

drastic and even a repulsive remedy. The threat of a summons probably has the same effect as a distress warrant has upon defaulting ratepayers. The issue and service of a summons, which would not take place for some time, cost only 3s.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I was inclined to vote for the clause until I heard Mr. Franklin. Who inspired this clause? The municipalities?

The Chief Secretary: It is a departmental clause.

Hon. G. FRASER: Even on the arguments of those who support the retention of the existing section, that remedy is ineffective, few municipalities ever putting it into operation. The remedy is merely a game of bluff. I want something that will really help local authorities. The power to summon defaulting ratepayers would not necessarily be exercised. There is a great difference between a threatened summons and an actual distress warrant.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: Various provisions of the Bill seem to aim at hampering local authorities in securing payment of rates. If the local authorities wanted the clause, would they not have asked for it? Yet the Minister says this is a departmental clause. I have been told by local authorities that they want the relevant section of the Act retained. The clause is likely to prove more expensive than the existing section to a ratepayer who is behind. I understand that during the past 15 years there have been only two cases of distraint in Perth. Summonses would prove far more expensive than the present system, especially in the case of suburban ratepayers, who would have to pay mileage. The Act functions well. Let us leave well alone.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The present method, which is 50 years old, should be scrapped. A local court summons does not require the services of a solicitor, and therefore is not expensive.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Under the present system 30 days are allowed after notice, and only then can there be distress on chattels. The deletion of the clause would affect succeeding clauses. It is time that the relevant sections of the Act were amended.

Clause put, and a division called for.

The CHAIRMAN: I give my vote with the ayes.

Result of division:

Ayes .. .. .	12
Noes .. .. .	11
Majority for .. .. .	1

#### AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. E. H. R. Hall	Hon. C. G. Elliott
	(Teller)

#### NOES.

Hon. E. H. Angelo	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. L. Oraig	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. T. Franklin	Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. H. V. Piessse
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	(Teller)

Clause thus passed.

Clause 52—Agreed to.

Clause 53 postponed.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 9.47 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Tuesday, 9th November, 1937.*

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

### QUESTION—MINES DEPARTMENT, UNDER SECRETARY.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Mines: In view of the report on page 246,

under the heading of "Personal," of "The West Australian Mining and Commercial Review" (October issue) issued from London House, 321 Murray street, Perth, Western Australia, supporting the statement of the "West Australian" newspaper of the 21st September, 1937, that Mr. M. J. Calanchini had accepted a seat on the local board of several of the companies operated by the de Bernales group of mines, will he assure the House that the matter will be placed in the hands of the C.I.B. for investigation, report, and action if necessary, under Section 8 of the Mining Act?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: A search of the share register and share certificate books of the whole of the de Bernales group of mining companies has been made by a departmental officer and has shown that Mr. M. J. Calanchini does not hold, nor has he ever held, any interest whatsoever in such companies. Mr. Calanchini has therefore not contravened the provisions of Section 8 of the Mining Act, 1904, and no action will be taken.

Mr. MARSHALL: Will the Minister hand the whole of the reports in regard to Mr. Calanchini's breach of Section 8 of the Mining Act to the Criminal Investigation Branch for investigation? One officer should not have the right to investigate the business of another officer.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member cannot make a speech when asking a question.

Mr. MARSHALL: Will the Minister be prepared to hand the whole matter to the Criminal Investigation Branch so that it may make a strict investigation into the ramifications of Mr. Calanchini's activities on these boards?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. I have made all inquiries that in my opinion are necessary. I am not going to attempt to make a criminal of a man who has been a faithful servant of the State for 43 years.

#### QUESTION—YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, EXPENDITURE.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Employment: 1, What amount of the £25,000 raised for Youth Employment has been allocated? 2, What are the amounts and what are the names of the persons who have been granted assistance from this fund?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT replied: 1, £15,250. 2, Expenditure to date is as follows: Prospecting scheme, £271 11s. 6d.; Narrogin School of Agriculture, £2,000; Vocational training—Technical Schools, £1,074 1s. 7d.; total, £3,345 13s. 1d.

#### QUESTION—STATE BRICKWORKS.

Mr. McLARTY asked the Minister for Employment: 1, Is it a fact that bricks are being stacked at the State Brick Works, Byford, faster than they are being sold? 2, Would it be possible to put in hand urgent school building requirements, and workers' homes, to maintain the Byford Brick Works at full capacity?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT replied: 1, There is not a sale for the total output of the two kilns. One kiln operates all the time and when extra stocks are required the second is brought into commission until sufficient reserves are accumulated to meet the demand for the next few months. 2, There are several other factors that determine the building projects that can be undertaken by the Government.

#### QUESTION—MINING, WONGAMINE DISTRICT.

Mr. THORN asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Did Mrs. S. J. King find payable gold at Wongamine? 2, If so, is Mrs. S. J. King entitled to a reward claim? 3, Did the Mines Department order Mrs. S. J. King to fill in all holes sunk? 4, Did the Mines Department order other prospectors to fill in all holes sunk, or repair surface damages?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, No. Crashings from this lease were quite unpayable. 2, Answered by 1. 3, Yes. This lease affected private property and Mr. and Mrs. King before the lease was granted signed a bond to the value of £25 as security for the making good of any damage done to the surface of the land upon abandonment or cancellation of the lease. 4, In this case the private property owner strongly objected to the granting of the lease, as it affected his grazing and other rights. In the case of other prospecting areas granted in the vicinity, the private property owners in writing authorised the applicants to operate and required no con-

ditions, as apparently the land affected was not being otherwise used by them.

### **IMPRISONMENT OF FRANK EVANS, SELECT COMMITTEE.**

*Report Presented.*

Mr. Lambert brought up the report of the select committee.

Report received and read.

On motion by Mr. Lambert ordered: That the report be printed and its consideration made an Order of the Day for the next sitting.

### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE.**

On motion by Mr. North, leave of absence for three weeks granted to Mr. Brockman (Sussex) on the ground of ill-health.

### **BILL—INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT.**

*Recommendation.*

On motion by the Premier, Bill recommended for the purpose of further considering Clause 148.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Sleeman in the Chair: the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 148—Tax on racing stakes:

The PREMIER: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 of Subclause 1 "at the rate of 4d. in the pound" be struck out and the words "at such rate as may be declared by Parliament" inserted in lieu.

Some slight doubt has arisen as to whether in an Assessment Bill we are not, by means of the clause, in fact imposing a tax. The Constitution Act provides that an assessment Bill and a tax Bill must be introduced separately, or rather that when a tax is imposed, that must be the only matter dealt with in the Bill relating to it. A doubt exists as to whether in considering the Bill, we are dealing with what is a new measure or with one that consolidates and amends the law relating to income tax assessment. This particular provision has existed in our legislation for many years, and we are really re-enacting something that has been law for the past 17 or 18 years, even prior to the amendment to the Constitution Act that set up that the tax Bill and the assessment Bill must be introduced separately. The Bill also pro-

vides in the Schedule for the repeal of the several Acts mentioned and possibly it may be held that we are not re-enacting but virtually enacting the tax embodied in the clause under discussion. If that should be held to be the position, the Bill might be set aside as not in order. The position can easily be overcome by making provision in the taxing Bill that will follow. I certainly do not wish to run any risk of the Bill being declared out of order after so much time has been taken up with its consideration.

