

BILL—GERALDTON SAILORS AND SOLDIERS' MEMORIAL INSTITUTE ENABLING.

In Committee, etc.

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

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

House adjourned at 10.10 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 13th December, 1934.

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

PAPERS—LAND TRANSACTIONS OF Mr. H. HALE.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I desire to place on the Table the papers asked for by Mr. Yelland in the motion he moved yesterday.

Hon. J. Cornell: That motion has not yet been agreed to.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That does not matter. I do not intend replying to the motion, but to place the papers on the Table.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: May I ask the Chief Secretary if the papers also cover my motion, of which I have given notice, to the effect that all papers relating to transactions between Mr. Harry Hale and the Agricultural Bank and Industries Assistance Board be tabled?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am informed that the file is complete and covers both motions.

Agricultural Bank and Industries Assistance Board.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.18]: I move—

That all papers relating to all transactions between Mr. Harry Hale and the Agricultural Bank and Industries Assistance Board be laid on the Table of the House.

The Chief Secretary has informed me that the papers are now on the Table.

Question put and passed.

Returned Soldiers' Settlement Board.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the previous day of the debate on the following motion by Hon. H. J. Yelland:—

That all papers dealing with the sale or negotiations for sale of property or properties offered to the Returned Soldiers' Settlement Board by Mr. Harry Hale, of Perth, be laid on the Table of the House.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—URGENCY.

Geraldton Unemployed and Provision of Work.

The PRESIDENT: I have received a letter from Mr. Hall stating that he desires to move the adjournment of the House on a matter of urgency. The letter reads—

Sir,—I desire to move, under Standing Order No. 59, that the House at its rising adjourn till the 14th December, in order to debate a matter of urgency, namely, the immediate necessity of providing work for the unemployed at Geraldton and the unsatisfactory

nature of the replies given on Tuesday last to my questions on the subject.

It is necessary that four members should, by rising in their places, indicate approval of the motion.

Four members having risen,

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central)
[4.35]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 4.30 p.m. on Friday, the 14th December.

I trust you will allow me to preface my remarks, Mr. President, by tendering an apology to the Leader of the House. Through my lack of knowledge of the Standing Orders, I did not advise him prior to 3.45 p.m. to-day of my intention to move this motion. I discussed the matter with the Clerk last night and it was not until this afternoon that he told me, as a matter of courtesy, the Leader of the House should have been informed. I at once telephoned to the Chief Secretary, but it was too late to enable him to make the necessary inquiries. As members are aware, on Tuesday last I asked questions regarding the unemployment position at Geraldton and the Chief Secretary furnished me with certain replies. The questions I asked were—

(1) Will he ascertain what is the number of unemployed at present in Geraldton?

(2) What provision will be made to provide work for them before Christmas?

I asked those questions in order to give the Chief Secretary an opportunity to make the necessary inquiries so that he could furnish me with what I thought would have been at least satisfactory replies. I have known the Chief Secretary long enough to have no doubt whatever that he would furnish me with satisfactory replies. I realise that in his position he cannot personally see that reliable information is always provided in answer to questions submitted by members, and I want to assure him and the House that I do not blame him personally at all. I believe that when questions are asked in Parliament every care should be taken by the departmental officials responsible for supplying information to the Leader of the House. The replies I received to the questions were—

(1) Work has been provided to those who have proved their eligibility for Government relief.

(2) Answered by No. 1.

I am in a position to prove that those replies are absolutely incorrect. I would not have asked the questions had I not satisfied myself previously regarding the actual state of affairs. I ask members to bear with me while I prove my claim. On the 9th November last I received the following letter from a man named Cyril Laurisch—

I am a carpenter by trade; a married man with one child; a resident of Geraldton, employed, until about seven months ago, as a sustenance worker on the Geraldton harbour works. Last April, in an attempt to break away from sustenance work, I accepted a job at Mt. Magnet as a carpenter on a mine being opened up by Mr. W. J. Parkinson. Owing to Mr. Parkinson being short of ready money, I agreed to work on half wages until the show began to pay. The show never did pay, but owing to a breakdown it was closed down three weeks ago, and I was thrown out of employment. My wages were £2 10s. weekly (balance still owing). After a week's unsuccessful search for work in Mt. Magnet, I came to Geraldton and saw the harbour works engineer who informed me that as soon as I got on sustenance he would give me my old job back. I immediately applied for sustenance, and was compelled to wait for two weeks while my case was being considered by the sustenance department in Perth, during which time I did my utmost to get work both in my trade and otherwise, but was unsuccessful. This morning I learned from the local sustenance department that my application was refused by the department in Perth because they considered that I should have no difficulty in obtaining employment in my trade. I emphatically state that there is no work available in my trade or out of it, and that statement will be verified by Mr. Lester, the Mayor of Geraldton, who is in a position to know. I, my wife and child, are at present living on the charity of friends, and that cannot last long. I am apparently being penalised for making an attempt to better my position. I feel sure that some misunderstanding has taken place, and I respectfully request you to place my case in the right hands for reconsideration, because I absolutely must have work or sustenance if I am to remain honest and law-abiding. Yours faithfully, (Sgd.) Cyril Laurisch.

I came to Perth and got in touch with the department, the officials of which said they would look into the man's case. They told me that they thought the man should have been able to get work at Mt. Magnet without having to go on sustenance at Geraldton. From my knowledge of the Murchison, I thought so too. On the 24th November, Laurisch again wrote to me as follows—

Concerning the refusal of the sustenance department to grant my application for sustenance, I wish to state that there is still no work

offering for carpenters in or anywhere near Geraldton, and that the statement made by the Secretary of the Carpenters' Union to the effect that there would be work available very shortly was not correct. During his visit to Geraldton last week Mr. Ketterer told me that he had reason to believe Mr. Crothers, a local contractor, would be requiring carpenters in a few days time. I made inquiries myself without any result as far as work was concerned, and yesterday afternoon I saw Mr. Crothers again, and he told me that if he was successful in getting a certain job he was after he might be in a position to offer me employment in about four or five weeks time. As far as the other local contractors are concerned, they have absolutely nothing to offer at present. Any statements I have made can very easily be checked by the sustenance department if they are sufficiently interested to do so, and I would be only too pleased if they or anyone else can tell me where to get a job, because I don't want sustenance if I can get work, but I must have one or the other. It is now a month since I put in my application, and my chances of getting back on the harbour works are now practically nil, owing to the delay, and that was the only work offering for carpenters here. The skilled work there is being done by Perth carpenters, while I, a local man, am practically starving. Hoping this will make the position a little clearer.

I again interviewed the officials of the department and told them I quite realised the position in which they were placed. I said I knew they desired to force these men to get work other than on sustenance, and I agreed with them. I had a friend at Mt. Magnet who was in charge of a mine. I wrote to him to find out whether Laurisch, whom I do not know, had told the truth regarding the industrial position at Mt. Magnet. In reply he wrote to me as follows—

Magnet is a very busy place these times, but still there are a lot more men here than there is work for. I have made inquiries about this chap Laurisch, and what he says is quite true. He was working for Parkinson and could not get all his money, but I think he will get paid up if Parkinson can get his show off. He inquired for a job with me, but I could not place him.

So the writer of that letter substantiates what Laurisch says. I have had him registered as a sustenance worker, but there has been such a long delay that there is not much chance of employment for him on the harbour works, though the engineer said he would place him there. The man came to see me last week, but no work had been made available for him. Another letter dated Geraldton, the 12th November, reads—

With reference to the letter you received from the Unemployed Relief Department re-

fusing to register me for sustenance employment, as stated to you previously, I was employed as a sustenance worker for about three months on and off when I accepted a job on a fishing boat. I stuck to the fishing job for five months, and then the owner of the boat made other arrangements which resulted in my being put off. I then tried to get other work but failed to do so, and was forced again to apply for sustenance employment and, as you know have been refused, being told to look for casual work. Yesterday I walked 15 miles out into the country looking for work, but could not find a job of any sort. I have a wife and child 11 months old, and my wife is due to be confined on the 11th February. That makes it imperative that I should get work. If you or any other person can get me a job that will enable me to earn my living, I will be grateful. R. Grego.

That man called at my home on Friday morning and made such an impression that I sent him to the mayor, who is secretary of the local relief fund, to obtain relief from the distress fund. Another letter reads—

As I have been unemployed for several weeks, and have three children to support through the welfare Department at the rate of £1 4s. per week, I have been up around the fields since I finished my last sustenance job at the harbour works. Mr. Brennan (the engineer) informed me that they are retrenching men, and there is no work available at present. Hoping you can manage something at your earliest, A. H. McIlwaine.

I saw that man on Sunday last and when he asked whether I had been successful in getting work for him I had to reply that unfortunately I had not. Another man wired me from Geraldton on Tuesday as follows, "No word through regarding papers." I rang the department this morning and was informed that the papers had been posted on Saturday last. That unfortunate man was refused sustenance because he had been share farming with another man. Let me explain his position. He owns not an acre of land and has nothing. A friend told him that he would provide tucker if the man would assist him with a tomato crop. The man agreed, but the frost ruined the tomatoes. The man applied for sustenance and was refused registration because he was said to be a tomato grower. I explained to the officials that the man had not received any proceeds, and that inquiry should be made in Geraldton to get the fact verified. After inquiry by the department he was registered as a sustenance worker. All those men have been registered as sustenance workers, but no

vacancies are available for them. I saw the engineer in charge of the harbour works on Saturday last and asked whether he could find work for one man who had been out of employment for four months. The man himself did not approach me; I was approached on his behalf by a friend. The engineer replied, "I cannot find work for one man." On Saturday night last the Mayor informed me that a man had reported to him from Perth and had informed him that he had been sent as a sustenance worker to work in the quarries, a branch of the harbour construction works. I do not care how many men are sent to Geraldton from Perth or elsewhere so long as the local men can get work. A register has been opened at the town clerk's office, and 24 married men and 41 single men have been registered as unemployed. I do not know how many of that number are registered as sustenance workers with the department. I regret that, through want of knowledge of the Standing Orders, I did not advise the Chief Secretary earlier of my intention to move the motion. I repeat that I absolve him from blame for the replies given to my questions. I have been requested by those men to exert every effort to obtain work for them, and I know that the Chief Secretary is as anxious as anyone that such an unsatisfactory state of affairs should not continue. I hope that the Government will endeavour to put work in hand at Geraldton, even if it be through the municipal council, in order to provide employment for those men. There is no intention that the men should be able to earn money to enable them to buy extras for Christmas. What they want is work to enable them to buy the necessities of life.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.51]: The method or lack of method adopted by the hon. member in bringing forward the motion for adjournment is singular in my experience. The long-established rule based on ordinary common sense is that if a member wishes to move the adjournment of the House he should at least approach the leader and state the grounds for so moving. He should also approach the leader sufficiently early to give him time to collect the information necessary for his reply. The more so is that necessary in the case of the Leader of the Legislative Council, who has to deal

with matters affecting numerous departments of which he has no personal knowledge. What is the position? Mr. Hall rang me at a quarter to four when I was about to leave my office to come to the House and said he intended to move a motion of adjournment on the question of unemployment at Geraldton. As members will realise, it has been utterly impossible for me to obtain information. I informed Mr. Hall to that effect, and although he has had no previous experience of moving such a motion, he is aware that he was acting contrary to the usual procedure. I have been in touch with the municipal council of Geraldton and have received letters from them regularly. Twelve months ago there was considerable unemployment at Geraldton, and I received communications from them once a week requesting me to do something to relieve the position. I took action. For months past I have received no letter from the council to indicate that there was unemployment at Geraldton. Neither have I received communications to that effect from any public body or from any individual in Geraldton. As events have proved, very little information is needed to reply to Mr. Hall. He has read four letters from men who want employment, men who want jobs on the harbour works and who are perhaps not prepared to go where they may be sent. Presumably they want a full-time job, at any rate at a high rate of pay. The letters are merely ex-parte statements that require investigation, and the names of the complainants should be supplied. Two of the individuals at least wish to go on sustenance. The days of sustenance are past. Work will be provided and those who want work must go wherever they are sent. About six months ago there was a great noise in Geraldton regarding unemployment. While the member for Geraldton, the Minister for Justice, was visiting the town about 40 or 50 men trooped in and said they wanted work. Mr. Willecock telegraphed to the Minister for Employment, and within a short time arrangements were made to provide work, but not in the Geraldton district. As they were single men, they were offered work in the South-West. Public intimation was given that if they turned up next day work would be provided. Only six of the 40 or 50 men turned up.

