, including the Schedules, are incorporated in this legislation. All members of the Forces will be given a vote in respect of the province in which they resided immediately prior to enlistment or appointment. There is also a similar provision for all members of the Forces who had joined up before the war started on the 3rd September, 1939, and they will be allowed to vote—provided they are within the South-West Pacific zone—whether they are 21 years of age or under, in Australia or outside of Australia and notwithstanding that they have not any property qualification. The scrutiny will be carried out by the Chief Electoral Officer in Perth, because there is no other machinery provided for the purpose.

What the Commonwealth Government said in regard to the previous measure passed by this House applies also to this Bill, namely, that it is not possible for the votes to be counted at the Front or in any of the camps. Voting is not compulsory and each member of the Forces will have only one vote. Provision is also made to give a vote to members of the Civil Construction Corps and the conditions under which they will vote are the same as those applying to members of the Forces except that members of the Civil Construction Corps or any workers connected with the Allied Works Council will have to be over 21 years of age. This Bill also gives a vote to the wife of a member of the Forces provided the husband was enrolled or qualified for enrolment as a Legislative Council elector as a householder at the time he joined up, and provided also that the wife remains in occupation of the dwelling-house. So the husband will have a vote as a member of the Forces and his wife will have a vote as the occupier of the dwelling. A similar provision was made in 1917. The same right is

given in connection with members of the Civil Construction Corps. If the wife remains in occupation at the dwelling-house she may make application to be registered as an elector. The reason for our proposing to give this right to members of the Forces and of the Civil Construction Corps is that we may show our gratitude, not only in words, but also in action.

We feel that if men are old enough to fight, they are old enough to vote. If they have the courage and the desire to fight for Australia, to protect us and to struggle for freedom, surely they are entitled to have a say in the government of their country! These men cannot pick or choose their vocations. They must do as they are told. Seeing that they have no control over their movements and are taking a risk for those who remain behind, they should have a vote and thus an opportunity to frame the destiny of their country. In connection with the Senate election, there was no qualification imposed and that applies also to the American Senate. Those Legislatures have a much greater responsibility than has our Legislature and surely, therefore, we can follow the same principle as they have adopted. As a matter of fact the principle on which voting for the other place is based is really a negation of democracy, and this Bill introduces a principle more in conformity with the wishes of the people. We say that these folk are entitled to vote irrespective of any qualifications. Their greatest qualification is that they are fighting for the protection of their country and those who remain here, and for the preservation of democracy.

This is not a flimsy, patriotic pretext but something which we sincerely believe. We want to put those who are away taking a risk on a par with those who were able to vote for the Senate of Australia and for the Senate of the United States of America. We feel they should have some voice in the reconstruction of this wonderful country of ours and a chance of rehabilitation when they return after they have fought overseas and done all they could to save us from our common enemy. This Bill is similar to the Bill introduced in the Commonwealth House, and we are seeking only to emulate what has been suggested in a higher place. The Senate has a greater responsibility than our Legislature and yet it was prepared to give a vote to those who were willing and

had the courage to fight for the people of Australia and freedom. I hope that members of this Chamber and of another place will give every consideration to those who are doing their bit and will record their gratitude by saying, "We will give you a voice in the destiny of the country you are now fighting for." If that is done, when those men return to this State they will be able to say that those who remained behind gave them an opportunity, which they appreciated, to determine how they should be governed. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. McLarty, debate adjourned.

BILL—TOWN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—ALBANY CEMETERIES.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS [8.15] in moving the second reading said: The Bill deals mainly with the desire on the part of Albany Municipal Council, the Albany Road Board and various church bodies in Albany to form a public cemeteries board under the Cemeteries Act. At present cemeteries in Albany are controlled by the Methodist, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian Churches, and the land in question is conjoined except for separation by a road, the whole of the properties being used for cemeteries privately held by the various denominations I have mentioned. Before effect can be given to the request of the Albany district to have a cemeteries board appointed to control the cemeteries there, it is necessary for the churches to relinquish their rights in the land so held, and that the land be re-vested in His Majesty, which will be followed by the creation of a public cemetery with a cemeteries board placed in control, for which purpose it is necessary for legislation to be passed. Parliamentary authority is necessary before the re-vesting can take place. Without any qualification, all the churches have agreed to surrender the land held by them, and for that land to be re-vested in the Crown.

The files show very clearly that the approaches which have been made by the

various denominations have been supported by the local municipal council, and that these led up to the holding of a public meeting convened by the Albany Municipal Council at which representatives of all denominations were present. Agreement was reached that the various denominations should surrender their portions of land held for cemetery purposes and that a cemeteries board should be formed. At that meeting at which that unanimous decision was reached, it was also agreed to ask that the new cemeteries board to be appointed should consist of the Mayor of Albany as chairman, two representatives each of the Albany Municipal Council and the Albany Road Board, and one representative of the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist denominations, and the Salvation Army. Although there is no reference in the Bill to the constitution of the board, there is really no need for that. As soon as the land is surrendered and the cemeteries are consolidated under the provisions of the Bill, the position will be in hand so that the cemeteries board can be appointed in conformity with that request. The only other provision in the Bill deals with the preservation of the burial rights of any person in portion of the land so surrendered. The Bill is simple and straightforward. It originated in the request of the churches and joint local authorities interested in the subject. The whole matter has been thoroughly investigated, and there should be no hitch to prevent effect being given to the desires of the local people. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Hill, debate adjourned.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st September.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin) [8.21]: I have no doubt that the road boards will welcome the measure which, if it becomes an Act, will be of great service to them. From inquiries I have made I find the Bill is regarded as necessary, and I have ascertained that its provisions, in their entirety, have been included as a result of requests submitted to the Government either by the Road Board Association or by the Great Southern Road Board Association.

Consequently, I am glad to support the second reading. An interesting feature of the Bill is that which sets out the steps necessary to be taken when a board desires to abolish the ward system. Such a position has arisen recently at Mosman Park. So far as I am aware that is the first instance of its kind. The request of the Mosman Park board is statutorily quite proper, but there exists no legislative machinery to effectuate the request. Hence the amendment dealing with that phase. The provision regarding postal voting in the vicinity of road board boundaries is in keeping with commonsense. The fact that a road board boundary intervenes between the polling booth and the voter's dwelling, plainly has no effect on the ease with which the voter reaches the polling booth, and should not be considered an excuse for allowing him the privilege of a postal vote.

Leaving out of the question considerations of sickness and reasons of a like nature, the only circumstance enabling postal votes to be used should be that of distance, and I agree that the five-mile limit mentioned in the Bill is quite fair and proper. With regard to the election of a chairman or vice-chairman, the West Arthur Road Board brought this matter before the Great Southern Road Board Association, which meets at Katanning. In the event of an equality of voting being recorded for the appointment of a chairman, the ordinary course to adopt is to refer the matter to the Minister for his decision, and the Minister thereupon appoints the chairman. If it should happen that the retiring chairman was still available for re-election, the Minister as a rule re-appoints him. The West Arthur Road Board, however, considers that the responsibility should not be thrust upon the Minister at such an early stage of the game. It considers that a second meeting should be held and if it was still found impossible to elect a chairman or vice-chairman, the matter could then more properly be referred to the Minister for his decision. Perhaps the most important provision in the Bill is that which will enable a road board to group all its various rates in one total and enter them in one column in the rate-book. That provision seems to me to be quite sound, for the benefits are obvious. There will be one column used in the rate-book instead of

half-a-dozen as at present. That will mean a great saving in clerical labour and in paper. Actually this procedure, although not legal, has been followed for years by certain road boards. There are many reasons why it is desirable to legalise the procedure, and the Bill will have that effect. I very cordially support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—New section; various rates may be aggregated in one sum and entered in one column of the rate-book:

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in lines 11 and 12 the words "subject to the approval of the Minister" be struck out.

There are many directions in which the approval of the Minister is an essential prerequisite. Some things that road boards are called upon to do are of such a character that it is reasonable that the consent of the Minister should be obtained before those things are done. The provision that will enable road boards to enter rates in the rate-book in a simplified form deals with a matter that should be required of road boards. Without that, I am satisfied that the consent of the Minister is not warranted. The Bill provides that a board may adopt this system, and in those circumstances it should be left entirely at the discretion of the board whether or not it should adopt the suggested method. I am satisfied that, once the department has given consideration to the question of whether the system is suitable, the only other consideration that arises is whether the road board itself desires to put the system into operation. I believe that in a very great majority of instances the boards will adopt the method. In these days there is far too great an inclination unnecessarily to submit matters to a referee, as it were, whereas the locally-elected representatives of the people are entitled to deal with such matters themselves. As the suggestion embodied in the proposed new section emanated from the local authorities themselves it will, doubtless, be adopted by the road boards, for it

will mean a great labour and paper saving device. I understand it will enable a rate-book to be used for a great number of years. Has the Minister any objection to the use of the existing rate-books until the present supplies become exhausted? The period might extend over three years. The retention of the annual rate-book seems to me unnecessary.