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

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

### **BILL—EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

#### **THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION**

(Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [4.55] in moving the second reading said: The Bill has attracted a great deal of attention in anticipation of what it may contain, and the implications that may follow because of its contents. Objections have been raised mainly by many interested people, but I submit that the people most interested in such matters are the children of the State and perhaps, next in order, the parents of those children. At any rate, I hope that the anticipation of the measure and its contents has been pleasurable and the results of it will be useful as well as pleasurable. I am indebted to my colleague, the Minister for Works, who, acting in my temporary absence, moved the first reading of the measure. In the endeavour to anticipate the Bill and its contents, it is known to members that I have been severely criticised and that a lady for whom I have the greatest respect, and who is prominent in the public service, has been pleased to dub me "a villain." But in spite of all the alleged sinister motives and of all the vilification, I can assure hon. members I personally entertain no harsh feelings. It can be well and readily understood that I have no axe to grind, and that I am not actuated by any biased motive, but I am merely acting as a member of the Government and the medium through which to give effect to our policy in this and other departments of the Public Service. Perhaps one good feature of the criticism that has been levelled at the Bill in anticipation is that members have been circularised with copies

of "The Teachers' Journal," which otherwise they might not have had opportunities to peruse. In the issues of that organ, members will have found certain propaganda and ideas set out that were submitted to influence the House against the Bill. I have no quarrel on that score. The Teachers' Union and its executive have a very important job to do on behalf of the teachers of the State, and they endeavour to do it in their own way according to their own lights. I intend to show that, quite apart from having any biased motive, there is no feeling on the part of the Government other than that of goodwill toward the profession. I hope to indicate, too, that that is also my own feeling. It is simply the desire of the Government to give effect to its policy and to do the best for education in every possible way, as education is controlled by the department in this State. All within, and without, the House are anxious that the best shall be done for the children of the State, and the Bill has been designed to that end. It has been designed to bring about greater success and greater efficiency in the Education Department. Later this evening I hope to have opportunity to indicate, when introducing the Estimates of the Department of Education, the very wide activities of that department. It will be found on examination of the Bill that the major portion of it deals with compulsory education, deals with certain aspects of compulsory education which have presented difficulties to the compulsory officer. The first one dealt with is where one parent of a child takes the child from within the compulsory radius in an endeavour to utilise the services of that child in helping the parent at some work or other. It is usual in such cases that the mother remains within the compulsory range, but the father takes the child to the bush with him. There is a section in the regulations under the Act, Regulation 173, which deals with the compulsory aspect of education, and states that children must attend school between the ages of six years and 14 years; that all children between the ages of six years and nine years living within a distance of two miles by the nearest road or other reasonable access are bound to attend school; and that children between the ages of nine years and 14 years living within a distance of three miles by the nearest road or other reasonable access are bound to attend school. That, in essence, is Regulation

173. But there is great activity on the part of thoughtless parents to remove their children outside the compulsory radius so as to be able to utilise the services of children of school age. It is hoped to prevent that. There is no likelihood of any action being taken except where one parent remains living in the home of the family within the compulsory radius. Another aspect dealt with in the Bill will be found in the clause dealing with the efficiency of home tuition and where certain absences from school are contemplated and encouraged by the parents. When this is discovered, the plea is given that the child is receiving home tuition. Unfortunately it is usually merely a plea to keep the child away from school, and by the time the inspector is able to inspect the work being performed at home, a great deal of valuable time in the education of the child has been lost. It is very obvious that it is possible to keep a child away from school for very long periods under that provision of the Act. It is suggested to overcome the difficulty by insisting that 14 days' notice shall be given by the parents of the child of school age if home tuition is preferred. Another clause deals with the work of the compulsory officer in connection with children being employed while within the school age. Power is sought that a compulsory officer shall be able to enter places of entertainment—which I understand are the common places for children to attend if they are "playing the wag"—and also that a compulsory officer shall have power to enter premises where it is suspected that children of school age are employed. In such cases it is usually found that the employer is quite unaware of the age of the child. But we have no power at present to enter such places and ascertain whether or not the Act is being evaded. Officers of the Child Welfare Department have that power, have power to enter places of amusement or such places as I have mentioned, but they have no power, under the Education Act, to assist the Education Department in this connection; so it is proposed to take that authority in order that the compulsory officers shall have the right of entry in such cases. It is intended also to abolish the present system of the serving of notices in cases where prosecutions are necessary for non-attendance at school. The present system is that a notice is served on the parent to appear at the Children's Court.

But parents can disregard that notice with regularity and with impunity; some parents take no notice whatever of it until finally recourse has to be taken in the service of a summons. It can readily be understood that in cases where dual notices have to be served, a great deal of valuable time is wasted. It is intended, therefore, that the service of notices shall be discontinued and that initial action shall be taken by the serving of a summons. Another clause in the Bill deals with the regrettable practice known by departmental officers to be very prevalent, namely that some children are made to rise very early and, before going to school, perform duties for their parents. It is one way of utilising to an unreasonable extent the labour of the child. Children so treated are generally late at school; they usually fall asleep over their work, and the practice is considered to be right away from the best interests of the children of the State. Another matter dealt with in the Bill consists of the dual questions of medical attention and cleanliness. A medical officer may issue a medical certificate instructing the child to remain away from school because of its personal condition or because of ill-health; but the medical officer cannot instruct the parents to have the child attended to. In that way, parents are armed with a medical certificate to say that the child is not fit to be at school, but no action can be taken to have the child attended to, and obviously a compulsory officer can do nothing to enforce attendance or to command attention to the child's health. So it is intended that where treatment is prescribed by a medical officer, that treatment shall be undertaken. In the metropolitan area free medical treatment for children of indigent parents is available at the Perth Hospital and at the Children's Hospital. In country districts, arrangements can be made by co-operation with the Medical and Health Department, and the Child Welfare Department, for free treatment at the nearest Government hospital. Power is being taken under the Bill prescribing that the treatment shall be given. Of course, that will not apply where no free treatment is available and there is no possibility of arrangements being made in cases of indigence; it is not intended that it shall impose a hardship upon parents in such cases. In respect of that part of the Bill dealing with the proposed administrative change,

some views have been expressed to the effect that it will impose a reduction in the status of the professional head, and that generally the professional side of the department will be made to suffer. Certainly the proposal represents a change in the Education Department, but it is the common practice in other Government departments, and the fear of inferiority to be imposed on the professional head is one that, at the very least, I hope will not be realised. It is not intended to bring about any reduction in status, nor is the removal of any privileges the aim of the two principal clauses in the Bill. The question of control by an under secretary within a department which is highly professional is the only workable system. The policy is to standardise all units of control within Government departments. I should like to indicate at this initial stage of dealing with the Bill, that there is nothing whatever in the measure which traverses the powers of the director in professional matters.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Will not there be conflict between him and the Under Secretary?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think not. On the other hand, I think that instead of conflict there will be co-operation, harmony and great efficiency. We have within the State examples of the closest co-operation existing. I hope the Leader of the Opposition is not immune to argument.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I would be taking after you if I were.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think not. But I hope the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to listen to logical argument in support of the contention I have advanced. It is the intention and the desire of the Government that the professional head should be free from the strain and worry attendant upon administrative duties. It is hard to conceive that the ardent professional man should desire to be bothered with administrative details. In point of fact, we have within the Public Service of the State examples of professional officers having opportunity of being in administrative control, but having no desire for it. Is it not logical also to expect that the attitude of a professional man put in charge administratively of other officers of his profession, would be one of objection? I think it is reasonable to assume that.

Hon. C. G. Latham: How could you discriminate? Money appropriated by Parliament goes in wages.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I intend to deal with that aspect also. Is it fair to expect a professional man not trained in administration but trained in the conduct and elevation of his profession—

Hon. P. Collier: As most of them are.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Doubtless, and most of them desire that the greatest height in their profession shall be reached by them. Is it fair to expect them to be hampered in an administrative capacity when it is known that in all such departments, and particularly the Education Department, with its many regulations, the Director shall spend 50 per cent. of his time worrying about regulations and interpreting them? Is it fair to the professional man?

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is the professional man's work.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: He is expected to do it.

Hon. C. G. Latham: He ought to do it.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The administrator is the man to do it. I can imagine that the professional man would desire to take administrative charge only if he were satisfied that the summit of his profession had been reached, that there were no fresh fields to conquer, and that his time could not be profitably occupied in professional undertakings. We could imagine, in such circumstances, that the professional man might be prepared to accept the worry of pettifogging details with which normally he should not be worried. I have stated that the general objection to the Bill has been one of fear of reduction in status, of the taking away of privileges, and that the professional man might be placed at a disadvantage. That is not to happen. Let us examine the position in other professional departments. We have many examples, including the Crown Law Department, the Public Works Department and the Medical and Health Department. In the Crown Law Department we have an Under Secretary in control of officers of no inferior attainments and he receives much less salary than those officers receive. Take the two professional departments controlled by the Minister for Works, where the Director of Works has direct access to the Minister, where the professional man has complete

control in professional matters. There is no better example in the service of a band of highly skilled, well-educated officers than is provided by the Public Works Department.