Yet previously there had been a great demonstration to impress upon the Government the need for providing work for the unfortunate unemployed. On the evidence submitted by Mr. Hall, it is not necessary for any investigation to be made, but I daresay that the departmental officials, of their own free will, will take some action. I shall be glad if the hon. member will supply the names of the men who have been victimised. I do not suppose they are confidential. It would give me great pleasure to investigate the matter personally, and supply the information to Mr. Hall. The information may have to be supplied confidentially. The circumstances may be such that it would not be advisable to give them publicity. I do hope that when Mr. Hall or any other member deems it necessary to move a motion of urgency, he will give me at least five or six hours' notice in order that I may be in a position to reply. In justice and out of courtesy to me, any member who decides to take such an extreme step should give me ample notice of his intention.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [4.58]: I do not wish to join in any contentious debate. Though Mr. Hall sinned in not informing his colleague earlier of his intention to move the adjournment of the House, there is something to be said in mitigation. I followed his remarks closely, and he said the reason for his moving the adjournment was the unsatisfactory and evasive answers given to questions respectfully asked. If any member reads the questions and answers he must agree that the answers are very much in conformity with many that are given to questions in this House. Not long ago Mr. Nicholson asked a question, and when the answer was given by the Chief Secretary, I interjected that it was incorrect. The correct answer had to be squeezed out of the department concerned by a question so framed as to permit of no escape. The unsatisfactory answers given by departmental officers to Ministers are the cause of the trouble. I think that was what prompted Mr. Hall to move his motion. I am satisfied that for a long time past many answers given to questions asked in this House have been given to evade and not to explain.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [5.0]: We all feel sorry for the position in which the Chief Secretary has been placed. I take it that the question raised by Mr. Hall can now be referred back to Geraldton and an explanation obtained. There is a good deal in what Mr. Cornell says in regard to answers given to questions, but a lot also depends on the way in which members themselves frame those questions. We should realise that the officer who receives these questions very frequently has nothing but the bare question to guide him in supplying the information required; consequently that information when in the form of an answer may appear to be evasive. But in the case under discussion, that excuse cannot apply. Nobody could expect the Chief Secretary to-day to reply immediately to the matters that have been touched on, but, knowing the Minister as I do, I feel sure that he will obtain from the department concerned an explanation as to what occurred.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.3]: I feel sure that when these matters are investigated fully and the Chief Secretary is in receipt of information regarding the individual cases referred to by Mr. Hall, the reply will not be regarded as evasive as members may think. I should like members to read those questions and the replies that were given. The first was, "Will he ascertain what is the number of unemployed at present in Geraldton?" and the second, "What provision will be made to provide work for them before Christmas?"

Hon. J. Cornell: And what was the answer? It amounted to "Mind your own business."

The HONORARY MINISTER: I suppose that in every town in Western Australia to-day there are unemployed who all consider that they are eligible for sustenance or relief work; but they are not all eligible. There are many men out of employment in the metropolitan area who are not eligible for sustenance or relief work, and I have no doubt that in each of those cases mentioned by Mr. Hall the departmental point of view is that at the time they applied for work or sustenance they were not eligible.

Hon. G. W. Miles: They had not joined the union.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The union has nothing whatever to do with the question.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What are the qualifications for relief?

The HONORARY MINISTER: In many cases the amount of money the individual has earned immediately preceding his application. Hon. members know that the department has to deal with all manner of cases, and that men very frequently submit claims they are not entitled to present, that they are hiding the facts, such as, for instance, the amount of money they are possessed of, and matters of that kind. I suppose every member has had experience of applications from one or more men who claimed they were entitled to sustenance or relief work, and has found on inquiry that those men had not given all the facts. Members have said to me that they could not go on with the applications of those men when the real position was disclosed. The department, in many instances, found that applicants were not eligible for sustenance and therefore not eligible for relief work.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is it a necessary condition that a man applying for relief work should be a member of a union?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Absolutely no. The hon. member has asked that question in various ways on numerous occasions.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The applicant comes into the union later.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What is wrong with that? He gets the position.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This reminds me of something said last night on the subject of preference to unionists. The hon. member has preference to unionists on the brain. The replies given to the questions by Mr. Hall were perfectly genuine. At that time, as far as the department were concerned, I assume there were no unemployed in Geraldton eligible for sustenance and therefore eligible for relief work. The Leader of the House has not had the opportunity of inquiring from the department whether that is the case. While some members may think that somewhat evasive answers are given at times, at the same time those answers may be correct in every word. I am quite prepared to leave the matter in the hands of the Leader of the House. I could mention scores of cases of men who in the last fortnight have applied for sus-

tenance or for work, and I can show that a fair percentage were not eligible for work on Government undertakings before Christmas. It is not possible for the Government to say, "You shall have work immediately." There are regulations to be observed.

Hon. H. Tuckey: You must draw the line somewhere.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Exactly. Now that Mr. Hall has ventilated his grievance, he should ask leave to withdraw the motion. The facts will be investigated, and the desired information supplied. If it can be shown that the hon. member's statements are correct, namely that the men he referred to were entitled to sustenance or work, I have no doubt the Leader of the House will do what is right.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central—in reply) [5.10]: I am aware of the difficulty in registering for sustenance or relief work men who have earned a certain amount of money within a given period, but I have been dealing with men who have been registered as sustenance workers, and I suppose I did not make myself clear. The Chief Secretary and the Honorary Minister might not have understood me when they asked me to supply the names of those men who were hanging round Geraldton trying to get work on the harbour improvements. The four men I mentioned went away from Geraldton to endeavour to improve their positions. I deny that I raised any question of unionism.

The Honorary Minister: I did not suggest that you did.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Anyway, the Chief Secretary has promised to inquire into the matter.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: These men registered but were told there were no vacancies.

The Honorary Minister: May I ask you this question? I desire to be helpful. What do you mean by registering as a sustenance worker? A person registers as being unemployed and then applies for sustenance and if eligible, is provided with either sustenance or work.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I am glad of that question, which reminds me that the Chief Secretary said these men wanted sustenance. The position is that a man applies at the police station, which is the local office

for the registration of unemployed. He is told, "You have no chance of a job until you register as a sustenance man." He registers and cannot get work until the form which he fills in, containing innumerable questions, is sent to Perth and is returned. It does not matter what the man's position may be, he cannot get work on sustenance jobs until the form is O.K.'d in Perth. Those men were not after sustenance, but were after work. I interested myself in getting them registered, and they were duly registered. I now ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

BILL—METROPOLITAN MARKET ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

QUESTION—NORTH-WEST, AERIAL SURVEYS.

Hon. G. W. MILES asked the Chief Secretary: In view of the fact that aerial and geophysical surveys of the Pilbara, West Pilbara, and Kimberley districts are being carried out, will the Government arrange for similar surveys of the Gascoyne and Ashburton Districts?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: The Northern Australian survey operations will extend over a period of years. The arrangements between the Commonwealth, Queensland, and Western Australian Governments at present have only been made for the survey of the Pilbara and West Pilbara districts. It is not known yet what other activities will later be undertaken.

BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT (ES- TATE AND SUCCESSION DUTIES) AMENDMENT.

Further report of committee adopted.

Third Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [5.20]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. R. G. MOORE (North-East) [5.21]: I am sure all members of the House fully appreciate the work of the select committee on this Bill. Personally I particu-

larly wish to express my appreciation of that work.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [5.22]: On behalf of the select committee, I acknowledge that appreciation voiced by the hon. member. I can assure the House it was a work of real interest to every member of the select committee, all of whom gave the closest attention to the task. It was more than a pleasure to me to preside over such a committee and to have their hearty co-operation. We appreciated the good services rendered by witnesses, who gave evidence and took an untiring interest in the subject. To the Usher of the Black Rod, who acted as clerk to the select committee, we owe special thanks for the accuracy with which he carried out his work.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.23]: In view of the volume of work that devolved on the Chairman of Committees and the clerks in putting together the amendments made by the select committee, and sorting them for presentation to another place, I think I am entitled to congratulate the select committee on its work.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [5.24]: I have pleasure in supporting the remarks of appreciation of the work of the select committee.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 4).

Second Reading.

HON. T. MOORE (Central) [5.25]: In moving the second reading said: For some years past the Meekatharra Road Board have wished to instal an ice works in conjunction with their electric lighting supply. Owing to a doubt as to whether they would be in order in so doing, the Bill has been brought down. Members who have been in the back country will realise that a town like Meekatharra, with some 35 years of history, should have had ice works long ago. All these years ice has been carted for hundreds of miles into the back country of

Meekatharra. In a climate such as prevails up there, those people have the right to help themselves to the extent of establishing small, inexpensive ice works. They have the plant and they have abundant electric current, and all they need will be one small unit which will have to be installed for the proposed ice works. Not only Meekatharra, but other towns in the district, such as Peak Hill, Reidy's, Cue and Day Dawn, will be in a position to get ice from the new works. People were desirous of having these works years ago but, owing to the fact that the town has had its ups and downs, the works were not installed. However, the road board have made a great success of their lighting plant, and so I can see no danger in giving them authority to instal these proposed ice works, which will prevent a long haulage of ice with immense waste. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [5.28]: I have great pleasure in supporting the Bill. I am acquainted with the members of the Meekatharra Road Board and have followed their official career for some years. They are composed largely of practical men, and their conduct of their business has been more than satisfactory, has been indeed a credit to them and to the town. Until about eight years ago they were selling electric current just as cheaply as it is sold in Geraldton. I have been closely acquainted with the genesis of the Bill. In March last the secretary of the road board wrote to me seeking information in regard to it. His letter was dated the 31st March, 1934, and here are some extracts from it:—

You are aware that we have a very good electric light and power plant, which has been running for the past 16 years with excellent financial results.

One reason why they are able to run the business so economically is that in the early stages they installed a Diesel engine, which resulted in greatly reduced working costs.

Owing to the increase of our population, with the prosperous outlook in the mining industry, my board think the time opportune for the installation of an ice-making plant with cooling chambers to be run in conjunction with our power plant, thus utilising some of the spare power. We propose, in the event of the successful installation, making ice for the public at a low rate to the end that every household may

have a supply during the summer months. It will be necessary for us to float a loan of from £1,000 to £1,500, but will require the consent of the Governor in Council through the Public Works Department. As a preliminary I would like you to ascertain what the outlook would be prior to my board making formal application for the permission. For your information I am enclosing copy of our last balance sheet, also an analysis of our depreciation account. From the former you will note accumulated profits amounting to £2,358 as at 30th June last. This has been absorbed in additions and improvements during the period. We owe only £304 to the Commonwealth Savings Bank, and have at the present moment a credit balance of £400 odd to the concern. You will note from the analytical return that £3,383 leaves us with a first rate plant at a written-down value of £4,152, the total cost having been £7,537, so that with the addition of an ice-making plant it must prove a remunerative concern. One hotel expends as much as £38 per month for ice imported from Geraldton. Other hotels also take lesser quantities. If we can get that trade it will be so much to the benefit of the town.

There is no ice-making plant at Meekatharra, and therefore no competition with private enterprise. I made inquiries about that at the outset, although I have a personal knowledge of the fact. I wrote to the Under Secretary for Public Works to ascertain whether the local authority was entitled to do this under the Road Districts Act. He replied that he had consulted with the Crown Law officers, who said it could not be done without an amendment to the Act. I know of one road board which has its own ice works in this State, allegedly constructed under the Act. That board has shown wonderful results and a good profit. There has been no loss to the ratepayers. Everything depends upon the management. At Meekatharra the management is excellent. The secretary is one of the best road board secretaries in Western Australia, and I must say that, although we differ in politics.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.35]: I am not opposing the Bill, but I have a strong opposition to the Government interfering in the arena of private enterprise. That objection also applies to public bodies. In outback centres, where it is said sufficient capital is not available from private enterprise to make a venture a success, I am bound to support a scheme that is for the benefit of the local people. The story we have been told is one that seems to offer promise of success for

this particular scheme, as it deals with the generation of electric current, but the proposition may be entirely different when the manufacture of ice is begun. An ammonia compressor must be purchased and maintained. Meekatharra is a long way from any refrigerating engineer should the services of one be required. The road board may find that the profits from electric light can readily be absorbed by the cost of running a refrigerating plant. In these modern days there is considerable competition from frigidaire. Various types of frigidaire are available for soft drink shops and hotels, etc. These plants are made in all forms and sizes, and render very effective service. If the price of ice at Meekatharra is not moderate, the local authority may find that competition will come from hotels, cool drink shops and so on, and that this competition will destroy any chance it has of making a profit. I am most anxious to do anything that will be for the benefit of the residents concerned, but we must bear in mind that a certain risk is involved. There is a danger that we may not be doing a good service to the people concerned by passing this measure. It may be said that small towns in the neighbourhood will buy the ice. It has been suggested that Wiluna would be a prospective customer.

Hon. T. Moore: I am not sure on that point.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I was in Wiluna the other day and noticed a fairly progressive ice-making plant in the town. I feel sure the management is looking for trade outside Wiluna and it may have Meekatharra in mind.

Hon. T. Moore: That would be over 100 miles away.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Whilst the venture itself seems likely to prove prosperous, I know from my own experience there can be a reverse side to the picture. I do not want to support a Bill which may not prove of advantage to the ratepayers concerned, and yet I do not want to withhold from them a convenience of this sort. Whilst I support the Bill, I am opposed to the principle of local authorities or the Government interfering with private enterprise.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [5.39]: One would imagine that this Bill will apply only to Meekatharra. That is the deduction to be drawn from the speech of Mr.