The **MINISTER FOR WORKS**: Section 233 of the Act sets out how rate accounts shall be kept. The Local Government Department has a supervising authority over road boards, and the approval required by the clause is not so much that of the Minister as that of the Government auditors. Instead of keeping a book such as mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, the board may record the particulars by any system approved by the Minister. The auditors might regard the keeping of accounts on the new system as being beyond the capacity of some secretaries. There is no compulsion on road boards to adopt the system proposed by the Bill. Ministers never interfere with the keeping of books by local authorities. They deal with the striking of rates and the like important matters. I regard the words proposed be struck out as a necessary safeguard.

Mr. WATTS: The Minister argues that because some road board secretaries—who cannot be very numerous and whose employment probably is merely temporary—are not able to aggregate and segregate the amounts of rates, every road board should be compelled to apply to the Local Government Department for authority to use the new system. I object to road board officials being compelled in so many instances to seek the approval of the Minister. Increasing the authority of Government means increasing the number of servants employed by Government and so increasing the cost of administration. I have never objected to the provision of the parent Act, which has stood for many years and which prevents the striking of rates above a certain figure. In the early days precaution might have been necessary.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	15
Noes	20
				—
Majority against	..			5
				—

Mr. Berry
Mr. Boyle
Mr. Hill
Mr. Keenan
Mr. Mann
Mr. McLarty
Mr. North
Mr. Patrick

Ayes.

Mr. Perkins
Mr. Sampson
Mr. Seward
Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Thoro
Mr. Watts
Mr. Doney
(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Collier
Mr. Coverley
Mr. Cross
Mr. Fox
Mr. Hawke
Mr. J. Hegney
Mr. W. Hegney
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Millington
Mr. Needham

Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Patton
Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Styants
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Triest
Mr. Willcock
Mr. Wise
Mr. Withers
Mr. Wilser
(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7, 8, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—BULK HANDLING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 21st September.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [8.47]: This is a measure which will obtain the general approval of members. It carries out the arrangement, made between Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. and the Minister, for the handing over to the growers concerned of the venture commenced by Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. at the time mentioned by the Minister. It has successfully been carried on since then. The House will agree that this is an example of co-operative effort which deserves well of the community because of the service it has rendered from very small beginnings—in fact from practically negligible beginnings so far as capital is concerned. Many of us believe that co-operation in its true form might well be practised to a greater extent than it is now, in the interests of the producing and consuming communities. It is as well that the Governments of Western Australia have seen fit, no doubt at times against considerable opposition from certain quarters, to lend their aid when legislation was required in order that this company might continue to function in a manner most useful to the wheatgrowers of the State.

We have now arrived at the stage where the company, for all practical purposes, has finished the installations that it might reasonably be expected to erect for the handling of wheat. It is admitted that had there been a large increase in wheat production, or even the maintenance in recent years of our former level, the company most likely could not have decided, so long before the time fixed by the deed of trust for the handing over to the growers, to do as it is now doing. Of course a new set of circumstances, not contemplated three or four years ago, has arisen in regard to wheat production in this State. To some extent those changes have minimised the need for further extension of the company's building programme. Hence we find, as the Minister has said, that the time has now arrived when the financial position of the company and the completion of the payment for the asset enables Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. to carry out the terms of its arrangements with the growers, as set out in the deed of trust executed with the trustee, much earlier than it expected. The company has not had a very rosy time in its negotiations with the Australian Wheat Board during the last two or three years. There have, as it were, been wars, or rumours of wars in regard to the suggested taking over, on a nationalised basis, of the bulk handling facilities of the Commonwealth, in which this company's activities would have been included. In some of the Eastern States of Australia, notably New South Wales, the capital expenditure on the provision of bulk handling facilities, which were established on a more grandiose scale than was the case in this State, has been very heavy. In that State the cost per bushel, represented by the interest and sinking fund on the capital involved, is very great. In Western Australia it has been comparatively small because the installations, although they have proved to be remarkably satisfactory, are of a type which, in the early stages, did not altogether meet with the approval of those who regarded themselves as experts in the matter. As the years have gone by, however, the judgment of those who stood by the type of work carried out in this State has been vindicated.

As a result we find that while there may have been some small increase in expenditure involved in other aspects of the handling of

wheat, by comparison with the expenditure in New South Wales, for example, the cost of interest and sinking fund on the capital involved has been relatively small. Both the Minister and the company, in the circumstances, are to be complimented on having agreed on the terms of this measure as being satisfactory to them both in order that the true intention of real co-operation may be put into operation at once. That true intention is to hand over to the persons who produce the goods that are handled, and who desire to make use of the facilities, the control of their own affairs. The underlying feature of this Bill is, to a large extent, the fruition of that aim, because at the present time an election of directors of this company is being held. The only change, as I see it, that will take place by virtue of this Bill, will be one of directors. Co-operative Bulk Handling will still exist and will still be a co-operative concern requiring the hearty co-operation—and it will get it—of all the wheatgrowers concerned.

Some of the money deducted from the proceeds of the tolls has now, in effect, become the share capital of those who subscribed it. Every effort has been made to ensure that only those who are current wheatgrowers, and still in the industry, will be entitled to be shareholders by virtue of those tolls. There is nothing whatever that could have been done by this concern which would lend it greater credit than the fact that it has made such an effort, and so successfully, to hand over to the growers of Western Australia the complete control of this matter five years before the stipulated time which they could very easily have insisted upon using to the full. I have no hesitation in supporting the second reading.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedands): It was my very good fortune to be associated with the original owners who obtained the statutory approval for this form of wheat handling. I recall that in 1932 the Westralian Farmers Ltd. by their own efforts showed the possibilities of bulk handling in this State. Up to that time bulk handling had been spoken of but had never, even on a small scale, been attempted, and it was generally described as being a very doubtful and very costly proposition. Until the Westralian Farmers Ltd., to which all honour is due, entirely at its own risk and expense successfully carried out a small scheme, but

one sufficiently large to establish its case, nothing concrete had been done. That firm proved that bulk handling could be effective at a certain moderate cost. A joint Select Committee of both Houses was then appointed to investigate the whole matter and report on a Bill then before this House, to obtain statutory approval to a State-wide scheme. That was finally obtained for another Bill, and in another form, but it met with a great deal of hostility at the time.

The hostility, on the one hand was through the fear of displacement of labour, particularly at Fremantle, and on the other because many of those interested were not convinced that the scheme proposed by Westralian Farmers, Ltd., if put into existence, could be wisely carried out on a large scale. Fortunately, however, the majority of this Chamber and of another place, endorsed the second proposal and effect was given to it. That was done despite the fact, too, that at the time a large number of wheatgrowers were opposed to it, not because they did not like bulk handling, but simply because they were not satisfied that the measure proposed was one that would give them a sufficient degree of control. That objection has now disappeared in the most effective manner, because by this very Bill we are handing over to the wheatgrowers complete control of the whole scheme. This is a fitting climax to the effort begun in 1932, and I, as one who was associated in a certain way with the scheme in those days am indeed glad to be here tonight to assist in passing this Bill.

MR. PATRICK (Greenough): The question of bulk handling interested me a great number of years ago. The Premier will remember that for some time an organisation called the Northern Development League operated in Geraldton. Its idea was that Geraldton was going to be the capital of the new State. Branches were formed all over the place and in my youthful enthusiasm I read a paper on the question of bulk handling at one of the meetings. It was printed I think, in the "Western Mail." I confess that at the time I did not know much about the matter. In fact I based most of my arguments on the report of the Royal Commission that had sat and dealt with the question in South Australia. At that time it was not such a live question as it afterwards became. Members might be interested to know that when I started wheat farming the four

bushel bag was in use, which held anything up to 300 lb. of wheat and was very heavy to handle. I would not like to handle such bags now. The first lot of cornsacks I purchased cost only 3s. 9d. a dozen, and with cornsacks at that price, bulk handling would not be a practical proposition. In 1921 a company was formed at the instance of Westralian Farmers, Ltd., to carry out an orthodox scheme of bulk handling. Mr. Basil Murray was closely associated with that scheme.