Hon. C. G. Latham: There is no analogy between that and the Education Department.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: There is a distinct analogy. We have in that department an example that has extended over 40 years, 20 years under the successful administration of Mr. Munt, and when the change took place, does the Leader of the Opposition think that the professional men desired to take charge? I think not. In fact, I am sure they welcomed an administrator to carry on with the same scope and in exactly the same manner as had been done for the last 40 years. Can it be denied that those men are well educated professional men? Some of them hold the degree of Bachelor of Engineering Science.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You would not waste their time on local government affairs and petty things of that kind which you have not got in the Education Department.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Not unless it was a matter affecting their professional staff.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: In no way would we worry the professional man with such details. The professional men get on very well with an experienced administrator in charge. There is never any friction: there is perfect harmony the one with the other. Insofar as salary is concerned, there is no suggestion that the Under Secretary should receive more than is paid to the professional man. In my view—and I am sure this is the view of the Government—the professional man should be the more highly paid officer. We have junior Under Secretaries in control on a salary of £830 to £1,000. Surely, in spite of the objection being raised by the Leader of the Opposition, members must concede that careful administration is very important, particularly in a department like the Education Department. The department is charged with the obligation of providing an admittedly high standard of education for 60,000 children, but that fact is often overshadowed by the belief that the main consideration should concern the mainten-

ance of the 800 schools, the control of the 2,000 teachers and the expenditure of a sum exceeding £700,000 per annum. This point certainly illustrates the fact that these phases, although departmentally complementary, present two clear-cut issues, firstly the formulation and regimentation of ideals and standards of education, and secondly, the conduct of the department's business under Act of Parliament to carry those standards into effect. There is a clear-cut and defined line, and at the same time a great necessity for blending the work and co-ordinating the issues that obtain in all other similar Government departments. I am neither assuming nor averring that the professional man never makes a good administrator; I am indicating that his training is not in that direction. There is another point applying particularly to the Education Department, namely that, under the present system, by the time a man has graduated through the service in the position of teacher, headmaster and inspector, before becoming director, he is of an age that means a very short term of service. Usually he arrives at that position with only a year or two to go before retirement. I am hoping it will be possible to consider the appointment of a comparatively young man to such a post as that of Director of Education.

Hon. C. G. Latham: There is nothing to prevent you to-day.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: There is. While it might be desirable to appoint a highly efficient and talented man, relatively young, to the post of Director to be in professional control, if he was an applicant for the dual position of professional and administrative controller, it might not be wise to appoint him.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is 91 per cent. to nine.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That, I submit, is a substantial argument in that a professional man of high attainments should have an opportunity to formulate plans and ideals within the profession and put them into effect. Under a capable administrator the ideals and attainments of a truly professional man have a greater opportunity of being brought into being. Is it not reasonable to suppose that an able administrator, working in whole-hearted co-

operation with an efficient professional man, would have a greater opportunity not only to effect economies but to bring about greater harmony of effort within both spheres? To me it seems unfortunate that the word "economy" is usually applied solely in a monetary sense. Is it not possible that there is wasted effort, and wastage in the service rendered? Is it not possible that the professional man in sole control of the professional side of the department could give considerable attention to that aspect? All, I think, are satisfied that we have an excellent curriculum for our Education Department. There is much of it that has not been put into effect because of the lack of money, but I submit that much of it could be put into effect if it were closely examined from the point of view of checking the wastage in the service. The professional man, desirous of doing the best for his profession, would obviate such wastages if he had an opportunity to devote himself entirely to professional service. This reminds me that there are many fields to which the professional head could devote himself very rigorously. All of us have certain recollections of our school days, and retain the impressions created on our minds by the attitude and teaching of our schoolmasters. That influence did not attend us at school only; it has been carried by all of us through our lives. To-day, due mainly to changes within social bodies and in the world in general, we find that that position does not obtain so often as formerly. There is the case of the delinquent youth. Is there any person better fitted to probe deeply into the question than is a Director of Education trained absolutely professionally, freed from the encumbrances of administrative duties, and able to devote his whole time to such matters? I repeat, the word "economy" is unfortunately almost always considered in terms of money. As I mentioned earlier, actually there are very few professional men of capacity who desire to be bothered with accounts, with the interpretation of awards and regulations, or with the organisation and details of office management. Those are highly important duties, and they have their attendant responsibilities; but those attendant responsibilities should not be the worry of a professional man. As I have indicated, it is expected in other Government departments that the activities of two such officers should intertwine, that their operations should dovetail, but that they should be kept as distinct as pos-

sible from overlapping. We have that experience, that highly successful experience, in other Government departments. I simply submit that in the interests of the child, in the interests of the teacher who is the medium through which the child receives tuition and is placed on the plane where we desire it should be placed, in the interests of education generally, and in the interests of competent management the two particular clauses of the Bill dealing with this phase are certainly worthy of approval. We often hear complaints, sometimes bitter complaints, of the inefficiency of the child who has reached the school-leaving age. If there be anything in those complaints, surely here is an opportunity for a professional head to endeavour to locate it, no matter how minute the detail might be. For in the main the complaints refer only to details due to alterations in the system. The main defect alleged is the inability to spell. While we were taught to spell in syllables, children today are taught the phonetic system of spelling, which in its initial stages, I understand, is a much simpler means to enable the child to understand words and pick up methods of reading and of understanding. But it does perhaps affect spelling. As with shorthand, this spelling is phonetic. The children are taught in that way. It may be that in the process of time it will be proved that the phonetic system is absolutely the correct one, and that the complaints levelled at it are not of much importance having regard to that fact. I suggest that with me and with the Government, and with the House and public generally, the professional man is desirous that his profession shall reach the highest standard. In order to attain that goal he should, I submit, have the opportunity to devote the whole of his professional energies along professional lines. I mentioned earlier that the principal objection to the Government's proposal is based on a fear of reduction in prestige. But there is another criticism, raised by the Leader of the Opposition, which is based on the belief that as 90 per cent. of education costs are absorbed in salary payments, administration merely means control over the spending of the remaining 10 per cent. That is not so. As I have indicated, quite apart from the spending of money, with well defined and planned and organised co-operation between the professional head and the administrator,

very much may be done. It is not necessary for me, perhaps, to enlarge on that point of economy applied only in terms of money. Early in the Bill will be found a definition of "Under Secretary." That is merely preliminary to the main clauses of the Bill, which are designed to alter the present order. Under the existing Act the Director of Education is the permanent head of the department. This means that he shall take charge of all administrative as well as of all professional matters. In my opinion there is an undeniable case for a Director to have full and complete control of the professional side of the department, of all matters concerning the teaching syllabus and the conduct of schools and the formulation of plans for the betterment of education. The Director should and must retain all his status in connection with attending conferences within the State and out of it. That is his job as professional head of the department. But on the other hand I submit that the link between the Director and the Minister should be a permanent head with some claim to administrative experience. It is the view and the experience of the Government that that is the only way by which successful administration of departments is achieved. The Bill also contains a provision which, by deleting a certain portion of the Act, repeats the provisions of that Act whereby teachers are not considered to be civil servants but all other officers of the Education Department, professional or administrative, shall be subject to the Public Service Act. That is the present system. The section, however, has been redrawn and is submitted in a clause of the present Bill. Before concluding I desire to point out that it is possible for the Government to carry out its ideas and desires by appointing a capable layman to be Under Secretary and administrator. The Act permits of this. The professional head might be known by a name other than "Director," but there are certain objections to overcoming the difficulty in that way. Hence the principal clause of the Bill. I have endeavoured to be fair in my explanation of the position. I cast no aspersions whatever. We have the greatest respect for the professional officers and their activities, and we seek with them, and with the public of the State, the highest efficiency in the



Department of Education. I think everyone supports us in that. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. G. Latham, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—LOTTERIES (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

Received from the Council, and read a first time.

### **BILLS (4)—RETURNED.**

- 1, Nurses Registration Act Amendment.  
With amendments.
- 2, Jury Act Amendment (No. 2).
- 3, Forests Act Amendment Continuance.
- 4, Road Transport Subsidy.  
Without amendment.

## **BILL—BUSH FIRES.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 2nd November.

**HON. P. D. FERGUSON** (Irwin-Moore) [5.43]: I support the second reading of the Bill because I believe there is every justification for placing it, or a similar measure, on the statute-book. Undoubtedly the fire menace in certain of our country districts is most serious. Whilst this legislation of itself will not have the effect of preventing bush fires, nevertheless a certain amount of satisfaction will be created in the minds of local governing bodies and farmers generally by the conviction that it will assist in the control of fires and eventually in the diminution of their number. Conferences of local governing bodies and the Primary Producers' Association have for some years been urging that a measure of this type be enacted, and I am glad to know that at long last the Government has seen fit to introduce the necessary measure. When an organisation first placed before the Minister for Lands a request for the introduction of a Bill of this kind, the Minister jumped on them with both feet. He said that he would not think of giving local governing bodies the power they desired. However, at last the slow-moving Conservative mind of the Minister for Lands has changed, as it does change with pressure from members on this

side of the House and pressure from governing bodies in country districts; and accordingly we have this Bill before us. It is rather a pity that the necessity for appointing another Minister to enable the rural policy to be brought up to date has not been recognised by the Government. Certainly the Minister for Lands is absolutely out of touch with rural sentiment and the aims and aspirations of the people in the country districts.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** The Minister for Lands is not under discussion. We have a Bill before the House.