Moore and of the Chief Secretary. I would point out that this is an amendment of the Act, and would allow all road boards to instal ice-making plants. That may be desirable or otherwise. There has been a good deal of criticism concerning the three per cents. fund. If we provide the local authorities throughout the State with facilities for installing ice-making plants, the three per cent. funds may be drawn upon more heavily than has been the case in the past. Whilst I admit that in outback places facilities could well be afforded for ice-making, etc., and the Act amended accordingly, I consider it is going too far to give general authority to all road boards to embark upon such an enterprise.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.40]: I agree with Mr. Holmes that there is a danger, if we pass this Bill, of its being taken advantage of by all local authorities. The measure provides not only for the manufacture of ice, but of ice chests and all appurtenances. It will permit of road boards starting out *holus bolus* as trading concerns. However much we may applaud the work of road boards, we may by this Bill be authorising local authorities to do something concerning which grave objection may be raised from ratepayers within their boundaries. There is not only the particular township in which the road board may meet, to be considered, but there are invariably other townships. The residents of those other townships may feel they have an equal claim for the establishment of undertakings of this sort, or they might, on the other hand, not be impressed at all by the proposal for the making of ice or the selling of ice chests. There is nothing in the Bill to debar any road board members from entering into a scheme of this kind, and there is no provision for a vote being taken amongst the ratepayers concerned. If we pass this Bill, we should embody in it a clause providing for the establishment of a substantial sinking fund for the repayment of the capital. Many goldfields centres are of mushroom growth. At such places private enterprise might well refrain from investing capital in a concern of this sort owing to the risk that would have to be taken. It would be as well before the Meekatharra Road Board or any other local authority is allowed to embark upon a scheme of this nature to have a clause em-

bodied in the Bill providing for the speedy redemption of the cost. Some of the lighting schemes that have been instituted by local authorities have been very successful. At the same time, in many cases this has imposed a heavy charge upon the ratepayers in the outlying portions of their districts. The ratepayers living outside the township have derived no benefit from the lighting system although they have had to contribute towards the cost. If ice-works were established the ratepayers generally might have to pay more in the way of rates, and many of them would be able to gain no advantage from the enterprise. We should be cautious about rushing into legislation of this kind at the closing hours of the session, especially when it is to apply all over the State. It would be better to introduce a special Bill to deal with each particular case.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [5.45]: The Bill is one which, as has been pointed out by other members, will affect not merely the Meekatharra or Cue road district, but in its present form will enable every road board in each district to exercise the powers sought to be granted.

The Honorary Minister: What would be wrong with that?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Road districts, like municipalities, are formed for a particular purpose; and the powers and authorities given to them have been laid down by statute for many years past. It has long been felt that such bodies should not be empowered to carry on certain activities in opposition to private enterprise, because the effect would be to destroy the means of revenue of those bodies if they engaged in private enterprise. In place of private persons or concerns establishing themselves in the district, the board or municipality would become a manufacturer or trader; and thus the district would lose the benefit of rates which would otherwise be received. I fully realise the difficulty of meeting the needs of goldfields centres which are again springing into activity. However, I venture to suggest that if it has been found impossible in Meekatharra to induce private enterprise to embark on this business, the power to be given to Meekatharra should not be a wholesale power available to every district. For example, if such a power as

that proposed were granted to road districts in and around Perth, Katanning and Northam, a position might be created which would be highly undesirable. Such a thing was never contemplated by the original framers of the Municipalities and Road Districts Acts. Paragraph 27 of Section 162 of the Road Districts Act includes a power that is interesting in the light of this Bill. The paragraph enables boards to engage in numerous activities, for example, the general management and maintenance of roads—the outstanding work devolving upon them—filling up abandoned mining shafts, supplying electricity, gas and a host of other things. To the end of that paragraph the following seems to have been tacked on at some time:—

and erect or acquire lighting plant and cooling chambers.

Hon. J. Cornell: That gives power to establish ice works.

The Chief Secretary: It is a little deficient.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It may be, but obviously there was some intention to provide for the establishment of some sort of cooling chamber.

The Chief Secretary: Under that provision ice could be manufactured, but not sold.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I admit that the power is not as full as it should be. However, there obviously has been some contemplation of cooling chambers for the benefit of road districts. It would be quite wrong in principle, though, to extend the power in the Bill to every road district. If it can be shown that in certain districts there is a bona fide need for the board to supply certain wants which there is not power to supply under the existing Act, let the additional power required by a board be limited to that particular board. The Bill should take the form of an enabling Bill for the board to carry out a certain work. I am afraid the present Bill could not be amended in that direction. Two or three years ago, I believe, a road board in the Great Southern District put forward a Bill to enable it to carry on picture shows. If I remember rightly, this Chamber in its wisdom decided that such a power should not be embodied in the Road Districts Act. There was a fear that possibly a board might fritter away the revenue of a district. The revenues of road

boards and municipalities should be expended in developing and improving the districts, not in carrying on business. That is not the purpose for which road boards and municipalities are created. This Bill being so comprehensive, and not admitting of amendment so as to apply merely to Meekatharra, I unfortunately cannot see my way to support it. However, I am prepared to consider any Bill which may come up on behalf of Meekatharra.

The Chief Secretary: Cannot this Bill be amended?

Hon. T. Moore: I think so.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I fear not.

Hon. J. Cornell: There could be an overriding clause.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There should be an enabling Bill in favour of the Meekatharra district.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: One more Bill will not make any difference. We are getting six a day.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I have the full-sympathy for those who are developing our back country, but at the same time they must keep in mind the obligations that road boards have regarding revenue received from rates and other sources. It is intended that such moneys should be applied to the development of the district in the first place. That there are certain exceptional cases in our back country I realise. That is the only consideration which would induce me to consider another Bill.

HON. E. H. ANGELO (North) [5.55]: In view of the Hon. T. Moore's speech, and the support given to the Bill by the Chief Secretary, I would like to see Meekatharra get ice works. I join with other members who have pointed out the danger of giving a general power to all road boards. At Carnarvon there is a private person running ice works. He might fall out with the local council, and the council could—I do not say they would—oppose him in his legitimate calling. I would be quite satisfied to empower the Government, after full inquiry, to permit a road board to undertake such a work as this. All that would be necessary to that end would be to insert such words as "having first obtained the consent of the Governor-in-Council."

The Chief Secretary: That consent is necessary in any case.

Hon. J. Cornell: Yes; that is the law now.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: Then I have no objection to the Bill.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.57]: I believe that every member is anxious to assist the Hon. T. Moore and the Chief Secretary. It would be criminal to deny a remote centre a convenience of the nature mentioned in the Bill. It has been pointed out that what is desired cannot be done under the Road Districts Act as it stands. I agree with those hon. members who have said that the Bill, if passed in its present form, will confer the power to establish ice works not only on the Meekatharra Road Board, but on any and every road board. My memory usually serves me well. I believe that an earlier Bill to amend the Road Districts Act contained a provision relating to ice work, but that the provision in question was deleted at the instigation of Mr. Macfarlane, because of its general application. Now Mr. Macfarlane goes so far as to say that he is in entire accord with the desire of the Meekatharra Road District to have what may be termed an absolute essential. I suggest to the hon. member in charge of the Bill that the Bill be taken through the second reading, that in Committee an amendment be made restricting the operation of the measure to Meekatharra, and that then progress be reported in order that the Assistant Crown Solicitor's opinion may be sought. Thereupon, if we have not done the job properly, we can recommit the Bill. We would give the Crown Law Department an intimation that we desire the Bill to be particular and not general. I suggest that the clause should read something to this effect, "Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in Subsection 27 of Section 162, it shall be lawful for the Meekatharra Road Board to establish or acquire," and so on, following the further wording of the proposed new subsection. Of course, the new subsection may be controversial, for it is an overriding amendment just as are provisions in the Agricultural Bank Bill, which override other statutes. I think the House is prepared to grant what the people of Meekatharra require. I suggest that the Bill could be taken through to the Committee stage and could be recommitted if the amendment I suggest were not found by the Crown Law Department to be correct.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [6.3]: The solution suggested by Mr. Cornell may be a way of overcoming the difficulties regarding which some members are exercised. I cannot understand their attitude on such a question. All the Meekatharra people ask is for a right that I think any other road district should enjoy if so desired.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: That is where we differ.

The HONORARY MINISTER: My experience of the back country, and particularly of Meekatharra, is that if there is anything missing, it is a supply of ice. That represents one of the few commodities that would make life worth living in such places.

Hon. J. Cornell: And beer worth drinking!

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, I agree with that too. If private enterprise is not prepared to make available what is lacking at Meekatharra, the people of that township should have the right to provide that requirement for themselves. Who will pay the piper? It will not be the State, but the ratepayers of the locality affected. We should not prevent them from giving effect to their desire if private enterprise will not provide for their requirements.

Hon. V. Hamersley: This is an experiment in 20 minutes!

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not agree that it is an experiment at all. There are other centres where the people are manufacturing ice, and that applies particularly on the goldfields. I do not see why Parliament should stand in the way of these people if they wish to provide themselves with ice.

Hon. V. Hamersley: And ice chests, too!

The HONORARY MINISTER: Is it not better for the residents, for the local authorities, if they are to provide ice, also to make available ice chests?

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: And the local authorities will trade, and lose the money of the ratepayers.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The matter can well be left in the hands of the people themselves, for they will suffer or benefit from the action proposed. If we can leave the management of the district, the construction of roads, the quarrying of stone and so on to the local governing authorities, can they not undertake this additional

task? I am informed by the Chief Secretary that the cost will be between £1,000 and £1,500. That shows what a serious matter this is! The proposal merely represents an attempt on the part of the people of Meekatharra to do something for themselves, private enterprise having refused to undertake the task for them.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: We admit they have a right to get ice supplies.

The HONORARY MINISTER: And if members are prepared to grant that right to the Meekatharra people, they should be prepared to accord the same privilege to people in any other locality where the ratepayers desire a like privilege.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [6.7]: I have no desire to debar the people of Meekatharra from enjoying ice with their beer or milk, but we are asked to deal with a principle that does not affect Meekatharra only. We should be consistent. When the Road Districts Act, in its consolidated form, was discussed, we refused to agree to a clause along similar lines. I do not altogether agree with the suggestion made by Mr. Cornell. For my part, I think if Mr. Moore were to go to the Crown Law Department, he could have a short enabling Bill drafted in about ten minutes, and no difficulty would be experienced in having the measure passed through both Houses of Parliament, and Meekatharra could then have its ice works. In its present form, the Bill seeks to embody in the parent Act a provision that this House strongly disapproved of when earlier legislation was under consideration. I take exception to the proposal that the road board shall be allowed to manufacture ice chests. That may be a laudable object, but we should endeavour to promote local industry.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: They might be built in a backyard factory!

Hon. A. THOMSON: I suggest that the debate be adjourned and, in the meantime, a short enabling Bill be drafted to authorise the Meekatharra people to manufacture ice. The Honorary Minister pointed out that the maximum cost would be £1,500 only, but I do not think it is in the interests of the State to give the right to a local authority to establish a trading concern. We should encourage private enterprise, which would provide more work. During the discussion on the urgency motion earlier in

the afternoon, the Minister said that too much was expected of the Government. I agree with that statement, but until a man is down and out he is not provided with sustenance work. It seems to me a crime that a man who has £5 put aside as a nest-egg must spend all that money before he can secure a job. I have much sympathy with the Government in their endeavour to find so much work for the unemployed, but any extension of State or municipal trading merely means a cushy job for someone and a curtailment of work for others.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [6.13]: As one of the representatives of the Central Province, I may be permitted to add a few words. I am in entire accord with the sentiments expressed by the Honorary Minister, and I do not care whether the principle involved is one advocated by Labour or not. The local residents should have the power to decide for themselves whether they wish the establishment of ice works. I have a vivid recollection of Morawa desiring to establish a hospital, and the people of that locality were to tax themselves with that object in view. The local road board requested Parliament to agree. A Labour Government were in power at the time, and I remember receiving a rap over the knuckles from Mr. Baxter. Much to my surprise, he was astounded at the idea. At that time I did not know the deep-rooted objection on the part of a majority of the members of this House to allowing local governing authorities to have a say in their own affairs. I am a bit wiser now, and I know there is that deep-rooted objection.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It is a pity that Parliament should try to dictate to local authorities as to what they should do for their ratepayers. Let it be borne in mind that the Road Districts Act provides that before any expenditure can be incurred a poll of the people financially interested must be taken. That is an absolute safeguard. I am pleased that members generally favour the granting of this power, which will enable the residents of Meekatharra to enjoy these facilities.

On motion by Hon. H. Tuckey, debate adjourned.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL BANK.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [7.32]: World-wide conditions are making it difficult to find profitable markets for most of our primary products and it is essential that action be taken to give such assistance to our producers as will enable them to carry on. If this fact is generally admitted, and I believe it is, surely it was only right and proper that a searching investigation should have been made into the operations and administration of the Agricultural Bank. The Government did the right thing in appointing the Royal Commission. The Agricultural Bank could more correctly be designated a rural credits assistance board. It is to be regretted that the investigation was not made years ago. Many people who were in a position to know should have advocated an inquiry years before. Let me quote a statement by the Minister for Lands, the Minister responsible for the institution—

I have never gone into the country areas without having observed evidence of laxity in administration.