At the time the Commonwealth Government agreed to find a large part of the finance to construct the scheme, but there was a hitch as regards the State wheat farmers because they were not able to raise the requisite amount. I think the then Government refused to allow farmers who were under the I.A.B. to take shares in the company. The Government refused to release the necessary finance to permit of this being done. Investigations were made and it was shown that there would be little saving; so the scheme was dropped and the money was returned to the subscribers. In 1930 when prices were very low Westralian Farmers Ltd. decided to investigate the question of installing a more economical scheme, and undertook experiments at Rocky Bay. As a result of those experiments five sidings were equipped and, from the experience gained, the Government was asked to introduce legislation providing for payment of a toll by the users of the scheme. As the member for Nedlands stated, the Bill was referred to a joint Select Committee, on which the hon. member rendered very great service as chairman.

Members will recall the very keen debate on that Bill, particularly on the part of members representing Fremantle electorates. They may recollect the tremendous fight put up by the late Mr. Alex McCallum, and a very able fight it was. Finally the Bill was defeated in this House. I believe that the only member of the then Opposition who supported the Bill, was the present member for Guildford-Midland. Two or three members of the National Party voted against the Bill, the late Mr. McCallum Smith having been one of them. Another interesting development occurred when the Bill was defeated. The Minister brought down another measure to provide for an orthodox scheme to apply only to the Fremantle zone.

The cost was estimated to be in the neighbourhood of £1,500,000. That was the Bill the Minister may recollect the then member for Pingelly, Mr. Harry Brown, and I assisted to defeat. The member for Fremantle will recollect having persistently moved the adjournment of the debate during the early hours of the morning, and we assisted by supporting him until the Bill was finally dropped.

The Minister for Mines: A very strong combination.

Mr. PATRICK: Yes, and a very lucky thing it was for the State because that scheme would have involved Western Australia in an outlay of three or four times the cost of the present scheme.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Five or six times.

Mr. PATRICK: Possibly it would never have reached the happy financial position attained by the present scheme. Then a new company was formed under the preliminary control of Westralian Farmers Ltd. and the trustees of the Wheat Pool, and I believe that a large amount of the capital consisted of fractions left over from the Wheat Pool. That money also served many useful purposes such as the furthering of scientific investigations and so forth. The company secured 48 sidings in the Fremantle zone. I believe that fact gave rise to some criticism too, but that is what really brought the scheme into being. Then there was a change of Government, and the new Government decided that before any further sidings were equipped a full inquiry should be made into the whole matter.

A Royal Commission was appointed of which Mr. Angwin was chairman, and I think Mr. Donovan was one of the members. The Commission recommended that the company be allowed to carry out a State-wide scheme and that legislation be provided to protect all interested parties. The report said the approximate saving to the farmers would be $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. a bushel and that this justified a continuance of the scheme. The Commission also said that the scheme met all the requirements of the country districts, but I believe a different class of terminal at the ports was suggested. Since then the price of cornsacks and wages have increased and so the saving from bulk handling today must be a great deal more than the $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. a bushel then estimated.

The Premier: But do not you get 2d. a

bushel less for bulk wheat than for bagged wheat?

Mr. PATRICK: I think that difference was taken into account at the time. Of course there are many factors to consider apart from the cost of bags. The cost of bags in wartime could increase to 20s. a dozen and the saving today must be a great deal more than $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. a bushel. In any event, a Bill was introduced and passed. Before this legislation was introduced, the company had done a great deal to implement the scheme. It had provided the finance to raise the sides of 200 steel trucks and later evolved a cheap system of hessian liners and canvas extensions to raise the height so that ordinary trucks could carry a full load of wheat. Today 98 per cent. of the wheat of the State is handled in bulk. In fact, very few sidings are equipped for the bag handling of wheat. The Minister at the time insisted that farmers should not be prevented from still handling their wheat in bags if they so desired. Under the previous legislation, Bulk Handling Ltd. was to have a monopoly and all the wheat was to be handled in bulk. Today any farmer, if he so desires, may purchase bags and handle his wheat in that way. After a few sidings had been installed for bulk handling, farmers began to cart their wheat greater distances in order to deliver in bulk and so make the saving.

The method of financing this scheme was a charge of $\frac{5}{8}$ d. per bushel, and every farmer received a fully paid up share of £1 which was taken out of the tolls. For the balance he received a debenture. The trust was in existence before the Bill was introduced; it was in existence when the company put up its own scheme. The idea of the debentures was that farmers were constantly going out of wheatgrowing and that in 15 years they would be allowed to withdraw their money. This Bill preserves that continuity. For 15 years they will have paid money by way of tolls and then a new set of wheatgrowers will carry on. On a conservative basis a saving of 2d. per bushel on 197,209,000 bushels handled to date represents a saving of £1,643,408 based on costs in 1935—the year in which the Royal Commission sat. The whole system cost about £500,000 and is now the property of the farmers, free of all debt.

I believe that at one time the C.S.I.R. characterised the scheme as a gigantic incubator for weevils, but this has proved to be incorrect. In fact, the Australian Wheat Board has now adopted the structural plan of the Western Australian system for the storage of wheat in other States, and various gadgets invented here for handling the wheat, such as the system of elevators and ship loading trippers have been adopted in the other States. So the whole scheme has been a triumph for Western Australian engineers and the officers of the company. Besides the big saving effected, the scheme has undoubtedly assisted the war effort, because it has saved a large amount of shipping and also the cost of importing jute goods from abroad. It has also saved a considerable amount on the haulage of bags, although at the time bulk handling was introduced the Railway Department did not regard that loss very kindly. One of the best things is that the scheme has not involved the State in any expenditure whatever. I support the second reading.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland): The Minister for Lands, in the very brief yet faithful outline he gave of the operations of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., referred to the early efforts that were made, and these have also been spoken of by the member for Greenough. I have been associated with all the efforts made to establish bulk handling of wheat in this State. I was connected with the early efforts that were based on the orthodox system. It was proposed to go to Canada and America to get plans and schemes for the bulk handling of wheat in this State, but I was never convinced that we could carry the huge capital expenditure that such schemes entailed. The financial side always made me hesitate. Although I worked on the committee, I was never enthusiastic. Notwithstanding my doubts in this direction, I always received a good deal of encouragement from the then manager of Westralian Farmers Ltd., Mr. John Thomson. We used to discuss regularly the enormous expenditure involved, the limited capital available to Westralian Farmers Ltd. and the comparative poverty of our farmers as regards their investing in such schemes, and we always wound up by saying, "We had better leave bulk handling alone." At one stage we had the support of the late

Mr. Hedges, the late Mr. McCallum Smith and other men of great financial strength, who were anxious to see bulk handling established and were prepared to put large sums into it.

Fortunately, we always hesitated and avoided going into what was known as the orthodox scheme. At last Mr. Thomson launched his scheme. It took him a good while to discover something, but ultimately he did. His idea was to build horizontal bins instead of vertical silos; in other words, to store the wheat horizontally instead of vertically. He reached that conclusion because he realised that there was ample storage room at the sidings in Western Australia. While other places—this applies to New South Wales to an extent—had to build upward, we in Western Australia could afford the space that would be required to store the wheat as it is now being stored. In one case capital was actually raised, but it was returned after a time because of the fear of the ultimate expense proving to be too great for the productivity of Western Australia, taking into account the value of its wheat. Ultimately Mr. Thomson tried out his scheme. I well remember when it was submitted to the board of the Westralian Farmers. He and I had discussed it before it went to the board. He asked for £200 to try it out.

That sum was voted, and with it he bought some old timber and built a bin at North Fremantle, near Rocky Bay. He then tried out an improvised scheme. He built an elevator and found that it was possible to take advantage on an economic basis of the natural fall of the wheat. He then discovered he could lift the wheat, that he could take advantage of its dryness and the fact that it would run. He experimented how far it would run and the manner in which it would rest. Having done that, he borrowed a truck from the Railway Department and made arrangements with the superphosphate company at Rocky Bay to use part of its works for experimental purposes. He filled the wheat from the bin below the Rocky Bay works, ran it up on the railway trucks and then unloaded it. He would then load it again and take it back. So he proceeded until he perfected his scheme to the extent that the board of the Westralian Farmers voted sufficient money to enable him to build the bins that were

referred to in this debate by both the Minister for Lands and the member for Greenough.