**Hon. P. D. FERGUSON:** The Minister for Lands—

**Mr. SPEAKER:** The hon. member is not entitled to refer to the Minister for Lands under the second reading of the Bill.

**Hon. P. D. FERGUSON:** Very well, Sir. Notwithstanding that the Minister has in this measure conceded the wishes of the Road Boards' Association and the Primary Producers' Association conferences, there are some aspects of the Bill relating to powers that are given to certain individuals which must occasion some concern in the minds of members of this House. These powers will, I am afraid, tend completely to wipe out the old-time claim that every farmer is boss of his own dunghill, because in certain instances powers are to be given to certain individuals to take control of bush fires, and the owner of the land is going to be in a somewhat invidious position unless the powers are curtailed to a certain extent. I have every confidence in local governing bodies. People elected by the ratepayers generally can be depended upon to choose the right persons in whom to vest the powers the Minister proposes shall be given, but every care will have to be exercised. It is not altogether the powers to be given to local authorities, but those to be delegated to other people with which I am concerned. For the prevention of fires, any portion of the State may be declared a fire-protected area, and that is one of the things we have been seeking for quite a long time. It will be illegal to light a fire in a protected area without first securing permission, and the penalty for a breach of the Act in that regard is £50. I hope the fear of that penalty will act as a deterrent against the indiscriminate lighting of fires. That does not apply as a general rule to the owner or occupier

of land. Such fires are mainly due to irresponsible persons who occasionally peregrinate around the countryside picnicking or touring for the purpose of sight-seeing. It is those people who constitute a menace to the bona fide landowners. The Government may declare dates between which it will be illegal to set fire to the bush outside of a protected area, and I hope that the Minister will continue the practice that has been handed down for many years of doing this only on the advice of the local authorities. It is interesting to note that the Commissioner of Railways, the Midland Railway Company and the Conservator of Forests are to be exempted from this particular provision. I wonder why. The Minister did not tell us, but perhaps there is a reason and we might be able to get it later on. It will be illegal to set fire to any bush, but if breaks are ploughed around a house, haystack or wheatstack, the occupier may burn within 10 chains. I want to know why 10 chains and why, if a man is going to be allowed to burn a firebreak around his house or haystack, he should be prohibited from burning a break around his crop of wheat or oats. It is an invidious distinction and should be altered. It is as essential for a man to protect his crops as it is for him to protect his house and haystack, and it is absurd to think he can protect his crop by only being allowed the privilege of burning a break within 10 chains of the house or haystack. It is going to be illegal to burn from the 1st October to the 30th April. I want to impress upon the Minister that those dates constitute altogether too long a period in which to prohibit the burning. For instance, the 1st October is altogether too early to stop burning. There is no risk of fire so far as I know in October, or very little, and it is essential that people should have the right to burn at that period of the season when they can effectively burn a break around their crops or property. The Minister has exempted from this provision the Commissioner of Railways, the Midland Railway Company and the Conservator of Forests for the simple reason that it is impossible for those people to burn effective breaks during October. Yet he is going to make it illegal for every farmer in the community to burn. In other words, the farmer will not be able to protect his property by burn-

ing a firebreak. Yet the Commissioner of Railways on any railway reserve and the Conservator of Forests are going to be allowed to protect their property because the period in their case can be extended.

The Minister for Lands: In other words, that is the law now. It is the law under which we have been operating for years.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The 1st October is altogether too early.

The Minister for Lands: It is the existing law.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Minister knows very well that he fixes the date at the request of the local governing bodies and many dates are selected.

The Minister for Lands: The Act fixes the date.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It might be the 1st October in the northern areas, the 15th October in the middle districts and the 1st November or December for the south.

The Minister for Lands: The Act fixes those dates.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The local governing body fixes them with the approval of the Minister. Furthermore, the 30th April is altogether too late a date to be fixed after which burning may be proceeded with. In the wheat belt proper it is absolutely impossible to do clearing work after the 30th April. If it is impossible to do clearing in the wheat belt after that date, what is the position in the South-West portion of the State? It is hardly possible a fire started after the 30th April, and it is not right that by legislation we should seek to hamper the activities of the farmer whether in the wheat belt or in the South-West. We want to encourage him in his clearing operations. The more forests in the wheat belt area that are cleared, the better it will be for the country. It should be encouraged in every way and obstacles should not be placed in the way of clearing. If we are going to prevent the farmer from getting on with his clearing operations until after the 30th April, we will not have any more land cleared in this country at all. A prominent landowner in the South-West told me the other day that the only suitable months for burning were January and February, but the Minister will prevent him from burning until after the 30th April. I hope the Minister will agree to have those dates altered. Whether a landowner lights a fire or not, he has, according to the Bill, to

extinguish it immediately, and if he fails to do that provision is made for a penalty of £50. It is quite possible that a train may cause a fire or a fire may be caused by a tramp, a picnic party or lightning. But the landowner will be compelled to extinguish it immediately he knows of its existence. Failing that he is liable to a penalty of £50. I should like the Minister for Lands to listen to this for a moment. If a man deliberately fires the bush, possibly burning out half the countryside, including many of his neighbours, he is liable to a penalty of £50. Yet if a spark from an engine sets fire to his country and he does not extinguish the fire in five minutes, he is also liable to a fine of £50. But surely there is no comparison between the enormity of the crime of deliberately firing the bush, thus menacing the whole district, and failing to extinguish a fire that may have been lit without his knowledge and approval or that may have been caused by accident, by a passing train or a picnic party, or by an act of God. I suggest the penalty is altogether too severe and might easily be reduced. I hope the Minister will accept the amendment.

The Minister for Lands: Does the hon. member possess all information regarding this Bill?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It is only the Minister who would make a claim of that sort.

The Minister for Lands: The hon. member does not know much about it.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Perhaps I have had more experience with bush fires than has the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: The hon. member has not had much experience of the Bill.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I have had the privilege of reading the Bill, and no other member has had more experience than that. Under the Bill the Government may prohibit the sale of wax matches. I suggest that in view of the fact that wax matches constitute such a menace to the agricultural areas of the State, the Minister should agree to alter the Bill and provide that the sale or use of wax matches in the agricultural areas of the State shall be an offence. Instead of the Minister having the power to prohibit the use of them in certain road board areas, I want to see that prohibition extended all over this country except in those districts where their use is absolutely essential. I have no first-hand information, but I am told that in some of the mining areas it is

essential that wax matches should be allowed to be used. I have no desire to restrict their use in those areas in any way, but I want to see their total prohibition in the agricultural areas. It will be illegal to light a fire during certain periods within three feet of a stump or log or tree and I would ask the Minister to agree to accept an amendment to provide for a greater distance.

The Minister for Lands: I do not mind.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I am glad the Minister does not mind. If he will agree to some of the suggestions that will be put up from this side of the House, he will find that he will have a much better measure and one more acceptable to the people whom the Bill is designed to assist. It is purely a country Bill and only the country people are vitally concerned with it. As I said before, the Minister is out of touch with rural sentiment, but he might be guided by those prepared to assist—not the Minister, but those people who deserve assistance.

The Minister for Lands: You must have been out of touch with rural sentiment, seeing that you were in office so long without introducing a measure of this kind.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The demand for the Bill has arisen in recent years. There was no demand for it during the regime of the previous Government. Resolutions by the producers' organisations and at road board conferences have all been carried within recent years since the present Minister for Lands has been in control, and it has taken all this time to introduce the Bill. I might be permitted to read Subclause 3 of Clause 14, as follows:—

Every person who is discovered or proved to have been in any party which has lighted or used any fire as aforesaid, or to have been present when the same was lighted or used contrary to Subsection 1 hereof, shall be deemed to have acted in contravention of the said subsection, unless he proves that he used his best endeavours to comply with the provisions of Subsection 1 hereof, but was prevented from so doing by another member or other members of the party.

The members for Fremantle and Murchison have on numerous occasions expressed their disapproval of legislation of this description, but notwithstanding that disapproval, we find that attempts have been made periodically by the Government to seek to include provisions of that description in various Bills brought down. I am going to leave that provision to the member for Fremantle to deal with.

Mr. Sleeman: We will kick it out.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Without any assistance from me. Another provision sets out that no person shall smoke a pipe without its being securely covered, a cigar or a cigarette, within 20 yards of any stable, stack, crop, or stubble. This is one of the most absurd provisions ever included in an Act of Parliament.