Any man with a proper appreciation of his responsibilities who observed laxity in the administration of an important institution such as the Agricultural Bank might have been expected to take some action.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: When was that statement made?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: During the discussion on the Bill in another place. The Minister's attitude has been that adopted by many others; what was everybody's business was nobody's business. Even the Auditor General, who cannot plead that he has to carry out governmental policy, failed to take that action which it was his undoubted duty to take. On his own admission he appears to have been guilty of a serious dereliction of duty, and I am wondering whether the Government or Parliament—we are frequently told that the Auditor General is the servant of Parliament—intend to take any action regarding him. I have no personal feeling against that officer, but the matters referred to by the Royal Commission call for action of some kind. Many statements have been made to the effect that the Royal Commission's report was too severe on the

trustees, that Mr. McLarty has given years of faithful service to the State, and that the other two trustees, who were at one time Ministers of the Crown, have also rendered good service. Those statements will not be denied by anyone. That the trustees were overloaded with duties of various kinds will also be admitted. That people were induced to go on the land and apply for loans is also admitted. Many other statements and excuses have been made for the serious mismanagement which, in my opinion, has been disclosed by the report of the Commission. There is not the slightest doubt that any impartial person who reads the evidence must admit that there has been serious mismanagement. Let me readily admit all that may be said in favour of the management. I remind members of the Commission's remark that one of the trustees has occupied his position only during recent years. Still, I submit that the findings of the Commission on the administration were justified by the evidence. I regret having to say that, as I respect and admire both the Managing Trustee and his fellow trustee who has been associated with him for so many years. I have to be careful, but my sympathy does not cause me to forget that I have a duty to those who have suffered from this faulty administration, namely, to some of the farmers and to all the taxpayers. To drive home my meaning I intended to quote extracts from the evidence given by two clients of the Bank who are known to me, but I will not do so. I will content myself by saying that failure to take action in those two instances has resulted in two good properties not only remaining unproductive for years but being a direct loss instead of a profit to the State. Without any desire to excuse the wrongdoing of some of the Bank's clients, I maintain that some have been forced to do things that they should not have done owing to the failure of the management to come to grips quickly with the position, adopt a fair and reasonable attitude and maintain it. I make that statement, though admitting as I must that in numerous instances the consideration extended to many clients of the Bank has been altogether too generous. The evidence I refer to will be found on pages 843, 845, 928 and 929 of the country section. I am reluctantly compelled to submit that the two cases I have mentioned are typical of many

others. The evidence given by the Bank's own officers proves that there was a lamentable lack of discipline and co-ordination not only between the head office and branches but between branches and clients. My object in mentioning the principal factors brought to light by the Commission, factors that militated against obtaining the best results possible, is to assist in determining what should be specially provided for in the Bill. In my opinion two things should be aimed at, firstly, decentralisation of administration and, secondly, co-ordination. The choice of commissioners is exercising the minds of many people. To get the right men will be a difficult job. What is of equal importance, though seemingly it was not recognised by the Royal Commission, is that the field inspectors should be men of undoubted ability. I am not in a position to say whether all the present field inspectors are capable men, but it is quite certain that if they are, they have been wretchedly under-paid and miserably treated. We all know what is expected of them. Whether their recommendations have been accepted in full, I do not know, but it is safe to say that practically all the money loaned by the Bank has been advanced on the recommendations of field inspectors. In future there may not be as much money to be advanced as there has been in the past, but we have to look to the field inspectors to exercise their ability to the utmost in order to secure the results that necessarily must be obtained. If a start is to be made to build anew, let it be from the bottom, not from the top. First make sure that the inspector has personal knowledge of the man and the property on which he is to report and advise, and is competent and able to take the personal equation into account. He should furnish a report on the position of each of his clients and a copy of the report should be sent to each client annually, together with the comments of the district manager and the chief inspector. This has been a burning question amongst clients of the Bank for many years. Over a long period they have demanded to see the reports submitted by field inspectors to the head office, and I have never been able to understand what objection there could be to supplying clients with a copy of their reports.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Is that done by the private banks?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Had they been supplied I think it would have been a step in the right direction. Many things are done by the private banks that I hope will never be done by an institution such as the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: There are many things done by the Agricultural Bank that are never done by a private bank.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: My reply to the first interjection by the gentleman from the Great Southern—and I hear in mind, Mr. President, that interjections are highly disorderly—is that I heard him say the other evening that it was quite unfair to make a comparison between the Agricultural Bank and a private bank.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: You are quite right.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It would be all to the good if the settler knew just what his faults were and then he would not have the excuse that many have to-day that they cannot get their grievances redressed. Neither would there be anything like that which we heard last evening when a member told us that he had been requested to approach the trustees on a certain matter, that he advised them not to help the client, and later informed the client that he had told the trustees something entirely different. I would never stoop to that. No man has put up a plea to me, because I say to him, "The best chance you have of getting approval to your request is your record." If the settler is dissatisfied with the report he should have the right to interview the district manager with, say, a local reputable farmer who could be elected by the clients of each district to act as their representative in such cases. I am talking about the ordinary system under which a farmer works. I have here a statement consisting of only two pages which is really heartbreaking. It is that of a man who has been on a good property and, arising out of a disagreement between himself and the field inspector, the inspector has not been on that man's property for 18 months. The last time he was there the settler chased him off it. The man in question has a good property and any quantity of water. He is an ex-marine engineer and a Scotchman at that. The property has been deteriorating now for some time. It is in my province and the matter is interesting many people. The district inspector should have gone there and settled

the argument. Either the settler should have gone on with his programme or he should have been put off the property. It is the property we have to consider and the success of the district as well. The district manager after a personal inspection of the property would decide what the future policy would be, and if the client did not agree, then he should vacate the holding. This would not prevent all mistakes or dissatisfaction, but it would do something like it and would be better than the policy, or lack of it, that has prevailed in the past. I realise as well as any other member that whatever method is adopted in these matters it will not be possible to get 100 per cent. satisfaction. It is a very difficult position the inspector has to carry out. I have letters of complaint of all kinds, but I have never taken sides beyond having the matter inquired into. Unless a third person intervenes, it seems to me that the unfriendly feeling between the inspector and the client is not carried on to the department.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: That is not happening in my district.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: That is quite an unnecessary and useless interjection because I am speaking of what is happening in the province I represent. Not only as regards pay but as to his authority should the status of the field inspector be raised. He should be able to authorise the purchase of spare parts, etc., up to certain amounts. Proper office accommodation should be provided for him at his centre, and if found necessary, the services of a typist obtained. He should not be allowed to have any interest in any Agricultural Bank farm either directly or indirectly, or in any farm whatsoever in the Bank district in which he is stationed. I will only make passing reference to the disgraceful affair brought to light by the commission on an investigation of a field officer's transactions in Agricultural Bank properties, because it is now too late to rectify the matter. We can only try to prevent such things happening again. The files of two of these officers who were dismissed on the recommendation of the Royal Commission are on the Table of the House, and members may see for themselves what happened. In the case to which I refer, I had personal knowledge of it, and unless members will take the trouble to read it up, they will scarcely believe that such things

would be possible. It is absolutely unbelievable. It was known to the head office and, as a matter of fact, the inspector concerned came down to head office about it. Knowing the Managing Trustee as I do, I think on this occasion his heart entirely ran away with his head, and instead of letting the axe fall, he allowed the officer to remain. Then the Royal Commission came along and unearthed something which was already known. Had the advice of the district inspector been followed, no field inspector would have been eligible to obtain an advance from the Bank. I realise the very great difficulty surrounding the framing of a Bill that will meet, as far as possible, the position as we find it to-day. I also realise the necessity for doing something as quickly as possible, but when I see two men, holding the same political views, both of whom own farms and each having had experience as a Minister, and at the same time holding different views on this Bill—I refer to Messrs. Troy and W. D. Johnson—then I am inclined to think the matter requires very careful consideration indeed. Personally I think the first thing that should have been done was to see that the primary producer received that which most other sections received, namely, a living wage. I agree that the State Government are not able to assist the primary producer as much as the Federal Government could, but more should have been done. As I have stated previously, just as it is necessary to assist the unemployed, so too it is necessary to do our utmost to help the primary producer. Even the man who is not at present a successful producer, it might be better for him and his family and for the State to at some slight cost keep him on his holding. I quote this case as typical of what may happen in hundreds of other cases if the long view is not taken. Otherwise we will not be able to keep these people out in the country where it is so easy to forget all about them. Some few weeks ago a man came to me in Geraldton and said that he wanted a job. As is my usual custom I questioned him and he said that he had come from the group settlements. I asked him why he had left there and he said that he had been unable to make ends meet and so he walked off. I was aware from what I had heard in Parliament and read in the newspapers that men who walked off their farms had no

chance of getting sustenance or relief work. I said to him, "There is not much chance for you but I will make representations." I did so and this is the letter I received in reply—

I have your letter of the 2nd instant regarding the case of This man was only recently farming under the group settlement scheme at Kudardup, and he vacated the property voluntarily. Recently the Government intimated to group settlers generally through the Press that any of them leaving a holding which provided them with a livelihood would not be considered for assistance. It has been ascertained from the group settlement authorities that holding was carrying 13 cows, and it was contended that his reasons for leaving the property were inadequate. I regret, therefore, that further consideration cannot be given to his request for assistance.

This man it appears walked off the settlement at what he reckoned was the peak time. I asked him why he did that and he replied that he had no chance of getting off at any other time. I asked him what he meant, and he said he had more money then than he would have at another time, and so he had brought his wife and family away. I repeated that I thought he had done a very silly thing. He was living with his four young children and his wife in one room in Geraldton, and when he came to see me he had one week of child welfare rations. But that very morning he had received notification from the Child Welfare Department that that assistance would no longer be provided. He asked me for any sort of a job at all. He said the returns from his 13 cows had brought him in £4 per month, but that it was impossible to live on that amount. I told him it may have been a very meagre existence, but at least he had a shack to live in on his block, and he had the milk, and probably he had some vegetables and other products to help feed the children. However, I could not convince him that he had done a foolish thing. I understand his wife has since left him and gone to work for a prominent civil servant, taking the youngest child with her, but leaving the other three, little more than infants, with her husband who has handed over the children to the care of the State. I am not trying to put over any sob stuff, but am merely stating the facts as they were given to me.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What does all this mean?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It directs attention to the fact that it is of no use dealing harshly with these men.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It would have been better for him to go on relief work than wait there.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: But he could not get on relief work, and so he is thrown on the local people. That is my complaint. I told him that if he could get on to the fields he would be able to secure work. From a State point of view I wonder whether it would not have been better to have paid this chap, who was getting £4 monthly from his cows, another £4 to keep him on his block rather than have him dragging his children all over the country.

Hon. W. J. Mann: If you were to give him £4 per month, probably he would no longer earn the other £4 with his butter fat.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The position is very difficult. I have in mind people on the wheatbelt, for the most part, men with a very different outlook. Everything should be taken into consideration before the position is made so hard for a man as to force him off his block, even if he has not been successful. I am aware that there are on the group settlements a lot of people who should never have been there, but I do not think we have so many misfits on the wheatbelt as there are in the groups.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Cannot they be made pay?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It is not a question of being able to make them pay; rather is it one of marking time until we can see daylight. We do not want to have an exodus of people from the country, because if they come off their blocks in sufficiently large numbers the Government of the day will be forced to do something for them. Even at some slight cost we should endeavour to keep them on their holdings. I have quoted this case as being typical of what may happen in hundreds of other cases if the long view is not taken. If the passing of the Bill will assist in obtaining centralisation of administration and co-ordination of effort between bank officers, and between bank officers and their clients, it will in that respect alone be a boon. If in addition a reduction of debts can also be arranged, it will put a different feeling into many who to-day are despondent. However, I am afraid no relief can be expected, owing to the fact that the first thought of

the new management will be to provide for the carrying on of those who are at present engaged in the industry. Our first thought should be to assist those willing to continue, before agreeing to take on any new clients. In that connection I am somewhat in agreement with the views expressed last night by Mr. Angelo, not with the idea of winding up the Bank, but with the idea of conserving the limited finances available for those who are in a very uncertain position. When the writing down takes place I hope it will extend to all; otherwise I fail to see how it can be brought about. A couple of months ago I quoted to the House a case which rather astounded members. I have it in mind still. Also I have here a letter from the Under Secretary for Lands dealing with applications made by those settlers for wire netting. Without that wire netting it is impossible for them to make a success of their holdings. I got a big shock, because I know those boys, brothers, returned soldiers, and they have a good report from the Agricultural Bank inspector of the district. When I got this letter telling me that an inspection of their rent account revealed arrears from 1926 to 1934 amounting to £1,906, I received a great shock. I have since made inquiries and I find that the bulk of it represents interest and arrears. Reverting to the writing down, we shall be forced to face it, and in the meantime a start should be made to write off all arrears. The Yandanooka case quoted last night will satisfy any reasonable person that it is impossible under present conditions for those people to pay these charges. I am opposed to the provision in the Bill that the officers of the Agricultural Bank shall be removed from the control of the Public Service Commissioner. I do not remember seeing any evidence to justify the Commission in putting up such a proposition, and I certainly think the staff have every right to expect to be dealt with in a fair and equitable manner. In removing them there will be danger that they will not be dealt with in that way. Serious consideration should be given to the practice of loading extra duties on the staff. There may be some duties which the Bank officials are best suited to carry out, but it should be clearly understood that if the Bank work is likely to suffer, extra assistance must be provided to prevent that. Also the practice of employing Agricultural Bank officers

to conduct elections or assist as polling clerks should be discontinued. Not that I have cause for complaint on the score of efficiency, but I know that Bank officers are regularly employed at election time, which necessitates their absence from the Bank during office hours, and involves a good deal of overtime in the evening. This, notwithstanding complaints from Agricultural Bank clients that their letters remain unanswered. The delay in answering correspondence was commented upon in the report of the Royal Commission. I am not favourable to a representative of the Treasury being a commissioner, for we have had quite enough of this part-time business. The Treasurer no doubt will have control over any amount he provides for the Bank, but I think another amount should be voted by Parliament annually, and that the Under Treasurer should take necessary action to see that he has proper supervision over that amount. I have tried to realise that the position is a very difficult one. I agree that the Government need offer no apologies for having appointed the Royal Commission. In this regard, papers have been tabled in the House to-day and on examination they may be found to contain something of interest. Before the Government appointed any members of the Royal Commission, it was their duty to see that they chose men of integrity, those who would be strictly and absolutely impartial so that when they made their recommendations those recommendations would be free from all possible taint. I support the second reading.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [8.15]:

The debate has taken a tone and a direction which has so thoroughly covered the various aspects associated with agricultural development through the Agricultural Bank that there remains very little for me to say. Although many members have spoken who are more closely in touch with the industry than I am, I think there are one or two points which, to a large extent, justify the findings of the Royal Commission. The history of the Bank, as given by Mr. Mann and Mr. Angelo last night, has made the position clear. The first conception of the Bank was that it should assist poor men gradually to establish homes of their own and become independent. This was extended as the result of Government policies until the institution is now perhaps one of

our largest State trading concerns, one that has an important effect upon the financial position of the State. The House has to determine whether it intends to continue that policy, and whether the Bank shall continue to be a trading concern, or shall revert to the first conception which was that of assisting persons who desired to establish themselves independently in the agricultural industry. There is no doubt the activities of the Bank are such as are undertaken by many of the ordinary trading banks. The conditions under which the Bank has functioned are such that I cannot conceive of any soundly-managed trading bank embarking upon a like policy. The result has been that the institution has come materially into direct competition with many of the Associated Banks. Mr. Angelo, in approaching the question from that standpoint, brought before the House a point of view which has not previously been ventilated, though it is one which deserves a considerable amount of thought. It is very difficult to exercise discrimination between the effects of our agricultural policy and the effects of the depression which has overcome agriculture in every country. We read of the state of affairs in Canada, the U.S.A., New Zealand, and the rest of Australia. We find very similar conditions existing in all those agricultural countries on account of the way the depression has hit the industry. This very important fact has been made plain to the House, that whilst the trustees have been blamed for many of the defects associated with the Bank, the main blame must be associated with Governmental policies.