That was the start. I shall not enter into a great deal of detail, but it is interesting to explain that at one stage a firm, Metcalf Bros., I think, had come to Australia for the purpose of installing bulk-handling schemes. I recall when I was Minister for Lands and Agriculture attending two or three conferences in the Eastern States at which that firm submitted its scheme for adoption and use by the various States. I may be wrong in this, but I think a mistake was made in New South Wales in adopting this scheme. That State's bulk-handling scheme today is the orthodox scheme which was brought from Canada. It cost over £40,000,000 to instal, yet today it is impossible for the New South Wales scheme to take delivery of all that State's wheat in bulk. The farmers there in peak periods are always disorganised and inconvenienced. Many of them have to buy bags, although the whole of the wheat could be delivered in bulk if the bins were capable of receiving it. Therefore that State has a very high capitalisation so far as its bulk-handling scheme is concerned, and yet it is not a complete scheme.

South Australia unfortunately got involved with Metcalf Bros. owing to some contract, letter or undertaking entered into. The South Australian Government had to pay a sum of money to rescind the contract entered into. The idea was that South Australia would follow the example of New South Wales. I do not know what the cost was to South Australia, but it was a considerable sum of money. The scheme was actually brought over to Western Australia and the Government inspected it. The Government gave a good deal of consideration to it and I think at one stage the Governor's Speech included a reference to legislation to be brought forward for the purpose of adopting it. Fortunately, however, we did not proceed with the scheme. There was plenty of temptation for us in the early stages of our wheat industry to adopt an expensive scheme which would have been a very great burden on our farmers. Now we have this co-operative scheme in operation and it is glorious to hear how the Westralian Farmers has been com-

mended for its enterprise in conceiving and perfecting the Western Australian scheme.

A trust agreement was entered into. This was another generous gesture on the part of the Westralian Farmers, because that company agreed that all the bins which had been constructed out of co-operative money, or money borrowed and guaranteed by the co-operative movement, would belong to the wheatgrowers generally. The movement found all the capital in addition to proceeding with and perfecting the scheme. It was agreed by the movement that it would at a given period hand the whole undertaking over to the wheatgrowers who used the scheme. It is a very fine gesture of co-operation that permits farmers to come into the movement irrespective of whether they contributed to the original capital or not. True, the farmers contributed $\frac{5}{8}$ d. to the toll, but they have not contributed anything like the amount that was paid by the members of the co-operative movement.

We have now arrived at the stage when the scheme has been perfected and is practically complete. It is not all that we would have liked, but the war has interfered with our getting necessary materials. We would have been marking time had we waited until we got all the material to enable us to complete everything as we wished to do. Instead of marking time we thought it better to hand over the scheme as it now stands. It would have been finished this year had we been able to obtain the material.

I am naturally very proud of this co-operative effort. I have been grossly misrepresented on many occasions in this House. I was attacked by members of my own party. All kinds of accusations were levelled against me in regard to the scheme, but of course that is part of public life. I recall how the late Hon. A. McCallum was fierce in his criticism of me, and others followed suit. Nevertheless, I was a co-operator then, as I am one now. I felt convinced that ultimately the scheme would prove to be of distinct advantage to our wheatgrowers and a very fine achievement for co-operation. I hope the farmers will not make a mistake in regard to the future operations. I think it was the Leader of the Opposition who pointed out that this change of control would not alter Co-operative Bulk Handling, that until 1955 it would still be Co-operative Bulk Handling.

I personally desired to start some propaganda for the purpose of getting the farmers to appreciate the fact that it will still be Co-operative Bulk Handling until 1955, although it is being handed over to the toll-payers in 1943. It is reasonable that the wheatgrowers should see to it that the scheme is co-operatively controlled and administered until 1955. However, the members of the Westralian Farmers' board said, "No, we are quite prepared to leave the issue to the farmers. We admit that it is Co-operative Bulk Handling and that there is a possibility of its being controlled, owing to the system of voting, by people who do not understand co-operation and are not versed in the ideals and principles of co-operation. Therefore we might be handing over a fine co-operative enterprise to be controlled by non-co-operators, unsympathetic, and possibly to those who might do it an injury because of want of knowledge." The board of the Westralian Farmers, however, decided to leave it freely to the wheatgrowers and the ballot is proceeding today. I trust wise counsels will prevail.

One thing being preached today is, I think, a very grave mistake. It is argued that there should be complete growers' control. There should not be complete growers' control in a venture of this kind. Expert knowledge and experience are essential. Therefore, men should not be elected to control the undertaking who have no training or experience. What will happen to a concern of this magnitude should it be handed over to such men? But, as the board of the Westralian Farmers pointed out, the wheatgrowers themselves understand that position. The members of the board said, "We will leave the decision to the wheatgrowers. They must decide whether they will retain the co-operative connection with the administration or whether they will dissociate themselves from the co-operative connection." I trust the connection will be retained. The scheme has been wonderful; it has given general satisfaction to everyone concerned.

The State, as the Minister pointed out, is justified in saying that this co-operative movement has contributed something of very great value to it. This example shows that where co-operative enterprises work in with Governments and where Governments—as has been done in this State—

work in with co-operative enterprises, wonders can be achieved. There were misunderstandings, fights, turmoil and strife regarding the scheme. However, gradually but surely wise counsel has prevailed. The Government has been sympathetic and helpful. The co-operative movement has consulted the Government on every occasion and kept it well posted in regard to matters of detail. The Minister for Lands has always been approached in regard to any problems that arose and, by submitting to the Government the desires of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., the Minister has been able to secure Government approval, with the result that the relationship has been cordial and I trust that happy relationship will continue.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1943-44.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 23rd September on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £2,012:

MR. PATRICK (Greenough) [9.33]: There is one hon. member to whom I have always listened with considerable interest and that is the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe. I am sorry he is not here at the present moment. When speaking on the Estimates, the hon. member spread himself on the question of increased Federal powers. Probably the hon. member has gained a little experience, like most men who go to the Eastern States for long periods, which has led him to the belief that everything can be controlled from one centre. What I think is necessary in a Federal system of Government is not more concentration of the powers in one centre but more co-operation between the central Government and the States. A great deal more of this co-operation could have been shown in connection with the war effort. For instance, we have witnessed the creation of what is

called the Civil Construction Corps, for carrying out many great works in Australia associated with the war.

In this State we had a Public Works Department containing skilled technicians and men who had already proved themselves capable of carrying out great undertakings, such as water schemes and the construction of roads, and who had also had experience in the employment of men. Would it not have been simpler for the Commonwealth to say that the Public Works Department in this State should be the authority to carry out the works the Civil Construction Corps has carried out? Instead of doing that, it set up an expensive department with a great many employees and in many instances it had to fall back on the Public Works Department to assist it in carrying out its enterprises. That is only one instance in which more co-operation could have been shown. In the Dominion of Canada, and also in the United States, much of the work that is passed through the central Government is delegated to the States to carry out. For instance, all the social services which the central Government in Canada proposes to do in connection with post-war reconstruction is to be carried out by the provinces.

The finance is to be allotted to the provinces and they are to do the actual work. That is the ideal method of running a Federation, because it is impossible to carry out works in a distant State from one centre. The member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe referred to a campaign being carried out by the Premier of South Australia against extended powers being given to the Commonwealth Government, but he did not mention that the Labour Government of Queensland is also taking great exception to those extended powers being granted. There was a very interesting comment published in "The West Australian" last week in this connection. It was an extract from an article in the current issue of the "Economic News" issued by the Queensland Government Bureau of Industry. According to "The West Australian" it said—

That bureaucracy was a state of affairs in which excessive powers were in the hands of professional public servants rather than of party politicians. We had a Commonwealth bureaucracy which even before the war was rapidly growing in numbers and influence, and which was at present increasing by leaps and bounds.

Totalitarian ideas, it stated, were beginning to make headway in the Commonwealth public service. Ambitious young men engaged as wartime temporaries, envisaged a totalitarian regime with permanent and important jobs for themselves. The wire-pulling type of departmental head intrigue to suppress any parliamentary criticism of bureaucratic activities. Not only among Commonwealth public servants, but also among the younger generation of university lecturers, lawyers, architects and other learned professions sympathies with Communism were increasing more rapidly indeed than among manual workers.

Communism in Australia as elsewhere, the article stated, might transform itself into National Socialism. The essential idea of both Communism and National Socialism was that the ordinary man should be deprived of his freedom and that all public affairs should be regulated by small groups, criticism of whom should be made a penal offence.