The Minister for Lands: And yours is one of the most ill-informed and absurd speeches I have ever heard.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Minister is entitled to his opinion, and thank goodness that opinion does not carry any weight in many districts of the State. If the Bill becomes law, it will be impossible for any man or woman to smoke a cigar or a cigarette in any train or on any road in Western Australia. Will the Minister say that is not absurd? The Minister is silent. There is not a railway nor is there a road in the State that is not within 20 yards of any stable, stack, stubble, or inflammable material of some description. What is the use of putting into an Act of Parliament something that it is hopelessly impossible to enforce?

Mr. Styants: What kind of a spark-arrester would you put on the pipe?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The hon. member had better ask the Minister for Lands. It is really absurd to put legislation of this description on the statute-book. The community will have nothing but contempt for it, and we do not want to do anything to bring contempt either on Parliament or on the legislation it passes. But the Minister is just about to do that. It is provided in the Bill that a local authority may require an owner to plough breaks to prevent fire, and if the owner fails to comply with the order, the fire control officer may carry out the work at the owner's expense. The Bill places the control of bush fires under the local authority, and that local authority may purchase out of revenue fire-fighting appliances, and may pay the cost of fire-breaks, establish bush fire brigades and pay the cost of controlling and extinguishing fires. Although these are new activities for local bodies, they are the powers for which local bodies have been asking for a considerable time. I would be safe in saying that these powers have been sought by road boards all over the State; at any rate, in all the agricultural districts of the State. They are the

proper functions for boards elected by ratepayers to carry out; they are matters in which the ratepayers are vitally interested. A board will be empowered to appoint fire-control officers.

Mr. Cross: That is a dangerous power to give boards.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: These officers will have power to take extreme steps to prevent and extinguish fires; they may exercise all the powers of the Fire Brigades Board, and enter upon private property, burn or clear fire-breaks, and take water or other material from any source whatever. Does the Minister intend that to include the domestic water supply of farmers?

Mr. Cross: Yes. It would include that.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I consider that is altogether too wide a power to give to anyone. In many of the drier areas of this State a farmer may have only a few thousand gallons of water available for domestic purposes, and in many instances considerably less than a few thousand gallons. If fire-control officers, or any local body, were to be allowed to interfere with the farmer's domestic water supply for the purpose of extinguishing fires, on that or any other farm, it would be a serious matter for the owner of the supply. If it were water supply for stock or for ordinary farming purposes, the fire-control officers, I agree, should be entitled to use it for extinguishing fires, but a farmer's domestic supply, which may have been obtained at great cost and under great difficulty, and which is required entirely for household purposes, should not be interfered with. The fire-control officers may take charge of a fire and give any directions they think fit. They may employ any person to assist them and may do any other thing which in their opinion is incidental to their powers. In actual fact, they may prosecute a farmer for any offence under the measure. Surely that is giving too wide a power to fire-control officers. To say that a fire-control officer should have the right to prosecute a farmer because in his opinion the farmer did not carry out the provisions of the measure is really going too far. If it is not sufficient for the police to have that power, it should be given to the local authority and not to any individual person. I hope the Minister will accept an amendment which will enable a fire-control officer taking such an extreme

step only at the request of the local governing body. When a fire occurs in a State forest or on Crown lands, the forest officer exercises these powers, and it is quite right that he should do so. The State has a forest policy, and the forest officers carry it out. They are experienced in the control of fires, and in my opinion there is no one more fitted to possess extreme powers than the officers in question. It is proposed that adjoining road boards may unite in appointing joint bush-fire control officers and that boards may establish and equip bush fire brigades. That is essential because on account of the expenses involved a small community may feel inclined to join together to establish and equip brigades. One very important section of the Bill refers to inquiries into the cause of bush fires, and the coroner is compelled to hold an investigation when requested to do so by a local authority, or by any bona fide resident who has suffered damage from a fire, or by any forest officer when the fire is within two miles of a State forest. In view of the fact that in the past so many fires have been lit by irresponsible persons and have done extensive damage, it is important that an inquiry should be held. Hitherto there has not been any form of investigation. There has been a general demand in the country for coronial inquiries into the cause of bush fires, and I know that when the police have been asked to investigate the origin of fires, all sorts of obstacles have been placed in their way, and in very few instances have the offenders been brought to book. Therefore it is right that an inquiry should be held by a coroner when requested to do so by a responsible person. Under the Bill, it is proposed that fines for offences shall be paid into Consolidated Revenue, and the Minister shall pay a moiety to the local authority in whose district the offence is committed. What is going to be the moiety, and why should the Minister be permitted to fix it? In my opinion, all fines collected under the Bill should go to the local authority and not be paid into Consolidated Revenue. The Minister is placing on the shoulders of the local authorities a big responsibility, and yet the only source of revenue is to be a moiety of the fines, while the rest will go into Consolidated Revenue. If the Minister should happen to be in an unkindly frame of mind, which

is often the case, the local authority might not get anything. I hope the Minister will agree to accept the amendment I have placed on the notice paper to provide that the fines shall go to the local body in whose district the offence is committed. It is proposed that a person who hinders or obstructs the fire-control officer shall be rendered liable to a penalty of £20. I admit there is room for an honest difference of opinion as to what would be regarded as hindrance of fire-control officers. There may be a genuine difference of opinion between a farmer and a person who is not vitally interested as to the best means to be adopted to control or extinguish a fire. A farmer who has a fire on his property is more vitally concerned than is any control officer, and his views should be taken into consideration. It is the fire-control officer who should have to consult with the farmer on whose property the fire might happen to be raging as to the best means to be adopted to combat it, more especially if drastic steps have to be taken to set alight some other portion of the farm in order to save the district.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Not satisfied with the clause in the early part of the Bill placing upon everyone's shoulders the responsibility of proving his or her innocence in a court of law, the Minister has inserted another clause towards the end of the Bill having a similar object. I do not know why he did this, unless he thought some of his supporters would miss the first clause.

Mr. Sleeman: What is that about?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I refer to Clause 37. I hope it will be deleted.

Mr. Sleeman: What does it provide for?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: That no matter what a person does in connection with the Bill, he has to prove his innocence, otherwise he is liable to a penalty.

Mr. Sleeman: That is the second barrel.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: No fire brigade officer will be liable for any damage or loss caused by his carrying out the provisions of the law. That could not be otherwise. It is what everyone would require to see incorporated in legislation of this kind. No one who was carrying out the lawful commands of the local governing body, by whom he

had been appointed as fire-control officer, could be held responsible for any loss that was occasioned in the discharge of his duty. Any damage caused by the fire in question will be deemed to be a fire within the meaning of any insurance policy notwithstanding any clause to the contrary. I cannot imagine any self-respecting insurance company raising any objection to that. I think it is quite as it should be. I hope the Bill will be the means of allaying to some extent the nightmare ever before so many farmers in seasons of bountiful rainfall, when there is abundance of grass over the countryside, all of which helps to make the fire menace more terrible than it would otherwise be. Unless we take drastic steps to minimise the menace and effect the proper control of fires, we shall be very sorry. We should embrace this opportunity to place on the statute-book a measure that will to a certain extent assist local governing bodies and ratepayers to cope with the fire menace, particularly in districts where grass grows abundantly and luxuriantly and where farms are not stocked to their fullest capacity. Where farms are carrying all the stock they are capable of carrying, or where the rabbit menace is very serious, not the same danger from fires exists. In some districts, however, there is very great danger, and we ought to give those who want to undertake the task of controlling fires, as well as they possibly can, the opportunity to do so.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [7.35]: I am very much in favour of the Bill, and am exceedingly pleased it has been brought forward. For a long time the Road Boards' Association, the Primary Producers' Association, and most organisations interested in primary production, particularly in the wheat districts, have desired the passing of a Bill to give the necessary power to rural fire brigades to control fires. The Road Boards' Association has been particularly energetic in this matter. That some delay has occurred is not altogether displeasing. The Bill asks for great powers, but these are necessary so that an efficient and useful measure may be placed on the statute-book. The Minister showed himself to be very conservative and cautious. I think the Bill provides what is necessary, and will be received with satisfaction. The president of the Roads Boards' Association and others who are greatly interested in this question will

warmly welcome the Bill. It is far-reaching and justly provides great power to rural fire brigades. The position calls for that power. The measure is based largely on the Victorian and South Australian Acts. The Act in South Australia is found to be of very great advantage. Property worth many thousands of pounds has been saved through the operations of that legislation. I have been in touch on different occasions with the honorary secretary of the Northern Fire Fighting Association, Mr. R. J. Rose, who is also editor of the "Laura Standard." He has done much good work. To an extent he has made fire-fighting his hobby, and the result is very much to his credit. The Minister for Agriculture in South Australia, Mr. A. P. Blesing, has made it clear that the Act finds great favour with him. He has particularly expressed appreciation of the work of the Northern Fire Fighting Association as well as of others in his State. The remarks of the Minister for Lands (Hon. M. F. Troy) have been well justified. I am grateful that the Bill has been brought down. It is a measure the introduction of which I have urged, and in connection with which the Road Boards' Association has put forward great efforts. That association is pleased that the Minister has introduced the Bill, and we hope it will soon become law.