Hon. A. Thomson: Absolutely.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I support that statement by pointing out that the Bank since 1911 has been operated on a basis of advances to the extent of 100 per cent. for the improvements to men who have settled on the land. We know what happened in 1914. The result was that the Bank which was already committed to the full value of the assets on which its money had been advanced, had to go beyond the 100 per cent. to assist in keeping these men on their holdings, and we had to create the Industries Assistance Board. I do not want to traverse the history of that board, for it has repeatedly been referred to. It does, however, serve to illustrate the desperate position in which many of the farmers

found themselves, and it illustrates the fact that many of those men should not have been allowed to remain on their holdings but, in their own interests and those of the State, should have been put off many years ago. From the financial standpoint, the idea of extending a degree of credit out of all proportion to the assets, was utterly unsound. That policy was followed and will still be followed under this Bill, which provides that advances may be made up to 70 per cent. of the value of the assets. That percentage is altogether too high. It does not leave sufficient margin for assisting a man when he strikes adversity, or at times when, with a sufficient margin, some financial institution would be justified in assisting him and would still be within the limits of a sound security. A few years ago it was recognised that the man who was fortunate enough to secure a block of land was thereby put in the position, owing to the tremendous advance in agricultural values, where he could say he was almost immediately within easy reach of a competence. A great deal of the failure of the Bank is due to the fact that men went on to farms who would never make farmers, but were fortunate enough to secure a block and were thereby enabled to make use of certain capital which was available for the block under the agricultural developmental policy of the State. From what I have gathered, the agricultural industry makes a greater demand upon the physical and mental capacity of the individual than a good many other occupations. To be a successful farmer, a man must have a highly scientific training and more than ordinary ability. It appears to be one of the most scientific occupations upon which man can embark. Unfortunately, that standard has not been attained by many of those people who have become clients of the Bank and have gone on the land at the expense of the State. The report of the Agricultural Bank for 1934 points out that during the last year no less than 163 clients discharged their liabilities to the Bank, the amount involved being £54,000 principal, and £4,000 odd interest.

Hon. A. Thomson: They were probably taken over by an Associated Bank.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I cannot imagine any Associated Bank taking over any of these people, in view of their experience with their

present clients. It appears that the law of the survival of the fittest must operate here, and that those who are weeded out will be weeded out with advantage to the State. We have to consider two questions, how the Bank is going to deal with its present clients, and what policy will have to be adopted for the future. It is obvious that with regard to the existing clients a standstill policy will have to be maintained until times improve. The collection of interest will be out of the question. With respect to the future policy of the Bank, there is a great deal in the contention of Mr. Angelo that the institution has served its purpose and that the original objective of the Bank has been achieved. The report of the institution for the last 12 months indicates somewhat the lines on which its future financial operations will be carried out. The expenditure incurred has been almost entirely in the direction of maintaining men on their farms and assisting them to carry out their operations more efficiently than they have done in the past. I cannot accept the idea that the trustees are to be blamed to the extent that blame is cast upon them by the Commission, because much is due to Governmental policy. The past, I think, has demonstrated that the Bank has been left with the inefficient men, with farms that ought never to have been occupied, whilst the best securities have been taken over by the private banks.

Hon. A. Thomson: It was the policy of the Bank not to give further advances.

Hon. H. SEDDON: It appears to me that the Bank has been used rather more than ordinary financial institutions would be used to assist men to establish themselves on the land. The policy has really been that of pioneering agriculture in districts which had never been properly tried out.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is so.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Many of the losses have been incurred because men have been settled in unsuitable areas and adopted farming methods there that were unsuitable to the district. The Bank has been financing these people. When the mistake was found out, the Bank had already made tremendous losses, but had to stick to the men whilst they changed over to different types of farming production.

Hon. A. Thomson: That was Government policy. The Bank frequently refused to assist until it was compelled to do so.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The Bank has been used to carry into effect Government policy to pioneer those districts. The work should have been inaugurated by means of experimental farms instead of being done on a wholesale scale by farmers who could not handle the proposition, with consequent bad results to the Bank. If it is thought this Bill will remedy that position, I am afraid the framers will be doomed to disappointment. In view of the drastic report and the drastic references by the Royal Commission to the trustees, no doubt the new commissioners will be compelled to adopt a very much harsher attitude towards the clients of the Bank than has been adopted by the trustees in the past. Much of the fault-finding has been associated with the leniency of the trustees towards their clients. There is every indication of a change of policy in that respect, a wise change, which will have the effect of weeding out many people who are now on the land and should never have been placed there. Clause 36 of the Bill appears to me to involve dangers. Some half-dozen different activities, each of them large and important in itself, are to be handed over to the commissioners. A great deal of the trouble in the past has been due to the fact that the trustees have had responsibilities thrust upon them with which they had no hope of coping. That position apparently is to be perpetuated with regard to the commissioners, who are to be charged with the administration of the Industries Assistance Act, the Discharged Soldier Settlement Act, the Group Settlement Act, the Group Settlers' Advances Act, and the Wire and Wire Netting Act. In order that there may be an effective organisation, the commissioners will have to be supported by some very capable men in executive positions.

Hon. J. Cornell: The commissioners are to be given more duties than the trustees have.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That is so. Mr. Piesse's idea that the trustees should be appointed in a way which would ensure a more continuous policy of operation is a good one. Something on the lines of the amendment proposed by him might well be adopted. There should be overlapping terms,

so that two new commissioners would not be appointed simultaneously, with the resultant disorganisation. I can foresee such disorganisation under the Bill unless some attempt is being made to retain the services of one of the present trustees, even if only in an advisory capacity. After all, there is no doubt that the knowledge and experience of those trustees would be valuable to the commissioners. If the new commissioners are prepared to stand up to the position, it is a good thing that greater powers are to be given to them, and that they will be freer from the kind of interference suffered by the trustees. This will be all to the good in the management of the Bank. I await with interest the Chief Secretary's reply on that aspect, which appears to me highly important. Now I wish to refer briefly to Clause 50. It has been commented on by every speaker so far. I am thoroughly seized of the serious dangers which will be associated with the passing of the clause in its present form, although I appreciate the reason for its inclusion. It is an extension of a provision included in the 1930 amending measure. It is a clause which confers powers the extent of which I do not think was fully appreciated by those who drafted the present Bill. Undoubtedly it was drafted with the idea of dealing with dishonest clients and establishing some kind of control over them. A more effective way would be to prosecute them in the usual manner and deal with them, if found guilty of improper practices, as other dishonest people are dealt with. I believe the clause, if passed as printed, will extend further than intended. The proposal will have the effect of seizing all the little sidelines which have been the perquisite of the farmer's wife hitherto, and which have materially assisted farmers in some districts to carry on when their credit was severely curtailed because of the depression. The best thing to be done—and I ask the House to support me in the amendment I have placed on the Notice Paper—is to provide that any prior encumbrances which have been effected on the property shall supersede any rights given to the commissioners under Clause 50. That would tend to remove much of the objection to the provision. A great deal more of the objection might be overcome by redrafting some of the phrases in the clause, so that it will be

obvious that it applies only to deal with the main lines of production. The whole thing boils down to this, that much greater attention will have to be given to the personal equation as represented in the client of the Bank. The ordinary banking institution has a system of inquiry, and places upon the local manager the responsibility of ascertaining the type of individual he is dealing with before committing itself to giving any great amount of credit. In this respect tightening up might be accomplished entirely to the advantage of the Agricultural Bank. Many of the more important aspects of the measure have been dealt with by agricultural members, who are far more closely in touch with the industry than I am; but it does seem to me that some features of Clause 50 which I do not think will operate advantageously have been lost sight of. Various stock firms have become involved in the way of providing sheep for holdings. When it is found that Clause 50 provides that the Bank can come in and take the progeny of those sheep to the detriment of the original holder, the result will be that the stock firms will simply refuse to provide any further stock for the farmer unless they have a very strong position established as against the Bank.

Hon. J. Cornell: Stock firms make arrangements with the Agricultural Bank even now.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The retrospective feature of the clause is that at any time the Agricultural Bank can step in to override the security given to the stock firms, the position of which is thus rendered highly doubtful. One hon. member has pointed out that he himself is placed in a highly doubtful position as regards some advances he has made to relatives. I do not think it is for one moment intended by the Government that the Bank shall step in ahead of an institution or a person who has rendered bona fide help to a client of the Bank.

Hon. L. Craig: I am sure that was not the intention at all.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I do not think it was, but apparently that is the position which has been created. Therefore I see the necessity for amendment of the clause. There are certain associated amendments which I have placed on the Notice Paper, and I hope

the House will assist me to incorporate them in the Bill. The measure, of course, is one for Committee. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

On motion by Hon. H. Tuckey, debate adjourned.

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan Suburban) [8.43]: I had not intended to speak on the Bill when it was introduced, but the remarks of various hon. members, and the realisation that the measure is being pushed through in rather a strange way, render it necessary for me to make a few observations. On yesterday's Notice Paper there were some 18 matters for discussion, some of which had been on the Notice Paper for a considerable time; yet this Bill, which reached the Chamber only yesterday, was submitted to be discussed and passed immediately. This fact made me feel, with other members, that the measure was being hurried through unduly. Such action is more than likely to be misconstrued by the people who advocate that the legislative terms with regard to local option polls should be observed. I believe that if a referendum were put to the people now, it would be defeated. I believe that no particular advantage would result from submitting a referendum at the present time. Moreover, occasionally it frightens me to see the easy way in which expenditure is being authorised by Parliament. I feel that in this instance, as in others, it is necessary to avoid the expenditure that might be involved. Undoubtedly the Act prescribes that the local option poll shall be held every five years, but I feel I must be strong enough to refuse to enforce the taking of the poll because it would be a waste of money. The advocates of prohibition would not advance their interests one iota if the poll were taken. It may seem illogical to speak in that manner, but I am influenced by the consideration that it might cost between £6,000 and £10,000 to hold what would be an absolutely futile poll. That is my honest conviction, and I do not desire to cast a silent vote.

HON. H. J. YELLAND (East) [8.46]: What I have to say will not influence the voting on the Bill, but nevertheless I shall not cast a silent vote. I oppose the Bill although I expect I shall be in the minority. One would be inclined to agree, if the monetary consideration was the only one to be borne in mind that the expenditure of £6,000 on taking a poll, the result of which would be a foregone conclusion in view of the feeling at present, would be an unnecessary expenditure of public funds. On the other hand we must keep faith with every section of the community. When the Licensing Act was passed in 1925 it contained provision for a prohibition poll to be taken every five years. Legislation was passed extending the time for taking the poll from 1930 to 1935 and the present Bill proposes to extend the period until 1940. That indicates that those who wish to record their disapproval of the present state of affairs are not to be given an opportunity to do so. I desire to call attention to the position as it was in America. We have been told that prohibition in that country has been a great failure. I had an opportunity to talk with a man who came from New York and he pointed out that the failure of prohibition in America was largely due to the fact that it was a Federal matter. He stated that when prohibition was a State concern, the individual States policed their own Acts and were able to combat breaches of the liquor laws within their own control. There were a few States where the people did not approve of prohibition and consequently had not passed, as State laws, enactments regarding prohibition. When the whole of the States had to be thrown into the melting pot to deal with this question, prohibition became a national law. When that result followed, many of the States told the Federal authorities they would have to police their own Act. Those States that refused to pass prohibition laws also refused to assist the Federal authorities in policing the Federal Act. In consequence, not only were the Federal police not able to cope with the difficulties that arose throughout the vast territory they had to supervise, but individual States, especially those along the eastern coast of America, not only refused to help but went so far as to put obstacles in the way of the policing of the Federal Act. This information came from a man who was not a prohi-

bitionist, and he told me he was thoroughly enjoying the privilege he had in Australia of being able to secure liquid refreshment anywhere at any time he desired. I quote my conversation with this American citizen in order to indicate the lack of co-operation between the States and the Federal police. It seems to me that that position would be applicable in Australia under similar conditions. If prohibition should be made a Federal matter, we would have exactly the same difficulty in the Commonwealth. If there is any possibility of the prohibition elements in Australia having their own way, it must be achieved by means of local option polls, with local control within the individual States. It would be far easier for each State to control its prohibition laws than it would be if prohibition were a Federal law and the Federal authorities did not have the hearty co-operation of each State. In such circumstances prohibition would be an absolute failure in Australia. That is the main point I wish to make.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The American citizen gave his own opinion.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: Yes, he was a business man in a big way in America and was able to weigh the matter up thoroughly. I know the fate of the Bill is a foregone conclusion, but I protest against the rapidity with which it was passed through the Assembly and is to be dealt with in this Chamber. No opportunity has been given to those people who desire to express their disapproval of the liquor laws of to-day or the conditions under which liquor is sold.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Not many take much notice of them because those people are too biased.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: We might have extended to those people the courtesy of allowing them to express their objections.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They are not prevented from doing so.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: They have not been given the necessary time. A few weeks ago a deputation waited upon the Minister, but no indication was then given of the action that was to be taken. Those people have informed me that they do not consider they have received as fair a deal as that extended to the liquor people. I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [8.55]: I was rather sorry to hear the concluding remarks of Mr. Yelland. It is a fact that a deputation waited upon the Minister some time ago. The deputation was received with courtesy equal to that extended to any other deputation.