No doubt there is a great deal in what that paper stated. A similar thing is occurring in the United States. Recently a leading article in a well-known American journal was headed, "Congress Slams a Door." The article stated—

Shortly before its summer recess, Congress served notice that from here on out it expects to exercise its rightful prerogatives—that it is definitely tired of seeing the executive branch usurp legislative powers.

The matter that roused its ire was a proclamation that all tinned goods in America were to be of one grade and all were to carry the Government brand. That is to say, individual brands would disappear and the American housewife would not know what brand of article she was purchasing; so Congress said it was going to take control of such measures itself. Returning to the Budget! The Premier commented on the present prosperity, and referred to the fact that the year had ended with a surplus. Of course, this is rather an extraordinary state of affairs because, if there is prosperity in this State, it is entirely artificial. Certainly there is no unemployment, but we have this peculiar condition of affairs: Whilst there is no unemployment, the two greatest industries—the goldmining industry and the wheatgrowing industry—are working half-time, in an absolutely crippled condition. The member for Mt. Magnet has told us that much valuable machinery used in the goldmining industry has been taken from the State altogether, so that even after the war it will probably be some time before the industry returns to full production. I think the Leader of the Opposition made some re-

ference to this matter. I have no doubt that the industry will carry on after the war just as it did before, and will be one of the big factors in the employment of labour in this State when the post-war period comes. In regard to the agricultural industry, not only has production fallen off tremendously through lack of manpower, but maintenance and improvements have gone back for want of materials and manpower.

Then there is the matter of the control of meat. We are told today that we want more meat, yet rabbits are practically allowed to destroy the pastures of the State. I suppose that never at any period in the history of Western Australia has the rabbit pest assumed such dimensions as today. If manpower were available, this would be another means of securing another class of meat for the people. The Premier mentioned that it had not been possible to carry out maintenance of public buildings, but even more rapid deterioration has occurred on farms through lack of maintenance than is the case with public buildings. Fencing has not been attended to because there is not the manpower to look after it. In the northern districts and, I suppose, wherever one travels, it is possible to find fields that were once under crop now covered with suckers and undergrowth. In certain districts this is a very serious matter, because some of our land, if left for three or four years, will cost more to re-clear than it originally cost to clear. The Minister for Lands stated that, in his opinion, the only remaining additional source of manpower was the Army, and I am inclined to agree with his contention. In a statement he made to "The West Australian" on the 29th April of this year, the Minister said—

A survey carried out recently by the Commonwealth Government indicated that the permanent hired labour remaining on our farms in Western Australia was about 40 per cent. of that in pre-war days. The Commonwealth average is much above this figure. There is clearcut evidence, both in the surveys made and in the comments by the field officers that the rural labour position is more acute in Western Australia than in the other States.

The survey by the Department of War Organisation of Industry shows clearly that there is a more severe depletion in Western Australia in most industries than in other States but applying particularly to the rural industries. It would be necessary, if the manpower position in Western Australia is to be restored to the same level as that of the rest of the Com-

monwealth, to return 2,400 men to permanent work in rural industries. One has only to contemplate the reaction in the Eastern States to any proposal that 10 per cent. of the remaining permanent labour should be withdrawn (bringing their position comparable to that in Western Australia) to realise the intensity of the labour shortage in Western Australia. Expressed in terms of hired labour, the position in Western Australia is even more serious.

To show how the position has reacted against this State, it is necessary merely to take the situation regarding wheat throughout Australia last year. We find that the yield for New South Wales was 52,000,000 bushels, for Victoria 43,000,000 bushels and for South Australia 38,000,000 bushels—for these three States those yields were well up to the 10-year average—while in Western Australia the yield had fallen to 20,000,000 bushels. The Minister for Lands has asserted frequently that the only source of additional labour is the Army; and there is no reason, now that Australia has been declared safe from invasion, why many thousands of men should not be released from the Services. Just prior to the Federal elections the Prime Minister stated that there were 820,000 men under arms in Australia. With Australia safe from invasion, I do not think anyone will argue that the necessity continues for such a large number of men under arms, particularly as only a small proportion will go outside Australia at all. Prior to Japan entering the war the system of military training was three months in training and three months out of camp. The system operated so that the period the men were out of camp would be utilised for work in essential industry. There is no reason why that system should not be re-instituted today, and the release of a large number of men secured from the Armed Services. It could be done under conditions that would enable the men so released to be called up should a state of emergency arise.

As it is, we find today that men over 70 years of age are trying to carry on while their sons are in the Army probably doing very trivial jobs, whereas they could be undertaking far more useful work on the farms. There have been instances where, the husband having died, the widow has had the utmost difficulty in securing the release of one of her sons to carry on the work of the farm. I heard of a case cited at the Country Women's Conference recently, of a woman who had attempted to carry on the

whole of the farming operations herself. She had put in the crop and had done the shearing of the sheep. Finally she was advised by her doctor that in the interests of her own health she should get off the farm. In the end she had to do so and she leased the farm as a grazing proposition. A different system altogether has operated in Canada where there has never been an unrestricted call-up of manpower. The first step taken there was to determine the number of men to be employed on production and that requirement was met first and the needs of the Army came second. President Roosevelt has stated on numerous occasions that he regards the production of food as one of the first essentials in wartime.

In fact the United States of America has today increased the production of wheat by 15,000,000 acres despite the huge surplus. In 1930, we had the spectacle of the slogan being printed on envelopes, "Grow More Wheat," at which particular time the United States of America was advocating the restriction of wheat production. Then we find that whereas we have gone in for restriction of production, the United States of America has expanded its area under crop. To indicate how labour has been employed in agricultural production in America not only on the growing of wheat but in other avenues, last year the United States of America produced 210,000,000 bushels of soya beans, which represented double the output for 1941 and six times the pre-war average production. That could not have been done without the provision of additional rural labour.

Mr. Marshall: Most of that could be done by the use of improved machinery and the application of science.

Mr. PATRICK: Yes, but that cannot be achieved in five minutes. This represents production in an entirely new type of agricultural produce, which is quite in addition to the normal agricultural production. I have never believed in any restriction upon wheatgrowing in wartime. The Minister for Lands made some interesting comments on that subject when he stated that there was some confusion of thought regarding it. There was some argument for restriction at a time when what was referred to as the nationalistic system prevailed. It was useless asking farmers to grow wheat for which there was no market. We would not ask a man who had a market for 100,000 pairs of

boots to double his output and yet not have a market for the additional pairs. That was the relative position of the wheatgrowers at that time. A huge surplus of wheat was piling up and there were no markets available for it. Today the position is entirely different and that is why the United States of America is today expanding its production of wheat to the extent of 15,000,000 acres.

There is no doubt that the market for wheat when war ceases will be greatly extended. All the countries of Europe, a large part of Russia, China and many other countries will require enormous quantities of wheat and, in fact, the difficulty will be to supply grain in sufficient quantities to feed the peoples of the world. Recent figures show a surplus of 1,000,000,000 bushels of wheat in North America and it is not because of any deficiency that America is advocating increased production. What concerns me more is the value of wheat today in relation to its purchasing power. Since 1939, according to Commonwealth Government authorities, the purchasing power of £1 in Australia has receded to 16s. I stand by the statement I made in my maiden speech in this Parliament when I said—

In my opinion Australia will never get back to a sound basis until a bag of wheat or a bale of wool will purchase the same in essential commodities as it could purchase in 1913. That statement anticipated President Roosevelt's so-called New Deal by two or three years, because his statement for his New Deal for agriculture was almost in those very words. Today the price for wheat is 4s. per bushel, but U.S.A. forward quotes today are 149 cents, which is the equivalent of 9s. 2d. in Australian currency. If those people were prepared to pay the equivalent in Australian currency of 9s. 2d., they must know something. They are not in the business for fun. In view of the huge surplus of wheat that has accumulated, if those people are prepared to give that high forward price for wheat we must realise that they are not getting any assistance from the Government to finance such deals. When they are, therefore, prepared to pay such a high price in Australian currency despite the immense stocks that are being held, there must be ample justification for the offering of such a high rate.