**MR. McDONALD** (West Perth) [7.40]: I support the Bill, which has received the endorsement of so many members. I should like to direct the attention of the Minister to one aspect of the measure. The definition of "Bush" includes trees, bushes, plants, stubble and undergrowth of all kinds, and refers to plants whether severed or unsevered. This is different from the definition in the Act. The term "Bush," in the Act, means grass, stubble, scrub, bushes, trees and other vegetation. That would refer to living scrub, scrub or vegetation that was growing. It might possibly refer also to vegetation that has been felled in the bush. The Bill, by referring to plants that are severed or not severed, would technically, I think, be wide enough to cover plants severed in ordinary domestic gardening. Whilst the courts must give a reasonable interpretation to any Act, I think the Minister might consider whether he should embody in the Bill an express exception so far as townsites are concerned. It would be impossible to regard the Bill as applying

to my constituency. If people burnt off bush consisting of severed plants in their backyards, it would be impossible for them to construct a firebreak 10ft. wide round the place, and inform the neighbours, etc. That would be absurd, and no one would place such an interpretation on the Act. But possibly in rural townsites people might technically be committing an offence against the Act if they burnt off severed plants on their premises. It might be just as well to consider whether there should be an exception to the application of the Bill to the city and various townsites. I would not have made these observations except that the definition of "Bush" in the Bill is more comprehensive than that in the Act.

The Minister for Lands: Do you object to it?

Mr. McDONALD: Not so far as the bush is concerned, for possibly that is a good thing. It might be advisable, however, to make it clear that people in townsites on small blocks would not be expected to comply with that part of the law which requires the construction of a firebreak, etc. I do not think anyone would prosecute in such circumstances, but we ought not to have in an Act anything that would render the people concerned liable to prosecution. I also wish to refer to the question of offences. The member for Irwin-Moore (Hon. P. D. Ferguson) referred to the case of fire lighting for camp purposes in the bush. He pointed out that in this case the defendant might be called upon to prove his innocence. That strikes me as rather drastic. I find, however, it is the same in the Act, and has been the same for 35 years without anyone complaining about it.

Mr. Marshall: That does not make it right.

Mr. McDONALD: It may be that in the case of camp fires more drastic action than usually might be permissible has to be taken.

The Minister for Lands: A similar provision is in a number of other Acts.

Mr. Sleeman: Unfortunately that is so.

Mr. McDONALD: I regard it, on the whole, as a wrong principle, although I admit it may be justified in certain instances.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is against the recognised standard of British justice.

Mr. McDONALD: It is against the ordinary conception of law with regard to offences.

The Minister for Lands: It is in the Arbitration Act.

Mr. McDONALD: That is so, and it may be all right in connection with the Customs laws, but, as a general principle, it is a provision that ought not to be found in our legislation. Another clause in the Bill in respect to all offences against the Act or against by-laws made under the Act throws on the defendant the burden of proof that he is innocent. That does appear to me to be rather too drastic. There was no such section in the old Act, and I would like to see that provision eliminated from the Bill. If after experience it is found difficult to bring home offences to wrong-doers, we could then consider whether such a provision was necessary in the interests of the public. As it stands, the clause does appear to cast an undue burden on the defendant, particularly as it has such far-reaching application. It concerns not only offences against the Act but offences against by-laws. However, the Bill should be of benefit to the country areas, and I am glad to support it.

Mr. STUBBS: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

**MR. SLEEMAN** (Fremantle) [7.47]: This is one occasion on which I find myself in agreement with Opposition members. While the Bill may be acceptable in some respects, there are two provisions to which I take exception, and I will do my utmost to prevent them finding a permanent place in the measure.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You must not take the Chair when the Bill is in Committee.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Unfortunately I was in the Chair when a similar clause slipped through in the Fair Rents Bill. Had I been in my place instead of in the Chair, it would not have been passed so readily.

The Minister for Lands: Do you know that a similar provision is in the Arbitration Act now?

Mr. SLEEMAN: That may be so, but I have opposed that type of provision on other occasions. The Minister appears to think that because that class of provision is in some of the Acts, it is quite all right. The member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) remarked that a similar provision was in the parent Act and half apologised for its appearance in the Bill on that score. Even though a similar provision should appear in 20 Acts, it is not right; and I shall always

oppose such a provision to the best of my ability. It is outrageous to say that the onus of proof is to be placed on the defendant. Ever since I was a child my parents, school teachers and others instilled into my mind that British justice demanded that a man should be regarded as innocent until he was proved guilty. When the Bill is considered in Committee, I hope that two provisions, at any rate, will not be agreed to. As a matter of fact, we should go right through the whole of our legislation and strike out such provisions wherever they appear. Just before his death, a former Attorney General, Mr. Davy, agreed with me on this point, and said that although he had been responsible for some such provision being included in measures, he recognised that it was not right, and said that we would make an effort to have it deleted from various Acts. Unfortunately Mr. Davy passed away and so he did not have the opportunity to act along those lines, I will never agree, despite the fact that such a provision may appear in the Arbitration Act or any other Act, that such clauses should be endorsed by Parliament. Then again there is the clause that makes it an offence to smoke within 20 yards of any stable, rick, stack or field of hay, corn, straw, stubble or other inflammable vegetable product. As the member for Irwin-Moore (Hon. P. D. Ferguson) said a man who was smoking in a railway train would incur the risk of prosecution for an offence against the Act.

Mr. McDonald: That provision is in the present Act.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Does the member for West Perth say that is right?

The Minister for Lands: But that is not in the Bill.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Of course it is.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: The Minister does not know what is in his own Bill.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The Bill specifically makes that provision.

The Minister for Lands: Where is it?

Mr. SLEEMAN: The Minister should look at Clause 15.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: He should read the Bill at any rate.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I was on a farm two weeks ago and I noticed that the crops were growing right up to the edge of the road, and there was no fence around the property at all. Anyone who was smoking a pipe,

a cigar or cigarette when travelling along that road could be prosecuted if the Bill becomes an Act, with Clause 15 intact. I do not desire to say any more at this stage, but I will fight against those two particular provisions when we deal with them in Committee. One will not even be allowed to smoke a pipe unless it is equipped with an efficient spark arrester. What does the Minister propose to do with regard to railway engines? They cause many fires, and yet there is no provision in the Bill dealing with that phase. I certainly hope the provision regarding smoking within 20 yards of stubble will not be included in the Bill when it is finally passed.

The Minister for Lands: Do you know that that is within the Act to-day?

Mr. SLEEMAN: That does not make it right.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [7.52]: I wish to deal with one clause only. Clause 13 sets out, *inter alia*, that "no person shall, in connection with any gun, rifle, pistol or other fire arm, carry or use any wadding made of paper, cotton, linen, or other ignitable substance." That clause, if agreed to in its present form, will cause much trouble and confusion. The whole clause deals with the carrying of firearms, and if followed out to a logical conclusion it will be necessary to pass another law compelling manufacturers of ammunition to state on the box what the wadding is made of.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is taken from the old-fashioned law.

Mr. Cross: That is what it amounts to.

Mr. STYANTS: I have used practically every type of firearm, and I admit I handled them at a very tender age. I have been using them for the past 35 years, and I have not yet seen the discharge from a gun cause a fire in one instance. I have been on the top of a haystack waiting for foxes, and I have noted the flame from the gun flash through the straw, yet no fire was ever caused in consequence. I have been lying down in stubble with a military rifle, and although the flash from the gun could plainly be seen, no fire was ever caused as the result of the discharge.

Mr. Cross: At any rate, this would not apply to a military rifle.

Mr. STYANTS: That is so, because there would be no wadding used there; but it would affect shot guns and some other types



of firearms. It will be difficult for any man to say what the wadding is composed of, and therefore it would necessitate the passing of another law to compel the manufacturer of ammunition to indicate what the wadding was made of. Then again paragraphs (b) and (c)—

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order! The hon. member is not allowed to discuss particular paragraphs during the second reading debate.