Hon. H. J. Yelland: I agree with that.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The discussion on that occasion did not refer directly to this particular question. During the course of the hon. member's speech he expressed an opinion similar to that which I voiced when I moved the second reading of the Bill. In effect, he agreed that it would be a waste of time and money to take the poll next year.

Hon. H. J. Yelland: That is so.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: A great majority of the members agree that that is the position, so why should Mr. Yelland complain about undue haste? Does he not realise we are approaching the closing of the session and must make some progress? If the Bill were not passed, the State would be committed to the expenditure of £6,000 in taking a poll next year. We should take a commonsense view of such matters. Members have a right to express their opinions, and if they do not agree with the period specified in the Bill they can endeavour to alter it. The Government have adopted what they consider the proper attitude. During the past two or three years there has been no agitation in favour of the poll. There has been no demand from any quarter, so far as I am aware. In those circumstances, why should members waste time in arguing that we should provide a few days extra to consider whether we should take the poll next year or at some other time? We are here to do our work, and I have been pleased to note that many members agree with the Government point of view. I hope the Bill will be passed through all stages promptly so that we may know where we stand.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 98:

Hon. H. SEDDON: Clause 2 provides for deferring the poll from 1935 to 1940. Instead of postponing it for so long, I ask the members to consider the advisableness of taking a poll in 1936. There will be no election in that year and there can be no question of coercing members or making the action of the Government a feature of an election.

Hon. J. Nicholson: In 1936 the biennial elections for this House take place.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I should have said 1937. On two occasions the poll has been deferred and no expression of opinion by ballot has been allowed the people. Nor has any alternative proposal been discussed with those who feel that there should be some further advance in the matter of temperance. A suggestion worthy of consideration is that provision should be made for the taking of local option polls in the districts of the State. The preparation of petitions for the issue of new licenses leaves much to be desired, and there is no provision for people who hold contrary opinions to bring their views before the public. A canvasser for signatures is often able to get people to sign without their realising what they are signing. There has been a considerable amount of misunderstanding associated with the securing of signatures, though I will not say that misleading information has been given. I mention this to illustrate the need for amending the Act so that a considerable section of public opinion might be allowed an expression of opinion. I move an amendment—

That "forty" be struck out with a view to inserting "thirty-seven."

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I cannot accept the amendment. If the hon. member and those associated with him are sufficiently interested in securing amendments to the Licensing Act, there are means for them to bring their desires before the Government, and their representations will receive consideration. When 30 per cent. of the people on the Assembly roll are required to record votes, and three-fifths of the recorded votes are required to secure an alteration, there is no hope whatever of securing an alteration. That being so, why should members be so obstinate? Why throw the State into turmoil and entail expenditure up to £6,000

by the State and put people to the inconvenience of embarking on an expensive campaign?

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Plant Diseases Act Amendment.

2, Death Duties (Taxing).

Received from the Assembly.

RESOLUTION—ELECTORAL ACT, 1907-21.

To Inquire by Joint Select Committee.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to a select committee of both Houses being appointed to consider and recommend amendments to the Electoral Act, 1907-21, and amendments thereto, that it had appointed a select committee of five members, and that it requested the Council to appoint a select committee of the same number of members with power to confer with the committee of the Assembly.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1.)

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly notifying that it had agreed to the amendment made by the Council subject to further amendments, now considered.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Nicholson in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Paragraph (a).—Strike out "and Ceylon."

Hon. J. CORNELL: This amendment is really mine. It seems somewhat of an

innovation that I should take charge of the Assembly's message, the province really being that of the Chief Secretary, but the Minister has agreed to my doing this. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

When the amendment was framed, it was rather obscure whether or not the term "British India" included Ceylon. I understand that in another place the position is as obscure as ever. This is not in the Federal Act. If our Act does include Ceylon, it will be all right. If it does not, a Cingalee will not be able to come under the Act.

Question put and passed; the Assembly's amendment on the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Paragraph (c).—Add at the end, "by virtue of a certificate of naturalisation issued under the laws of the Commonwealth or any State of the Commonwealth."

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am informed that this amendment will throw the part of the measure to which it refers totally out of line with the Electoral Act. As a matter of fact, the words are redundant. Therefore I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Assembly's amendment on the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Hon. J. CORNELL: As this Bill and the Constitution Acts Amendment Bill which we shall deal with next, are practically related, we might defer drawing up reasons for disagreeing with one of the Assembly's amendments until we have disposed of the second Bill, since the reasons for disagreeing with one will apply to the other.

Resolutions reported, and the report adopted.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly notifying that it had agreed to the amendment made by the Council subject to further amendments, now considered.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Nicholson in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Paragraph (a).—Strike out “or Ceylon”:

Hon. J. CORNELL: The carrying of this amendment made by the Legislative Assembly will bring the position into line with the amendment made to the Electoral Act Amendment Bill we have just disposed of. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Assembly's amendment on the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Paragraph (c).—Strike out “under the laws of the United Kingdom or.” After the words “any State of the Commonwealth” strike out “or under the laws of any of the British Dominions.”

The CHAIRMAN: It will simplify matters if I divide this amendment into two. The Committee can deal with the first sentence.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move—

That the first sentence of the amendment be not agreed to.

This will mean that the words the Assembly propose to strike out “under the laws of the United Kingdom or” will remain in the amendment we sent along. The second part of the amendment I propose to accept.

Question put and passed; the Assembly's amendment not agreed to.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move—

That the Assembly's amendment to strike out “or under the laws of any of the British Dominions” be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Assembly's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of the Hon. J. Cornell, Hon. G. W. Miles and the Chief Secretary appointed to draw up reasons for the Council's disagreeing to two of the Assembly's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

BILL—MINE WORKERS' RELIEF ACT AMENDMENT.

Third Reading.

Debate resumed from the 11th December.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [9.55]: I was rather surprised at the attitude adopted by some members in connection with the third reading of this Bill. Mr. Williams appeared to think that it was being rushed through. It was before another place for some time and has been before us for some days. There was no desire to rush it through. Naturally it will not give universal satisfaction on the goldfields. As Mr. Williams suggested, it is probable another Bill will be brought down next year. The Minister for Mines gave careful consideration to the whole question. He visited the fields more than once, and interviewed different parties concerned in the measure. I do not say he was guided entirely by their advice, but he went as far as he could.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is not possible to amend the Bill as we would like to amend it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Nor is it possible to make it as generous as we would like. It cannot be amended to give as much as many would desire without placing a burden upon the Treasury, upon those engaged in mining operations, and on the men who are employed. Mr. Williams said he wished to have the Bill amended to provide that men with advanced silicosis and receiving compensation should be granted an allowance of £1 a week for their wives, if they had no other income and no other means. I take it he is referring to extreme cases of hardship. All that a mine worker needs to do in such circumstances is to satisfy the board that it is a case of extreme hardship, and under the Bill it will grant him an allowance. The amendments contained in the measure enable the board to do this. The hon. member also said that a man is allowed to work for two years in the mining industry without a certificate from the Commonwealth laboratory. It is presumed he referred to men employed in outlying fields such as Mt. Magnet, Cue, and Wiluna, far from the Commonwealth laboratory at Kalgoorlie. All such cases are examined at the laboratory annually.

not once in two years. When the examinations were instituted in 1925 there were no complete preparations for the work that had to be done. Since then a mobile unit has been purchased and established, and the laboratory is able to meet the situation annually, so I am informed by the Department of Mines. It was not possible for a period to examine the men annually, and at the outset some time elapsed before examinations could be made. Provisional certificates only have a currency of 12 months from the date of issue. It is the duty of the mine owner to insist that the miner shall obtain another provisional certificate at the expiration of that time, from the nearest medical officer available. The miner is required to do that, and so far as I know, he does it. There may be cases where the Act is not complied with. It is hardly correct in these days, now that provision has been made to deal with these cases, to say that men are allowed to work in the industry for two years without the necessary examinations. Mr. Williams also said that if a person contracts silicosis and leaves the industry and takes his compensation on a percentage basis, there is no provision for such a man contributing to the fund so that he may obtain his benefits after he has exhausted his compensation. The position is as stated by Mr. Williams, but I am informed that there would not be many cases of this nature. The great majority of miners who are disabled, or partly disabled, by silicosis would be quite capable of doing some work and earning wages. Any men who are receiving workers' compensation on account of silicosis only, however, will not have exhausted their compensation for some years yet; and any cases of the nature referred to will be considered at a later date if it is necessary to do so. Mr. Williams further stated—

I repeat that the Bill should be amended so that indigent persons might benefit. The amount to be contributed might be made more, and I do not think that the men in the industry will object to paying the extra sum over the 9d. per week now paid, so long as the beneficiaries receive another 10s. or 20s. per week.

The problem is not so easy to solve. The Minister for Mines, who is in full sympathy with the men, and members representing the goldfields, who are also in complete sympathy with the unfortunate miners, recognise, I think, that the Government have

made a step forward. The benefits described by Scale I. of the regulations under the Mine Workers' Relief Act are fixed by regulation, and any amendment of the benefits which may be thought necessary can be given effect to by amending the regulations.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [10.5] in moving the second reading said: The Bill has some relation to the measure which we have just disposed of. The first proposal of this Bill deals with the question of the issue of provisional certificates by the local medical officer where a man desires to work in the gold mining industry and where it is not possible for him, at the time, to get a certificate from the Commonwealth Health Laboratory. It is provided that when eventually the man is examined by an officer of the Commonwealth Health Laboratory, if he is found to have been suffering from one of those diseases at the time that he commenced employment on this occasion in the mining industry, he shall not be entitled to compensation under the Third Schedule to the Workers' Compensation Act. Members will realise the position, especially at the present time, when large numbers of men are going into the gold mining industry who perhaps years ago were employed in that industry and as the result of that previous employment are now suffering. Naturally, seeing that it is necessary to have a certificate before they can commence employment, if it is impossible for them to reach the Commonwealth Health Laboratory they do the next best thing, which is to get the local medical officer to give them a certificate; after which they are examined at the earliest possible opportunity. The Bill contains another provision designed to make clear the fact that paragraph 14 of the First Schedule to the Act is also intended to apply to the Second and Third Schedules when applicable. Paragraph 14 of the First Schedule has reference to a medical referee. The Act contains a provision whereby in

the event of a question of the worker's fitness to resume work having arisen, his case shall be submitted to a medical referee. Then, if either party is not satisfied with the medical referee's decision, the case is referred to a medical board, constituted of three members. In recent years it has been the practice of the State Insurance Office to refer these cases direct to the medical board, instead of in the first place to the medical referee. In practice it has been found that when a case is referred to a medical referee, either one or other of the parties concerned is not satisfied with the decision given, and that then an appeal has to be made to the medical board. With a desire to expedite matters and simplify procedure to some extent, the State Insurance Office have adopted that policy; but it has been declared to be illegal. In view of the fact that the Act lays down that these cases should first of all be submitted to a referee, before being submitted to a medical board, the State Insurance Office and the other parties concerned have no right to take a short cut straight to the medical board. If the Bill is passed, it will be quite possible, by agreement between the parties—namely, the employer and the employee—to refer the matter direct to the board, thus avoiding the necessity for going before the medical referee in the first place. The remuneration of the medical referee and of the members of the medical board is paid from Consolidated Revenue; but if there should be other expenses incurred, then it is necessary that some agreement should be reached between the parties as to how the expenditure shall be met. If no agreement is arrived at, the party against whom the medical board's decision is given must pay the other expenses. Paragraph 20 of the First Schedule also provides that where agreements of this kind are entered into, they shall be sent to the local court for registration. This is considered to be unnecessary, and therefore the Bill contains an amendment to the effect that agreements of that kind need not be registered in that way. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [10.10]: I second the motion for the second reading, and am of opinion that the measure could safely be passed without debate. It has satisfied the scrutiny of another place, and

scrutiny elsewhere, and is a measure that will simplify procedure.

HON. E. H. ANGELO (North) [10.11]: It is not my intention to comment upon the contents of the Bill, but I consider it my duty to take this opportunity of bringing before the Government the very serious handicap which the Workers' Compensation Act imposes upon industry in Western Australia. I shall give the Honorary Minister some little information which I have been able to glean.

Hon. J. Cornell: This has nothing to do with the Bill.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: The whole question of workers' compensation is bound up in this matter.