If buyers in U.S.A. and Canada anticipate that wheat will bring such a high price in

the post-war period, there is a reasonable assumption to be drawn that Australian wheat should fetch a correspondingly high price and there is every reason for increasing the area under cultivation instead of continuing the restriction upon acreage. Only this week the Commonwealth Minister for Commerce, Mr. Scully, said that, in view of the great sales made to date, the restriction upon the acreage under production would be removed probably in the near future. In my opinion the restriction upon cultivation should never have been imposed. It is also necessary, as I have pointed out on many occasions, that the debt structure must come down. Even if the debt structure does come down, that will be no solution to the difficulties of the industry unless payable prices are secured. Unless that is done, it will simply mean rebuilding the debt structure that has been reduced. At the same time an adjustment of the debt position is needed if the industry is to be placed on a sound foundation for rebuilding. We have the knowledge that the mortgage section of the Commonwealth Bank commenced operations this week.

Mr. Marshall: That must make you burst out laughing!

Mr. PATRICK: That is merely a delusion from the standpoint of wheatgrowers. The mortgage branch of the Commonwealth Bank will operate only up to seventy per cent. of the value of a property. The trouble here is that before the system can be of any value to him a farmer must reduce his secured debts otherwise the only people who would be able to deal with the mortgage department of the Commonwealth Bank would be farmers who today are in a sound position. The ordinary farmer who requires assistance will be able to receive no help in that direction. Once the industry has been stabilised another improvement to be effected is the provision of some insurance scheme covering the failure of crops owing to rain or pests. In the United States of America there is an insurance scheme operating under the designation of "failure of rain." That is an innovation. It is a scheme that would be valuable in many parts of Australia where drought conditions are experienced in definite periodic cycles.

As has been pointed out by various speakers, the need is apparent for much greater

population particularly in the rural districts throughout Australia. That applies more particularly to Western Australia which has become rapidly depopulated. For instance, when I first entered this Chamber my constituency had a population of over 6,000 electors whereas today the number is under 5,000—which is rather a deplorable state of affairs in a comparatively new country. The de-populating process has been going on not only on the farms, but also in the towns. Some small towns in my electorate have disappeared. The process will continue until country amenities are brought into line with those obtainable in the cities. I have in mind such things as water supply and electricity. Again, there is the burning question of education. The report of the recent meeting of the Country Women's Association in Perth shows that education was one of the leading questions discussed. Many able speakers dealt with it. The burden of their argument is that it is absolutely necessary to improve the system of education in the rural areas if population is to be retained there. More central schools are need in the country districts.

I recall to the Minister for Labour a small town in South Australia where he and I went to school. Forty years ago, to my knowledge, there was in that town a branch of what is known as the School of Mines—the practical equivalent of our technical schools. At that school of mines analytical chemistry and many other subjects of the kind were taught. I think the Minister will confirm my statement that that school still exists. It existed 40 years ago, and in the interim we in Western Australia have not reached that stage of development.

The Premier: There is a school of mines at Norseman.

Mr. PATRICK: This town is smaller than Norseman. It had 2,000 inhabitants, but now has gone down to 1,600 or 1,700. At the time I speak of the School of Mines had a registrar and a teaching staff. There should be greater opportunities also for country children to enter the University. It has been pointed out that only a very small proportion of our University students is drawn from country districts. The reason for this is plain. The University is free, but when it comes to sending country children to the institution it is not as free to them as it is to children in the metropolitan

area. For country children, the cost of board and lodging enters largely into the question. One of the best means of improving the situation would be to grant additional scholarships to country students. I know of one boy, living near my farm, who went to the Geraldton High School on a scholarship, and whose school report two years later stated, "Outstanding ability in every subject." I believe he was dux of the school. The boy's parents could not send him to the University, and he took a position, I believe, in the Commonwealth Bank. So his talents were practically lost. I hold that he would have proved far more valuable if he had taken up a branch of science, instead of taking a position in the bank.

A question raised by the member for Murray-Wellington is the desirableness of more country people entering the State Public Service. If there were more people from the country in our Public Service, the service would have a much better idea of the requirements of country people. The Premier, when introducing his Budget, mentioned that a sum of money was being spent in looking for coal at Eradu. I was not present when the Leader of the Opposition spoke, but I am aware that he made some references to a report by Dr. Herman on the subject. While it was interesting to put down a shaft at Eradu to look for coal, I do not think that is the right way to develop the industry in the North.

The Premier: We were assisting the leaseholders.

Mr. PATRICK: It was rather a hit-or-miss way of looking for coal. There should be scientific investigation as recommended by Dr. Herman. The coal measures of the North have never been scientifically investigated. I shall read recommendations made by Dr. Herman, which were signed on the 9th June, 1933. His qualifications are outstanding—engineer-in-charge of directing research, Victorian State Electricity Commission, first-class mine manager's certificate in Victoria and Tasmania, and for a period in charge of one of the big Tasmanian mines. In 1912 he was director of the geological survey of the State of Victoria. In 1917 he was chairman of the Advisory Committee on brown coal in Victoria. It was on the report of this committee that the State Electricity Commission accepted him as a man of very high qualifications. His report of 1933 states—
re Irwin Coal Seam:

The development work, principally boring, hitherto done has been confined to a comparatively small portion of the coal-bearing strata shown on the map (geological map). It is quite within the bounds of reasonable probability that somewhere within these several hundreds of square miles there may be found by further boring a coal seam or seams of quality comparable with that of the Collie seams. A few square miles of such a seam would be sufficient in which to establish a coal-mine.

If such a workable area should be found, preferably towards the southern limit of the large area above indicated, its beneficial effect upon the coal bill of the Railway Department might be very considerable. An examination of the Railway Department's tabulated statement shows that from such a locality about 20 per cent. of the total locomotive requirements could be supplied more advantageously than from Collie. On this 20 per cent., representing more than 50,000 tons per annum, there would be an average saving in haulage of 120 to 200 miles, which at 1.04 pence per ton-mile, would mean an annual saving in freight costs of £30,000 to £40,000. Other consumers, particularly the Midland Railway Co., might take coal from such a source instead of importing supplies.

Now comes the point to which I desire to draw special attention.

It is therefore recommended that systematic boring, which would require the services of two boring plants for several years, be undertaken, as soon as financial circumstances permit, in the coal measures southward of the Irwin River seams. Such boring should be preceded by a detailed geological survey which, to be satisfactorily conducted, would occupy two field officers for several months.

Dr. Herman, in a summary of his findings and recommendations, suggests—

That systematic boring preceded by geological surveys be undertaken in the Irwin River coal measures in the hope that a workable coal seam may be discovered therein.

I recommend to the Minister that if he wants to develop the possibilities of the northern coal seam properly, he should give his attention to the report of this distinguished scientist. If such coal was discovered—even though it might not be of the quality of Collie coal, which is very high—it might be possible to develop power and lighting schemes in the northern areas. More might be done in this connection with Collie coal. Hitherto reports on these schemes have been based on present population, but surely if schemes of this kind were adopted we could look forward to increased population in areas served by them.

Now with regard to our railway system and its position after the war! I believe that after the war there will be a great

many improvements in the system of transport. Today the Commonwealth Minister for Air is talking of huge aerodromes all over Australia, and of air services to be conducted at 3d. per mile for passengers. If anything of that sort comes about the railways will lose a great deal of their remaining passenger traffic. My belief is that there will be a huge development of goods air traffic. Today air transport is carrying all the munitions of war. There should be an immense development of air transport in the country. We have to get away from the idea that increased expenses in railway management can only be met by increased freights. The soundest policy, of course, is to try to increase the population served by the railways, so as to increase the business of the railways. The effect of raising freights on a rural population that is not carrying on a very profitable industry is to depopulate the industry further and to decrease the railway returns.

Another form of decentralisation was mentioned by the Minister for Labour. The subject was brought up at a meeting of the Reconstruction Committee, of which he is the chairman. It is a flat rate for things like liquid fuel all over the State. The Leader of the Opposition brought up a recent case of fuel being landed at a southern port in bulk but the price being the same as that of fuel railed to it from the metropolitan area. A similar position has obtained at a northern port for years. I brought the matter to the attention of the Federal member whose constituency includes that port, pointing out to him that while two-thirds of the liquid fuel landed there was in bulk the price was the metropolitan price plus railway freight. The reason for the situation was that one small company was operating there and railing its fuel from Perth. The Federal authorities said that on that basis the proposed reduction in price was not feasible. That is an absurd position. Even there, at the port represented by the Premier, where two-thirds of the liquid fuel has been landed in bulk, the rate charged for petrol was still the metropolitan rate plus the rail freight. This committee, of which I and the Minister are members, will, I think, recommend a flat rate for the State as one of the means to achieve decentralisation.