**MR. STYANTS:** Provision is contained in the Bill whereby unauthorised persons may be permitted to seize and examine firearms when used on unfenced properties. Is it likely that anyone will hand over a sporting rifle valued at upwards of 30 guineas to an individual whom he does not know to be authorised under the Act to take such action? That particular portion of the Bill should not be agreed to. I do not think the use of firearms is dangerous at all from the standpoint of fire, and, in addition to that, trouble and confusion will follow if we agree to the inclusion of the other point to which I have referred.

**HON. C. G. LATHAM** (York) [7.58]: I am glad that the amending Bill has been introduced but I am sorry it has not been brought more up to date. The comments by the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Styants) were pertinent inasmuch as a provision has been taken from the old Act and included in the Bill. That provision was all right in the days of the old muzzle loading guns, when all sorts of material was stuffed into the guns when they were loaded. You, Mr. Speaker, and I can remember the days when we stole the guns from behind the kitchen door and grabbed a flask of powder and shot in order that we might enjoy some shooting. We always took some paper with us to ram the charge home and to separate the shot from the powder. In those days the paper was likely to smoulder. Irrespective of what the member for Kalgoorlie may say regarding fire not being caused through the discharge of fire arms, I have frequently seen paper smouldering for some time after the discharge of a gun. In the days I speak of, such a provision as we are discussing was quite necessary, but with up to date ammunition there is no danger from the discharge of a rifle. The days of the old muzzle loader are gone, and I do not think any member

could now buy a gun of that type. It is a pity this particular provision was included in the Bill.

**The Minister for Lands:** I am not keen on it either.

**Hon. C. G. LATHAM:** I do not think there is any need for it. I am more concerned about the general principles of the Bill. The Bush Fires Act has been in force for a long time and it has for the most part been honoured more in the breach than in the observance. We are definitely laying down some authority in the Bill, an authority to police the legislation. That is the great advantage of it. I hope that in policing this legislation the local authority and the bush fire brigade board will be careful in exercising the powers we are giving them, for a great deal of damage can be done by untrained men.

**Mr. Cross:** We should have a country fire brigades board to control the lot of them.

**Hon. C. G. LATHAM:** And the hon. member would be secretary of it, if he could make a trade union of it. As a matter of fact, we get just as good service from men who are not members of those associations as we do from those who are. What I am more concerned with is that when we hand over these powers to those authorities they will exercise them with common sense. I have seen people go mad when dealing with bush fires and start lighting fires in all directions; I have seen men go out with bags and knock more fire behind them than they were putting out in front of them.

**The Minister for Lands:** Already there have been some bush fires in the Great Southern this year.

**Hon. C. G. LATHAM:** I wish this legislation would stop fires, but of course it will do nothing of the sort. This State has been extremely lucky in point of bush fires, for in the other States there have been terrific losses as the result of such conflagrations. As we clear our land, so we require some kind of legislation to protect our settlers. We are here handing over powers that will compel the farmer to expend a good deal of money. We have to exercise common sense in this legislation and I hope that when it is put into operation the powers contained in it will be exercised with due discretion. I was glad to hear the member for Fremantle (Mr.

Sleeman) make the statement that we should retain that great old privilege handed down to us, namely that every man is innocent until proven guilty.

Mr. Marshall: It is not a privilege, but a principle.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is both. I am sorry to think the member for Fremantle was in the Chair the other night in his official capacity, because had he been in his seat as a private member, I might have got from him support for a clause that I was then trying to put through. It is a question of the right and privilege of the individual, and we have to conserve that privilege. I hope on this occasion when in Committee we shall be able to put someone else in the Chair, so that we may have the support of the member for Fremantle on the floor of the House. Of course the principle has been accepted in other Acts of Parliament. Sometimes I have had the privilege of fighting it. I care nothing about politics where a principle is concerned.

The Minister for Lands: On some occasions you supported that principle which you now condemn.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have never done anything of the sort. Of course I know it will give the Minister pleasure if he can waste time so that this, his own legislation, will not go through too quickly.

Mr. Marshall: I know one Act that you supported and which had that provision in it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The first time I knew of an Act containing that provision was when the Act to prevent pilfering on the wharf went through. Then the gold stealing legislation was another.

Mr. Marshall: And you supported that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I did not. I was not here then. Of course if it is desired, I will keep going while the member for Murchison has that point looked up. As Hitler says, "Let us keep the debate going." I hope the Minister will not adopt his usual tactics of holding that the Bill is beyond necessity for amendment. It is necessary to give some protection to people in the country and to have someone to police the Act. I should like to have seen something done with a view to compensating men for any damage caused through the carrying of this law into effect, but I am doubtful whether it would be possible

to bring that about. Insurance for pastures is at an extraordinarily high rate and I doubt whether it would pay anyone to insure. I do not know of any way in which we could compensate men who may have lost some of their pasture through the operation of this legislation. At all events, we could allow the Bill to become law and be in force for a year or two, after which we might consider how to devise compensation for those who have been occasioned loss by this legislation.

MR. HILL (Albany) [8.8]: I will support the Bill. The southern end of the State is very different from the rest of the State, our trouble being, not to prevent bush fires, but to get a good burn when the occasion arises. Last year we had a great fire in the Denmark district. I was one of those who then adversely criticised the policy of the Forests Department, but since then I have had the privilege of discussing the matter with the Conservator of Forests and as a result I will support that portion of the Bill which places fire control in the hands of the Forests Department. The only possible way we can control fires in the forest areas is to burn off before the height of summer, after which there shall be no burning off at all. That is the policy of the Forests Department, and I support the provisions in the Bill which give the Forests Department control of bush fires.

On motion by Mr. Stubbs, debate adjourned.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1937-38.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 4th November: Mr. Sleeman in the Chair.

*Department of the Minister for Agriculture (Hon. F. J. S. Wise, Minister).*

*Vote—Agriculture, £104,669:*

MR. MANN (Beverley) [8.10]: I listened with interest to the Minister for Agriculture when introducing these Estimates last week. His speech was very satisfying indeed, for to a large extent he gave us valuable information about the progress of the State as a whole. There are one or two points I would touch upon. First there is the charge in the adminis-

tration of the department. The Minister is wise in having an Under Secretary to carry on the department and I feel sure the new policy adopted will prove to be very satisfactory. In regard to the export of lambs, we shall have reached a new stage this season. The member for Irwin-Moore (Hon. P. D. Ferguson) mentioned that we wanted a chief adviser for this trade. We have competent men who are advising on the rearing of sheep, but we have no one competent to advise exactly the right type of lamb for export. In the southern areas we have a type of subterranean clover that is going to play a very prominent part in dairying. Provided that a quota is not imposed on this State, before long we shall be exporting a little over half a million lambs, and I am convinced that before ten years have passed we shall touch the million mark. The quality of our lambs is very good and I pay a tribute to the ex-Director of Agriculture on the adoption of the South-down type. One feature that will be troublesome to Western Australia will be the selecting of the right quality of ewe from which to breed the export lambs. Only last week the Minister for Lands mentioned those 10,000-acre areas east of the wheat belt. I hope that some day we may get the farmers out there to breed the crossbred ewe and the lamb that will be required. Some day the quota will be put on us definitely, which means that we must use the best possible breed for the purpose. When the rainfall comes back again in the eastern districts there will be an immense area under production. The pig trade, like the lamb trade, is a very big industry. We can breed a very good quality pig and we shall be able to develop a large export trade in that respect. Much credit is due to the stud-breeders, particularly in the Merino industry, for the type of sheep they are producing. The type of ram has improved considerably, but we still see large imports from the Eastern States of Merino flock rams and selected sheep. Buyers, of course, say there are not sufficient here to meet their requirements, but thousands of pounds are being spent in the East every year for sires. We have to import the right type of sire, but we are breeding an excellent type of flock and selected ram, and it is a pity that we cannot do more along those lines. Regarding the farming industry, a rapid change is occurring from the horse-drawn to the