Hon. J. Cornell: No, it is not.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: As a Bill to amend the Workers' Compensation Act is before the House, I believe I have the right to offer some comments on the working of the Act since its inception. Upon investigation I find that this is the position: the cost per head of population in the various States of Australia and New Zealand for workers' compensation is as follows—and I want hon. members to realise the figures—

	s.	d.
Tasmania	1	6
Victoria	2	8
South Australia	3	3
Queensland	5	11
New Zealand	6	2
New South Wales	6	7
Western Australia	10	11

The cost here is 10s. 11d. per head of population as against 1s. 6d. per head in Tasmania. Employer in the mid-hazardous manufactures list in Western Australia are complaining that it costs them from 3s. 6d. to 4s. per employee per week for workers' compensation. This means that Western Australian industry is heavily handicapped in comparison with Eastern States industry. The position in New South Wales was inquired into some little time ago. In that State alarm was recently felt because the percentage of medical and hospital expenses had increased enormously. The report of the New South Wales Government Statistician showed that during the past three or four years there had been a steady increase in the ratio of expenses to the compensation received by the worker, and that this ratio had reached the high figure of 12.13 per cent. This is inclusive of

all amounts paid by way of compensation. If the comparison was made against weekly compensation alone—that is, excluding lump-sum and death payments—the percentage was 13.31. Five years ago the proportion in Western Australia was 39.1; it has now risen to the astonishing figure of 64.5.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Too high.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: It is absolutely ridiculous. It is staggering. A determined and united effort should be made to improve the position. Such an effort has, I believe, been made in New South Wales, where, however, the position was mild in comparison with what exists in Western Australia. Undoubtedly the position here has been brought about by the abnormal charges being made by the medical profession. The majority of the doctors—I do not say all of them, as we still have doctors who are reasonable and play the game—but the majority are making a welter of the Workers' Compensation Act. There is no disguising that fact. In my opinion, it is high time for the Government of Western Australia to institute an inquiry into the operation of that Act. That would be fair not only to the employer but also to the employee, because if so much were not taken for medical and hospital expenses, there would be a chance of the employee getting a better deal. Investigations have revealed that a large percentage of the doctors, hospitals, and chemists are deliberately taking advantage of the Act to obtain increased incomes. A feature that has cost a considerable amount of money is that in many instances the doctors themselves own hospitals and send patients to those hospitals for treatment. Doctors, almost as a rule, ask patients before treating them, whether they are under the Workers' Compensation Act. That is usually the first question asked. I know of many instances where doctors, after having been informed that the patient was not under the Workers' Compensation Act have recommended him to go elsewhere. Some years ago, when I was a member of another place, I read particulars from a number of accounts that had been submitted to me by an insurance company. There was one account that I regarded as particularly staggering. It concerned an Italian who had lost the top of his finger. The doctor's account came to £99 16s.; hon. member's will realise that £100 was the

limit under the Act. Eight X-ray examinations had been made of that simple little trouble. The doctor also charged for so many visits and so many prescriptions. As a rule, doctors do not charge for visits and prescriptions separately, but combine them in the one charge.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Was that account incurred in the country?

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: No, it was a city account. There were several other accounts, and I remember that when I had finished dealing with them, Mr. Collier spoke and said he was glad the matter had been ventilated. He said he had been astounded to hear the details and that he intended to have an investigation made.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I asked whether the Italian's account was a country account because that sort of thing is not done in the city.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: That particular account was sent by a city doctor.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Doctors do not dispense in the city.

Hon. V. Hamersley: But they may include charges if they have their own dispensary.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: In my opinion, doctors ought to charge such fees as may be regarded as reasonable respecting an individual of the industrial community who is not an injured worker. Instead of fixing charges on that basis, in many instances the doctors have levied charges for people who are under the Workers' Compensation Act. This particular point was emphasised by the Commissioner in New South Wales who reminded medical practitioners that the Act was designed to indemnify workers from the cost of treatment they would ordinarily be called upon to pay, and not to give the right to doctors to increase fees for the treatment of injured workers. As a matter of fact, fees under the Workers' Compensation Act should be less than those that would be charged to a wage-earner who was not insured, because there are no bad debts. On the other hand, the injured workers do not receive that benefit.

The Honorary Minister: Then we should have a price-fixing Bill to deal with that phase.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: What I suggest is that the Government should conduct an investigation regarding the whole position. It could be done without injury to the em-

ployees and would certainly lessen the burden on the employers. These differential charges are being levied throughout the State. I will quote a few more of the instances of which I have particulars. A doctor wrote to a company in Perth as follows:—

This man need not remain in hospital, but before I decide the matter I will be glad to know if you are agreeable to make him an allowance for board and lodging; otherwise I will keep him in hospital.

Another man who suffered from an injured toe was kept in hospital from the 25th April to the 21st May. On the latter date he was certified as fit to return to work. The only explanation given by the doctor was that the man's home was 20 miles away. In that instance the hospital account amounted to £11 14s., the doctor's account, being the maximum charge for each week in hospital. £6 10s., and the amount of compensation the man received was £5 15s. In another case, a doctor charged for three attendances per week, while at the same time the patient was having two daily out-patient's attendances at a hospital, together with massage. That made a total of almost four attendances per day at a time when the man was walking round the streets. In another instance, a doctor ordered that a man should have 21 teeth taken out. I cannot understand how that man came under the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act, but, at any rate, it was agreed to extend the provisions of the Act to cover him. The doctor would not allow the 21 teeth to be taken out at once, but directed that one tooth should be removed at a time, and each removal required the administration of an anaesthetic. In another instance, a girl ran a needle into her finger but insisted that the needle had not broken. She went on with her sewing, yet the doctor insisted upon an X-ray examination, and she was charged accordingly. I think these instances should be sufficient to deal with that phase. The other day I heard of a patient who had been attended by a doctor for a considerable time. Although the man said he felt well enough to go back to work, it was a week or two before the doctor permitted him to do so. At last the doctor said to the man, "Well, Jack, I cannot keep you here any longer. I will have to give you a clearance. But remember

this: You tell your mates I gave you a good time, and kept you in hospital to give you a good start."

Hon. C. B. Williams: What is the name of that doctor?

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: I cannot give the hon. member the name.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Then it is not worth while.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: What I have stated is an absolute fact. I mention that instance because that shows the doctor tried to take an undue advantage over other doctors who are playing the game. I am glad to be able to say that quite a large number of doctors are still acting in an honourable way towards their fellow-men.

Hon. J. Cornell: Have not the doctors a union?

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: There is the British Medical Association, and not long ago that organisation created a board so that insurance companies and others could submit their grievances for investigation. That move has had a fairly good effect, but, unfortunately, the board cannot discipline every doctor. Not all medical men are taking advantage of the Act in the way I have indicated. I was also shown a letter, a little while ago, from a young doctor in the Eastern States. He had received a letter from a friend who was also a doctor, and had been in Western Australia for about six months. The young doctor in Western Australia wrote to his friend suggesting that he should come over and join him. He informed his friend that, "This is paradise for doctors owing to the Workers' Compensation Act." In consequence of that letter, the doctor in the Eastern States wrote asking about the operations of the Workers' Compensation Act in Western Australia.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I can substantiate that, too.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: I do not suppose there is any member of this House who does not know what has been going on.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Of course we do.

Hon. J. Cornell: Why do not you introduce an amending Bill?

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: I thank the hon. member for the suggestion.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: But don't do it this session.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: I will not. The mere fact that this matter has been venti-

lated may bring doctors up to scratch, and make them put on their thinking caps. I have dealt with this matter because it seems a great shame that a section of the medical fraternity—I have already pointed out that this does not apply to all doctors—have been making a welter of the workers' compensation business in the interests of their own pockets. Is there any other section of the community that is as well off as the doctors? Why is it? If members ask half of the doctors, they will admit it is because of the liberal conditions of the Workers' Compensation Act. In consequence of what I have disclosed, I urge the Government to take an early opportunity to appoint a committee—I do not suggest one from the House—and have an inquiry into the matter. They can select one or two reliable officers who will have the right to take evidence and conduct an investigation regarding the operations under the Workers' Compensation Act. Such a course will not do any harm to the employees, but it may afford the employers considerable relief. Most certainly it would have the effect of bringing down the premiums charged for workers' compensation business.

HON. R. G. MOORE (North-East) [10.25]: I do not desire to say much about the Bill, but rather about the Workers' Compensation Act, which the Bill will amend. Mr. Angelo said that every member of this House knew what had been going on with regard to the medical fraternity. I confess I am one who does not know anything about it. I am not aware that doctors have resorted to methods described, and I am glad to be able to say that. There is one matter regarding the Act that appeals to me as most unfair. I refer to the compensation payable to dependants of an individual who had been killed. Some time ago an instance was brought under my notice regarding a man who had been killed in a mine at Kalgoorlie. His mother applied for compensation and stated that she had been dependent upon her son. In consequence she received compensation. Some four years later another son was killed in a mine and again she applied for compensation. On that occasion the mother was told that she could not receive any compensation because she had reported that the first son who had been killed had maintained her.

Hon. C. B. Williams: If she had fought that case, I think she would have won.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: I think she can still fight it. I desire to draw the Minister's attention to the definition of "dependants" in the principal Act. The definition reads—

"Dependants" means such members of the worker's family as were wholly or in part dependent upon the earnings of the worker at the time of his death, or would, but for the incapacity due to the accident, have been so dependent.

In the second instance, no compensation was paid to the woman because she had already received compensation on account of the death of the first son.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Was a lump sum paid in that case.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Yes.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: There you are!

Hon. R. G. MOORE: My opinion is that if the mother had 10 sons and all were killed, she should be entitled to compensation in respect of each.

Hon. J. Cornell: How could that be?

Hon. R. G. MOORE: If payments are made of the premiums, the dependant should be entitled to receive compensation. If the second son had been the son of someone else, the compensation would have been paid. Simply because he happened to be the second son of the one mother, no compensation was paid. That sum had been paid four years before and could easily have been spent by the time the second son was killed.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It would have been a substantial amount.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Yes, about £600. The second son paid the full premium.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I think that would be a matter for the law courts.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: It is of sufficient importance to bring before the House. I consider the position most unfair and I intend to tell the woman the wording of the definition of "dependant." The definition fixes no time limit and it seems to me that with the lapse of time she would become dependent on the second son and would have a good claim.

HON. C. B. WILLIAMS (South) [10.31]: If a miner works in the industry under a provisional certificate and remains in it for two years, and the laboratory doctor says he is unfit to continue, he will not be compensated. We understand that a flaw has

been discovered in the parent Act. I agree that no man should be allowed to come to Western Australia, enter the industry here, and a month or two afterwards have a claim against the employer under the First Schedule. There should be some safeguard for the protection of the employer.

Hon. J. Cornell: He might bring the disease with him.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Yes, and when a miner is concerned the liability falls on the State Insurance Office. Parliament amended the Workers' Compensation Act in 1927 to cut out the provision for a medical referee as regards diseases under the Third Schedule. The mining branch of the A.W.U. asked the then Government to have the provision relating to medical referees repealed, because such procedure was a waste of time. If a miner goes to his doctor and the doctor says he is suffering from a compensable disease, the employers send him to their doctor, which means the Commonwealth Laboratory in Kalgoorlie. This applies to Kalgoorlie workers. The two doctors agree or disagree, or determine some percentage of liability. Previously he had to move through the clerk of courts and pay a fee of one guinea to go to a medical referee. However, the Act was amended and he now goes direct to a medical board. If a man loses portion of a finger, leg or arm and there is a disagreement between his doctor and the doctor of the insurance company, to go to a medical referee is a waste of time and money. Neither side would be satisfied and a medical board would be applied for. I have no objection to that; it is a quicker way of getting a settlement. But I object to the clause in the Bill that loads the man with extra expense. The injured worker is suffering enough disability without having to meet any expense when he asks for justice from a medical board. Such expense should be met out of Consolidated Revenue. It is not fair that a lawyer should be allowed to appear against an injured man. He has not enough money to employ a lawyer, and if he lost the case he would have to pay the opposing lawyer. I have had considerable experience of these matters because I have appeared for many workers before medical boards. My assistance costs the men nothing, and with my knowledge of the Act I have been fairly successful. It also costs the employers nothing when I take up cases for

my constituents, even when I win for the men. Therefore I cannot see why the worker should be called upon to pay special expenses and I object to that provision in the Bill. When a man is disabled by accident, there is no reason why he should be loaded with special expenses simply for appearing before a medical board to get what is his right, namely, justice. I have stated on previous occasions that the insurance people are on a good wicket. I do not know whether they will be on it much longer. I have started an agitation amongst the miners to induce them to refuse to pay the amount for medical fees. They have to pay 6s. per calendar month to the doctor. That is a condition of employment. For that payment they receive very little, and after all they are insured under the compensation Act up to £100 for expenses in the event of an accident. What Mr. Angelo has said does not apply to the medical practitioners on the goldfields, so far as I know. It is a condition of employment that the men contribute to the medical fund. The mines collect the money and pay it direct to the lodge, to the medical fund, or to the doctor of the employee. When an accident happens, no matter how serious it may be, the medical man has to treat the worker without any remuneration. I would not say that the doctor was not entitled to more remuneration than he gets, but when we consider that there are 3,500 miners working in Kalgoorlie and that they contribute 6s. per month each to the medical profession of Kalgoorlie, we realise that a considerable amount is paid.

Hon. E. H. Angelo: It would be a good subsidy.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Out of that the doctor has to pay for hospital accommodation as well. The only time when the State gets hit is when a worker has to be sent to Perth for special treatment and those expenses are met out of the £100 provided.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That system does not encourage malingering, does it?