Australia has to face many problems after the war. We have heard much about the

Atlantic Charter. We want to know what are its implications, and also those of the Lease-lend Agreement. Under the latter arrangement the United States and Great Britain have already agreed on the elimination of all forms of discriminatory treatment. How will this affect what is known as the Ottawa Agreement, which was made between the Dominions and the British Government and under which Australia has enjoyed favourable treatment in regard to many of its primary industries such as dried fruits, butter, etc.? Taking the large view, I think the freer flow of international trade should favour the primary industries in Australia. Extreme nationalisation caused restriction of food supplies, while people starved. It bred bitterness and despair, and probably was one of the factors leading to this war. As the Minister for Lands pointed out, while we have wheat at give-away prices—it was down to as low as 1s. a bushel—many European countries imposed duties of 10s. and 12s. a bushel on wheat to prohibit the import of cheap wheat. As a result their people were starving while there was an abundance of wheat in countries from which they would normally import it. One thing Australia will largely have to abandon is her isolationist idea. Many of us have preached this doctrine for years. We should now take heart from some remarks made recently by Dr. Evatt. The party to which he belongs held isolationist views. He said—

Australia cannot establish any new order while the rest of the world remains in disorder. It cannot be safe from aggression if conditions in the rest of the world are such as to bring about war. In many respects our own security and prosperity, and our democratic way of life in Australia are dependent upon the attainment of security, prosperity and freedom in other lands.

Mr. J. H. SMITH (Nelson): Unfortunately I was not in my place when the Premier introduced the Estimates, but I have perused them since. I regret to find that no provision has been made for post-war reconstruction. I was hopeful that when the Estimates were compiled some reference would have been made to what was to happen in the future. Months ago it looked as though we would have an invasion of this country. We are pleased today to know that that danger has gone. But we cannot expect to hold Australia unless we increase our population from

7,000,000 to at least 20,000,000 or 30,000,000 people. We in Western Australia will have to increase our population because we have the largest area of country. Most of the land in the South-West is good country and still undeveloped. We should have something on the Estimates to assist in making possible the carrying of a population of 1,000,000 or 1,500,000 in the near future. In my electorate, Nelson, the population is increasing all the time. When the roll is compiled it will include over 6,000 electors. There is room for another 60,000 people on that roll. No matter how we look at the position the South-West seems to be the only part where prosperity abounds. We have all sorts of primary industries, and the future of this State is linked up with primary industry. Where are our secondary industries going to be established after the war?

The Premier: What about tobacco and flax?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Yes. I will come to them. We should not have our factories here and the tobacco in the South-West; the factories should be at Manjimup. It is for that reason that I am disappointed to find no provision for post-war reconstruction on the Estimates. Unfortunately no Loan Estimates will be introduced this year.

The Premier: Yes, there will be; next week.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Premier must be an optimist. We will be holding an election within the next month or two. I thought that we would have dealt with the Estimates and that the notice paper would not have been filled up with motions and other business. I anticipated that the Premier would have introduced the Supply Bill and that we could then have gone on with the election. But here we are rushing away without even knowing whether the soldiers, including the women, are going to be given a vote for the election; or are we going to disfranchise them?

The Minister for Mines: It depends on the Legislative Council.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Is not that a disgraceful thing to say?

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must not on the Estimates discuss legislation that is before Parliament.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I agree with you, Mr. Chairman. I was talking about post-war reconstruction, which means looking after the welfare of the men and women in the Forces today. However, I will not go further in that regard. I am sorry that we have not the Supply Bill before us, and that time is getting so short. Our tobacco industry is in a very precarious position. I had hoped that the Minister for Lands would have been here to listen to what I have to say. I would like to see this industry become a flourishing one. The Premier made some remarks about the tobacco and flax industries.

The tobacco industry is in a bad way. Last year the prices were deplorable and today, with the additional 20 per cent. granted, the tobacco growers will receive only about 2s. 3d. on an average. Much of it cannot be sold. Last year those who were first in received very poor prices. As a result everyone held back this year, but those who were in for the first appraisalment received the good prices, while those in for the third appraisalment are much lower down with the same class of tobacco. There is something radically wrong. Instead of 1,000 acres of tobacco being grown in my area we should make provision to plant 10,000 acres. The same remarks apply to the flax industry. Thanks to the advances made by the Commonwealth Government the flax industry is making great progress. In fact, I believe we have the distinction of producing the finest flax fibre in Australia, and the Nelson district has the honour of having the second largest area in the world under flax.

The Premier: And very good flax, too.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Yes. I hope that the industry will thrive after the termination of the war. The other day a question was asked of the Minister for Lands by the member for Sussex regarding the increased interest charge on vacant holdings in the hands of the Agricultural Bank. The rate has been raised from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 per cent. We have been asked to increase dairy production, but to increase the interest rate is not at all encouraging. The Minister, in his reply, stated that it would have the effect of increasing production. It is not often that the Minister is caught making a blunder, but I think he did so on that occasion. He said it was considered that an interest rate of five per cent. would encourage

development and was in the best interests of both the dairy farmers and the State. If dairy farmers have to pay an increase of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., how can it encourage development and be in the best interests of the State? I regret that this has occurred. We are trying to increase the production of butter-fat, and dairy farmers are leasing vacant holdings adjacent to their own in order to run their dry stock, but they will not be able to do it if they have to pay the increased rate.

I believe that the South-West portion of the State will pave the way largely for land settlement after the war. Men who return from war service and who wish to go on the land should be settled there. We do not want to settle them as we did after the 1914-18 war. Many of them could not make a living on their holdings. They were put on repurchased estates, for which they were charged enormous prices, and they have practically starved on their holdings. They are in no better position now than they were on their return and are broken-hearted. If we are going to settle people on the land, we must make provision for them and must insist upon having a guaranteed price for their produce. I believe that a labourer is worthy of his hire, regardless of whether he is working in secondary industry or in primary industry. A man on the land should know that a minimum price has been fixed for his product so that he can pay the wages necessary in the industry. The Commonwealth Government has subsidised dairying to the extent of many millions of pounds. This has enabled the dairy farmer to meet the increased costs of production and living, and to pay higher wages to his employees. The farmer, if he can get a reliable employee, is only too pleased to pay the £4 17s. a week, which is the minimum for a dairy hand even if he does nothing more than use a broom.

I wish to refer to the timber industry. I should like the Minister responsible for State sawmills to say whether the statement is correct that employees who enlisted in the A.I.F. early in the war are not being credited with holiday pay or long-service leave, whereas the men in the industry who were called up are receiving theirs. I do not know whether the statement is correct but, if it is, an injustice is being done. I hope that Parliament will not sit much

longer, that members will be given an opportunity to meet their masters as early as possible and that the men and women with the colours will be given a vote. Unless the men and women who count most do have a vote it will be a reflection on the legislation of this country. I hope the Premier will ensure that they get it and that the Estimates will be completed as quickly as possible.

MR. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle): Since the Budget of last year was delivered the war outlook has undergone a transformation. It was difficult at that stage to tell exactly how the Allied nations were going to win, but now we feel, so much having transpired in the 12 months, that it is impossible to lose. Seeing that the end of the war is definitely in sight, it is well that we should direct our attention towards making the very necessary preparations for re-absorption into national life of those persons who have been called to take part in the defence of the country, and it is to be hoped that the mistakes of the past will not be repeated on this occasion.

There are very grave problems to be dealt with if we are to prevent a repetition of previous experience. Any student of history will remember that no new statement with regard to the new order is being made during this war. All of the statements now being made were made during the previous war. We know that deplorable conditions ensued some years afterwards when world-wide depression was experienced in almost every country. Soldiers who had marched off to fight for their country were left without employment and had to exist on a mere pittance.

It is well that we should give some consideration to just what movements were afoot during the last war, in order that we may, if possible, profit from that experience. The Americans were some time before participating in the 1914-18 struggle, and President Wilson of the United States became a champion of the rights of the democracies. His pronouncements, made from time to time in America, which was then detached from the war operations, were such as to inspire working men throughout the world. President Wilson became a world figure and millions of people in every country at that time looked to him

as the one statesman who offered them the opportunity to stop for all time the barbarities of war. So when Wilson proceeded to Europe in order to participate in the peace talks at Versailles he was received with enthusiasm in Great Britain as well as on the Continent. In the streets of Paris he met with organised applause and adulation, and was also the subject of great approbation in the newspapers.