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I do not know whether every member of this House started life with a silver or a golden spoon in his mouth. Men everywhere are of different types, but would a man malingering to get half wages? I have heard it said that certain men like to be on the dole, but I think they would prefer to be at work. The goldfields labourer receives the highest wages in the

State, but why should a man be content with £2 3s. a week when he can earn £4 6s.? I have met with accidents and I was only too glad to get back to work in order to get the extra money. I admit there are some who malingering, but there are bad amongst all classes. A man, assuming he had no family, would be very lazy who was satisfied with £2 3s. or £2 4s. 6d. as against the full wage. If he had a large family probably he would draw an amount almost equivalent to full wages. I have met malingers and have had occasion to refuse their contributions to the fund of which I was secretary, but they are not numerous. The average man in my walk of life is only too anxious to get back to work and will not remain on compensation longer than possible. I oppose the levying of any expense on the worker, who is only seeking justice. In going before a medical board a man is seeking a settlement so that he can return to work, and facilities should be provided for him. The decision of the medical board is final. The sooner he gets back to work the better it is for the employer. At present, of course, the employer is not recognised; an insurance company takes the risk. The sooner a man can get to the medical board and get satisfaction, the cheaper it is for the insurance company that carries the employer's risk. I object to any man being allowed to work two years in a mine and then, if found to be suffering from miners' complaint, to get only his contributions returned to him. If miners are to be examined, let them be examined before they enter a mine. It is possible for a man to work in a rise for only two years and get dust. If that happened, the laboratory doctor would say at once that the man was suffering from dust and was not entitled to continue in the mine. A man might arrive from Broken Hill and become a charge on the State one month after entering the industry here. X-ray plants have been provided at various centres and there is an up-to-date plant in Kalgoorlie, and it should be possible to examine men entering the industry and, if they show signs of physical weakness or disease, to tell them at the time. A man should not be allowed to work for two years as I pointed out on another Bill a couple of days ago and then be told that he has no right to compensation. The position should be safeguarded. I approve of

the cutting out of the medical referee, because that is only a waste of time and money.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate and reported without amendment.

Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. C. B. Williams, Bill recommitted for the purpose of further considering Clause 3.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Nicholson in the Chair; Hon. E. H. Gray in charge of the Bill.

Clause 3—Amendment of the First Schedule:

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: My desire is to strike out any reference to anything that is going to saddle the worker with costs, and I think I can do that by asking the Committee to delete a portion of proposed Section 14A. I move an amendment—

That Paragraph (iv) of proposed Section 14A be struck out.

The CHAIRMAN: This is a matter between the worker and the employer and, as the paragraph points out, they may agree between themselves which one of them shall bear and pay the costs and fees, and that failing any agreement the party against whom the decision lies shall bear the costs and fees. So that the successful party will get his costs. The hon. member need have no fear about there being any inequality there.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: This does not apply solely to mining. It applies to all work. A worker may for a period of six months have been on half wages, and he may be called upon to go before a medical board. We can assume what condition a working man may be in after having been for six months on half wages, and he would not relish being taken before a medical board to determine his fitness for work or perhaps a claim that he may have for compensation. Of course I do not know of such a case, but I do know of cases where insurance companies have employed lawyers and the worker has had to fight his own case.

In that case he has no costs, and if he succeeds there is nothing for him to recover. If he fails, why should the employer have the right to apply for costs against the worker who might have been unfortunate enough to be hurt and go before the medical board?

The CHAIRMAN: If the worker is successful, he can recover costs.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: But what costs?

Hon. J. CORNELL: If this paragraph be struck out it will be necessary to insert something in its place, for it is a question of costs, and someone must pay the costs.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Under the Third Schedule of the Workers' Compensation Act if a worker applies for compensation the employer sends him to another doctor, who may say he is fit for work. The man then demands to go before the medical board at no cost to himself. I am only asking that this provision in the Act be allowed to remain as it is, that there shall be no costs to either side.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: He goes to a medical referee.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: No, this is doing away with the medical referee. The medical referee means a waste of time, and so he is being cut out. The worker goes direct to the medical board at no cost to himself.

Hon. L. Craig: Suppose the union secretary did not represent the miner, the miner would have to employ a representative.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Yes, or represent himself.

Hon. L. Craig: So if the union secretary is not there, the miner has to pay someone to represent him, and the other side employs a lawyer.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Yes. The applicant generally gets the secretary of his union to take his case, and of course that secretary cannot apply for costs. If this paragraph be struck out we shall be just as we are to-day, and no costs will be payable by either side.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am sorry I cannot accept the amendment, although I can express sympathy with the hon. member in his desire. However, the amendment might even work against the desire of the hon. member. This is not de-

leting Clause 14 of the First Schedule, but is merely inserting a new provision. I suggest to the hon. member that he does not press his amendment, which might do more harm than good.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I do not want the Honorary Minister to tell me anything about workers' compensation, for I know what I am doing, whereas the Honorary Minister knows nothing about it. I am speaking for the workers, whom the Honorary Minister is supposed to represent. I can see nothing to the prejudice of the workers in the deletion of paragraph IV. Under it the worker seeking a decision from the medical board is liable to pay costs, whereas to-day he is not liable for anything. I could understand Mr. Holmes or Mr. Miles trying to put this paragraph into the Act, but I cannot understand a Labour Minister trying it.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not reflect on the Honorary Minister.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I am not doing so. I am fighting for what I think is right, namely the cutting out of costs.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	10
Noes	..	..	..	..	16

Majority against 6

AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. R. G. Moore
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. C. G. Elliott	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. E. H. Hall
	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. E. H. Angelo	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. J. M. Macfarlane
Hon. A. M. Clydesdale	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. J. T. Franklin
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Bill again reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time, and passed.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [11.16] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to bring the State Government Insurance Office under the provisions of the State Trading Concerns Act of 1916.

Hon. G. W. Miles: To legalise it.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. The Bill will have the effect of validating the operations of this office since its inception, and will also authorise the continuance of its operations.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And extend them.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: If thought fit by the Governor-in-Council. There is a principle involved, namely the right of the Government to enter the field of insurance. This is a principle which has become well established not only in Australia but in other parts of the world. I claim that wherever State insurance has been established it has had a beneficial effect not only upon the workers who are mostly insured in State offices, but upon the employers as well. It has meant a saving of millions of pounds to the employers of Australia. State insurance offices have been established in several of the other States in Australia for many years. Our office here has only been established since 1926, and was only established then because the private insurance companies were not prepared to do the business required of them.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Part of that business the State office will not do now.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: In 1926, when the Workers' Compensation Act was amended, and it became necessary for the mining companies to insure their employees under the Third Schedule of that Act, the private offices said that could only be done provided an exorbitant premium was paid. After certain negotiations and after a committee had inquired into the matter and recommended that the premium should be £4 10s. per £100, the private offices gave the mining companies three days' notice of their intention to terminate their contracts. It therefore became necessary for the State to step in and protect the employers and the employees in the goldmining industry. Experience has shown that the operations of the State office have been very successful,

notwithstanding that the premium charged has been nowhere near the figure suggested by the private companies. I remember on a previous occasion when I had the opportunity to speak in this Chamber on State insurance, I spent some time in indicating what a wonderful field there was in the insurance business, and what a wonderful money-spinner it had been for private companies, and what benefits had accrued from the establishment of State insurance offices in various parts of Australia and in other parts of the world.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What about reading the Auditor-General's remarks?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I feel sure that no construction can be placed on the comments of the Auditor-General that will be unfavourable to the State office, more particularly when it is compared with private offices. State insurance offices have been established for many years in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand. In many of the States of America, State insurance offices are also established. In every case this has led either to an increase in the benefits to those who are insured with these offices, or to a substantial reduction in the premiums charged. In some cases it has led to both things happening. The Victorian State office was established in 1914 in the year when the Workers' Compensation Act was passed. Two of the provisions of that Act were that insurance by employers was compulsory, and that a State office should be established. This office operates in competition with other companies, and the policies issued by it are guaranteed by the Government. The effect of the operations of this office was to reduce the rates charged compared with those charged by private companies, and despite this reduction the State office there distributed in bonuses to employers to the end of June, 1933, approximately £98,000, and accumulated reserves amounting to £96,560, whilst the profits earned since its inception amount to £207,555. Victoria is a conservative State and it was many years before Western Australia in establishing its office. The expenses ratio in 1932-33 was only 16.7 per cent., this being lower than that of any other insurance office transacting workers' compensation business. I have here some interesting figures on the question of the expense of this class of business in the State offices in the United States. It is said that

where private companies only are operating, the expenses ratio is 38 per cent. Where the State offices are operating in competition with private companies, the expenses ratio is approximately 10.6 per cent., but where the State has a monopoly the expenses ratio is only 4 per cent. These figures show conclusively that where State insurance offices are established, they can operate not only in competition with other companies but under any circumstances, and can operate in a way that must be beneficial to all parties. In Queensland the State Insurance Office was established in 1916. It had a clear monopoly of workers' compensation insurance. In that case, the benefits to the worker were increased, but the premiums were not increased. The Government appropriated £20,000 to establish the office, but of that amount only £3,570 was required. That sum was repaid to the Treasury within 12 months. Since the Queensland office was established, it received £6,400,000 in premiums up to the 30th June last, and paid in claims £4,800,000. The premiums received have exceeded the claims paid and the administration charges by nearly £720,000. The office also has a fire insurance department. When the Queensland office first undertook fire insurance, there was an almost immediate reduction in the premiums charged by private companies of 33-1/3rd per cent. That office has also been remarkably successful. New South Wales has transacted its own internal Government business since 1911, and a State office was opened there in 1926. There was a new Workers' Compensation Act passed in that year; and the local associated underwriters decided that it would be necessary to increase rates by 150 per cent., with an additional charge of 40s. per cent. on all rates to cover disease. I would like hon. members to bear those figures in mind. The Government office reduced the disease rate from 40s. to 20s. as from the 1st July, 1926, and subsequently reduced the general rates by 33 1/3 per cent. as from the 1st October, 1926. In 1926-27 the cost of compensation to all insured employees was substantially reduced by allowing a bonus discount of 20 per cent.; and from the 1st July, 1927, the rating for clerical staffs was reduced from 17s. 6d. per cent. to 10s. per cent. That is a wonderful record, and the same thing applies in practically every case where State insurance has been established. In New Zealand, where there is no monopoly

for the State office, but competition with 52 companies, a system of payment of rebates to policy holders was established in 1923, with the result that policy holders have benefited to the extent of £263,573 in eleven years. New Zealand also has a fire insurance section. For the year ended December, 1933, the fire insurance section had a premium income of over £200,000. It paid in claims £49,005, and returned to policy holders by way of rebates £30,060. The total assets of the fire insurance section as at 31st December, 1933, amounted to £1,060,513. These are remarkable figures, especially considering the fact that in addition to reserves having been built up to such an extent, premiums have been reduced and benefits have been increased. To my way of thinking, at any rate, the figures show clearly the necessity for the establishment of State insurance not only in Western Australia but in every country. I have already remarked that in this State the Government were practically forced to start a State Insurance Office. Had they not done so there would have been no cover for the employers, and of course the men would have been in a similarly unfortunate position. What the attitude of the private companies would be if they had the field to themselves was shown by the fact of their being prepared to give three days' notice to an industry such as the mining industry of Western Australia of their intention to cancel policies. The State Insurance Office was opened at only a few days' notice, and it has cost Western Australia nothing. The private companies declared they had no data upon which to estimate what the risks were likely to be and what, therefore, the premiums should be. The Government had no more data than the private companies had, but within three days we were able to open an office and charge a premium far below that which the private companies suggested would have to be charged. During the whole of the time that our State Insurance Office has been established, it has not had to call upon the Government for any money whatsoever.

Hon. W. J. Mann: There have been substantial increases in premiums, though, have there not?

The HONORARY MINISTER: In some cases. However, the State Insurance Office

is not out to make profits. The private companies are.

Hon. W. J. Mann: The State Insurance Office made a loss of £24,000 last year.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not think it can be said that there was a loss.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The Auditor General's report says so.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The object of a State Insurance Office is not to make profits, but to give service to both parties, the employer and the employee. I do not propose at this late hour to weary members by dealing with any more of the many phases of the subject. I assume I shall have another opportunity before the Bill reaches the Committee stage; if not, I shall have an opportunity during that stage. I do consider, however, that the time has arrived when Parliament should be prepared to recognise the State Insurance Office, to legalise its operations, in other words to validate what has been done to date, and also to authorise the continuance of the operations of the office. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.37 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 13th December, 1934.

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

QUESTION—UNEMPLOYMENT, RELIEF WORKERS.

Mr HAWKE asked the Minister for Employment—1, How many relief workers are graded as "A" class, "B" class, and "C" class? 2, How many of the relief workers are registered as tradesmen?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT replied: 1, As only those men who claim physical unfitness are medically examined, the information is not available. 2, The department has already taken action in the direction of compiling corrected particulars of the callings of each man employed in Government relief works. The compilation is not yet completed.

BILL—DEATH DUTIES (TAXING).

Introduced by the Minister for Justice and read a first time.

MOTION—ELECTORAL ACT, 1907-21.

To Inquire by Joint Select Committee.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE

(Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [4.34]: I move—

That a joint select committee of both Houses of Parliament be appointed to consider and recommend amendments to the Electoral Act, 1907-21, and amendments thereto.

The Electoral Act, originally passed in 1907, has been amended in its machinery sections by the Acts of 1911, 1918, 1919, 1921 and even subsequently to that, but it was consolidated up to 1921. Because the Act has been passed piecemeal in that fashion, various sections are in conflict with each other, which does not tend to the smooth working of the administration of the Act. A little while ago I gave notice of a Bill to amend the Act. It was intended in that Bill to deal with the question of electors voting other than at the poll in the district for which they were enrolled. I particularly desired to bring down that Bill this session because, when we have an alteration of the electoral law, it is as well that the people in outback parts of the State, who are mostly concerned in such alterations to the law, should have ample time in which to acquaint themselves of the nature of the alteration. I remember that the previous Government