But before very long Wilson was subjected to what was almost a blizzard of criticism and calumny, and he wilted under it. It seemed as if his influence at the Peace Conference table became almost negligible towards the end of the deliberations, the reason being that he had struck opposition from persons who were more bent on the acquisition of territory than upon the prevention of future wars, and the preservation of good conditions for working men and women. I am very much afraid that when the pressure of this war is over we shall have a repetition of those conditions, and again have peace negotiated by persons such as Foreign Secretaries and others more concerned about territory to be acquired and interests to be served than about decent conditions of life and the prevention of future wars. It may be known to some that those who accompanied President Wilson from America to the Peace Conference were completely disillusioned before the close of the deliberations. Edward Bullitt, the chief of the delegation, resigned on the spot and addressed to Wilson a letter which indicated that Wilson had lost the faith of mankind, who had looked to him so fervently just before the Peace Conference opened. What was it that Wilson came up against? The natural instinct of the representatives of various nations to get as much as possible each for his nation out of what was going! There were difficulties regarding boundaries in the Balkans, difficulties with Italy, which had been brought into the war by agreement with Great Britain under the Treaty of London, which promised Italy certain concessions. The difficulties confronting the representatives at the Peace table proved insurmountable, and we had nothing but promises. The major result was this war which we are now fighting.

It seems to me that if we are to look for any great improvement for the masses of any country, then, so far as we our-

selves are concerned, we must lay our own plans here in Australia and must not count too eagerly upon what will emerge from the deliberations of the next Peace Conference. There were strong movements in Europe and in America during the 1914-18 war to take advantage of the Peace Conference, and to make a concerted effort amongst the nations of the world for safeguarding conditions for working men and women.

Those were strong, virile movements, as strong as any existing today; but, so far as I can see, the only result which they achieved was the provision for setting up an International Labour organisation. I think it can be truly said that that particular organisation is the only really good result following the 1914-18 war. A considerable amount of good has come from that source, somewhat restricted as it is in certain directions. But the movements in Europe and America were such as to inspire considerable faith in the participants. They believed that it was possible, as a result of their determination, to bring about what they called a New World.

We are all familiar with Lloyd George's statement, made during a general election, about his determination to obtain a world fit for heroes to live in. We are also painfully familiar with the fact that that ideal was never attained. I desire to emphasise that the statements made today in various countries about a new order, and about reconstruction, are by no means new. One can find exactly the same statements made during the previous World War. So we should attach very little importance to those pronouncements. However, we should endeavour to see, whilst we have this belief in the possibility of a reconstruction, that we lay our own plans upon a solid foundation. Already some thousands of our men have been invalided home from the various fighting fronts. They are of no value for further fighting, having suffered wounds or diseases which have rendered them useless for active service. Such men come back and find themselves in an air of unreality. The member for Greenough said tonight that the prosperity which we feel about us is artificial. It is artificial to this extent, that it is brought about by conditions which will be changed completely as soon as the war is finished. This prosperity is no more artificial than

the prosperity resulting from that boom which invariably succeeds cessation of hostilities. But neither will that prosperity last, since its foundation is by no means solid.

The prosperity which we anticipate upon the cessation of hostilities will result from the turning-over of establishments engaged upon war production into production of necessities and luxuries for peace-time consumption and because the production of those commodities has been so severely restricted during the war period. It is obvious that tremendous scope will exist for a year or two for the manufacture of commodities now in short supply. But there will be no check upon their manufacture. Every person who thinks he can make a success of large-scale manufacturing will engage upon it and we shall have a period for a year or two which, if left to itself, will inevitably bring this country and other countries to a financial depression such as that which we experienced following upon the boom after the 1914-18 war. Therefore it is to be hoped that the Commonwealth Government will, in collaboration with the State Governments, take such steps as will result in a check being kept upon such production and ensure its direction into the proper channels. Just as it is essential to order properly manpower and production during a war period, so is it essential to regulate industry in peace-time. There can be no justification whatever for allowing industry to go unbridled simply because the opportunity exists to make large profits and to take no cognisance of the fact that, following inevitably on such an artificial boom, there will be a tremendous depression which will spell widespread misery for large numbers of people.

The Commonwealth Government has already indicated that it is prepared to plan now for the problems which will confront us when the war is over. I believe there is ample scope for State Governments to collaborate. This Government has already indicated that it has taken certain steps for post-war reconstruction. The member for Nelson complained that the Premier made no mention of that fact. I was surprised to hear him speak in that way, because mention has been made in this Chamber of the various plans which have already been put in hand and of investigations made for the period of reconstruction. For example,

take the Premier's proposal for workers' homes! That can be considerably enlarged, as we know that in all the States of Australia there is now a great shortage of homes. Anybody who moves around today must realise how urgently additional housing accommodation is needed. In some cases three or four families are being accommodated in one small dwelling house, living under conditions which we would condemn were times normal, but which we must tolerate now because of the necessity of utilising our materials and manpower in some other direction. Are we to wait till the war finishes before we lay our plans for this home building? If so, it will take a very long time before the people are suitably housed. There is a limit to the number of residences which can be erected in 12 months and restriction will be imposed upon us because of the scarcity of carpenters and labourers, as well as of materials.

Mr. McLarty: The New Zealand Government is starting on its scheme now.

Mr. TONKIN: So should we, and other Governments, too. It is necessary to initiate this scheme so that it will gain momentum when the opportunity arrives for us to embark on building on a large scale. Even though we are short of manpower today, we can find some method of erecting a few houses. Some people are living under conditions entirely unsatisfactory and really unfair. They are most unfortunate in being called upon to endure such conditions, which, however, are not general. It ought to be possible in certain circumstances to relax the regulations in order to permit of the erection of a few houses. All carpenters are not engaged upon essential work, as so termed by the manpower authorities. Some carpenters are too old to be of much value for constructional work required by the various war departments. Such carpenters may take a considerably longer time than is usual to build a house, but they would be quite prepared to undertake the work.

Mr. Perkins: Are they not engaged on repair work?

Mr. TONKIN: No.

Mr. Perkins: They are in country districts.

Mr. TONKIN: Opportunity should be afforded those persons to embark upon house-building on a small scale because, even though it would be small, it would be some

alleviation of the situation. The manpower authorities should be a little less strict in this regard. I am aware that it is possible to obtain a permit under very special circumstances, such as where people are living in conditions which are absolutely intolerable. It is possible to obtain a permit to erect a building the value of which is very low, about £400. It is almost impossible in this State—I have no knowledge of the position in other States—to erect a house worth calling a house within that price, because the cost of the material is such as to preclude the erection of a worth-while dwelling at a cost of about £400. When I speak of a worth-while dwelling, I mean one suitable for the housing of a mixed family. True, a dwelling could be erected for a pensioner at about that figure, but pensioners are not in such great need of houses. There should be some change of view on the part of the Commonwealth department controlling this matter. Permission should be given to erect houses costing more than £400.

Furthermore there are many directions in which we could be assisted by the manpower authorities. It should not be obligatory for persons engaged in non-essential industries to register a change from one employer to another. I have had cases brought under my notice where employees engaged in non-essential industries have sought to change their employment in order to better themselves. I speak of the wives of soldiers engaged in certain occupations. They find that they could, by changing their occupation, earn more money. Why should they not be permitted to do so when the manpower authorities have made no attempt to take them from their employment? It is no concern of the manpower authorities whether a person is working for A or B, if both A and B are engaged in non-essential industries. Why should the authorities step in and say to Jones, "You must work for A rather than for B and accept wages £1 or £2 a week less than you would otherwise earn?" That is a state of affairs against which I protest very strongly. I say that wives of soldiers should be permitted to earn additional money should they get the opportunity to do so.

I am not pleading that they should be taken from an essential industry to work in a non-essential industry if they are capable

of being absorbed in an essential industry. By all means let them work in that industry. But if the manpower authorities permit them to be engaged in non-essential industry in the first instance they should not be concerned about their travelling from one non-essential industry to another, if those people are thus enabled to better themselves. I would like to point out that there are numerous instances in which the wives of soldiers—who are on quite good pay because they are officers—are in receipt of good money while in other instances the wives of privates are engaged in non-essential industry and are not permitted to supplement their income by changing their occupation. That should not be the case. I hope some cognisance will be taken of the facts and that the department will not concern itself with persons who are so employed. I repeat that I make no plea for persons engaged in non-essential industry who could be utilised in essential industry. I admit quite readily that the first duty of a citizen is to work in essential industry if he or she is capable of so doing.

As to Leave to Continue.

THE PREMIER: I move—

That the member for North-East Fremantle be given leave to continue his speech at a later sitting.

Motion put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.58 p.m.