power vehicle. I believe there is a big opportunity for research work with a view to reducing the cost of farming along those lines. Tractors are being introduced in large numbers, but it would be interesting to ascertain the possibilities of producer gas under a proper test. A number of farms have tested it in a small way, but I should like the department to undertake the work, and make definite tests to ascertain whether a reduction in farming costs could be brought about in that way. The horse seems to be passing out. The farmer of to-day must adopt the best methods. Farming is very different from what it was 25 years ago. It has become more scientific. Just as science is playing a part in the breeding of stock, so must science play an increasingly important part right through our farming operations. I think it quite likely that producer gas will result in a reduction of farming costs. There is only one other matter on which I wish to touch, and that is the research work of the State. I desire to pay a tribute to Dr. Bennetts for the wonderful research work he has done in animal diseases. Toxie paralysis was rampant a few years ago, but, as the Minister remarked, stock has been rendered immune to its ravages by inoculation. We have excellent men in the department, men who came here ten years ago and have made an exhaustive study of our problems, and yet we expect them to continue their work under conditions that are quite unsatisfactory. One serious drawback is that there is no laboratory in this State. Yet we ask men who not only possess high qualifications but are enthusiastic in their work to carry on their investigations under such a serious handicap. What is likely to happen? Inducements will probably be offered to them to go to States that can offer better conditions. Any professional man is likely to go where proper facilities are provided for the work. When the officers are cramped for room, as are those of the Department of Agriculture, and when they have to work without proper facilities, they are not given a fair chance. I hope the Minister, when he replies, will be able to indicate when a laboratory is likely to be provided for this State. The existing conditions can only be described as terrible. I am fairly well acquainted with the department, and with the work that is being done. The officers are doing their best in existing conditions. We cannot afford to lose our

officers, particularly men of the type of Dr. Bennetts, who has solved many problems for us. I enjoyed listening to the Minister's speech. His is a major department of the State. The soil is the basis of our wealth and must play a prominent part in the prosperity of the State.

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington) [8.20]: I am always pleased to see an increased Vote on the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture. I regret, however, that almost the whole of the increase this year is needed to cope with the grasshopper pest in some of the wheat areas. No doubt the money is urgently required to combat the grasshoppers, and anything that can be done to help the farmers suffering loss through the pest should be readily done. We in the South-West, fortunately, are not worried with grasshoppers, but we have many other pests that help to impoverish the farmer and cause him endless worry. If the work of ridding the State of those pests is to be tackled as it should be, and if research work in general is to be undertaken, I believe that it should be carried out in those parts of the country where the problems arise. We are most anxious that an agricultural college and a plant-breeding farm should be established in the South-West. At the college every facility should be provided for research work. I am sure the Minister will agree that if research is to be carried on as it should be, those responsible for the work should be located right in the centre of operations. The Minister knows that the South-West is developing very rapidly. I venture to say that the carrying capacity of that part of the State is increasing so quickly that in a few years it will rival any similar part of the Commonwealth. One has only to travel through it, particularly in a season like the present, to appreciate the tremendous advances being made in relation to pasture and the number of stock being carried. It has been proved that if super is used, we can get the results. Because of the rapid development, saleyards are being established at many centres. That is a good sign, and the saleyards are helping those parts of the country considerably. On account of this activity, there is much stock changing hands, and with the increase through closer settlement, it is necessary that the greatest possible care should be exercised to prevent disease and ensure that

when it does occur it is promptly checked. To assist to bring this about I would urge the Minister to arrange for more veterinary advice to be given to the farmers in those areas. Veterinary officers should visit the saleyards and examine the stock offered for sale. I suggest that the Minister should select some of the bright boys from the young farmers' clubs. The member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) has had some experience of those clubs; when the Estimates were being discussed last year, he spoke about them. I think the Minister would be well advised to keep in touch with the clubs, and if he finds any boys showing promise—there are a number of such boys—they should be taken and trained in veterinary work. The South-Western Conference, at its latest gathering, decided that a deputation should wait on the Minister with a request that an agricultural college be established in the South-West. The member for Bunbury (Mr. Withers) was asked to introduce it. Owing to the unfortunate accident that befell the Minister, he has not been able to receive the deputation, but I am hoping that in the near future he will be able to meet it. A representative gathering of men from the South-West will be prepared to put the proposal before him. We feel that a college should be established in the centre where dairying, fat lamb raising, fruit and potato growing, and mixed farming generally are carried on. This is the country for the mixed farmer, and our young boys should be given an opportunity to train in their own centre in which this particular class of farming is carried on. We already have two agricultural colleges, and I have heard excellent reports of both of them, but the claim is made—and I think rightly—that the particular class of farming applicable to the South-West does not apply to the districts where the agricultural colleges are located. Some years ago, when irrigation was started, we received a promise that an experimental farm would be established for both dry and irrigated farming, but the proposal never materialised. The South-West is at present enjoying probably the best season ever experienced. There is feed in abundance; stock has not looked better, and the price for butter fat is better than for some years past. The overseas market, too, is more promising than it has been during the last seven years. It is remarkable, though true, that notwithstanding that we are milk-

ing 5,000 fewer cows than previously, the production of butter fat has increased by over 40 per cent. The factors responsible for this improvement are the good season, better pastures, better breeding and herd testing. The Minister, in his interesting speech the other evening, told us that this year Western Australia would export 250,000 fat lambs, or about 100,000 more than last year. There is no doubt that the increase in the export of fat lambs will continue, and that soon we shall reach the 500,000 mark. The increase will continue so long as markets can be found. I was hoping to hear the Minister say something about markets. The British market is the only one at present open to us, and we do not know how long it will continue at the present remunerative prices. I should like to hear from the Minister something about markets, and the policy of the Government in that regard. To primary producers this is a most important matter. Although I represent a South-Western constituency, I should like to say something about markets in their relation to the northern part of the State. I cannot claim to have any personal experience of the North, but I know the difficulties that confront producers in the matter of markets. The position there will become most acute unless markets are found, particularly for cattle-raisers. Undoubtedly there is a great and rapid increase of cattle in the South-West. In the past, for certain months of the year very few fat cattle could be bought in the South-West; the only hope was to obtain cattle from the North. But those days are fast vanishing. What with better pastures, the use of super, and permanent grasses, fat cattle are to be found in the South-West all the year round. The indications are that the number of cattle there will continue to increase rapidly and materially. The metropolitan market is the only market for numbers of Kimberley cattlemen. If that market disappears, the outlook for them will be anything but encouraging. Recently I read that 100 bullocks were exported to England as boneless beef. That industry should certainly be encouraged. If a market for boneless beef can be established, it will be a great help to the Kimberley cattlemen. Western Australia is unfortunate as regards its goldfields market, in that most of the beef supplies for it are brought from South Australia. The goldfields represent a considerable portion of our local market. I do not know whether anything can be done to help

our local producers in that regard. When I was on the goldfields a few months ago, I saw a number of bullocks in the abattoirs, and every hoof came from South Australia.

Mr. Marshall: Can you guarantee continuity of supplies? That is the trouble.

Mr. McLARTY: Probably we could guarantee continuity, but it is a matter of competition. There is the question of rail freight.

Mr. Marshall: Rail freight is much higher from South Australia.

Mr. McLARTY: There is a better outlook now for most of our primary products, an encouraging fact for all sections of the community and the farming section in particular. However, there is vital need for cutting down costs as between producer and consumer. I would like to see the Minister do something to get those costs down. At various times we have discussed here the position of the whole milk producer. Session after session we have had Bills amending the legislation on the subject of whole milk. Apparently nothing is to be done this session in the matter. Perhaps the Minister thinks he has done enough. I admit he has done a good deal. However, there is need for further amendment of the Act. Whilst the price of whole milk to the producer is fixed at 1s. 3d. per gallon, less 1d. for brine cooling, he does not receive anything like 1s. 2d. after the deduction of the penny. Many producers are getting only 9d. or 10d. per gallon, while milk is being sold in the metropolitan area at 2s. 4d. per gallon and even more. That state of affairs does not encourage production.

Mr. Marshall: How is it that the milk producers get only 10d.?

Mr. McLARTY: Costs are taken off. Railage, cooling, factory costs and spillage have to be deducted. Whilst the metropolitan consumer is paying 2s. 4d. per gallon, the producer of the milk often gets only 9d. The intervening costs could be cut down considerably and a little more money given to the producer. Now I will leave the subject of milk to say a few words about potatoes. I admit that the prices of most primary products are more encouraging than they have been, but the potato man still finds himself in a difficult position. I do not know how he will get out of his difficulty unless the Minister is prepared to give him some help. The

go-as-you-please system of marketing potatoes is detrimental to the grower. With the increase in irrigation areas, there is bound to be a far greater production of potatoes than in the past. Some effort should be made to achieve orderly marketing. I do not know that there is need for restriction of production; I do not like restricting the production of anything. However, I do think that in view of the success which other marketing boards have achieved, there is every chance of similar success in the case of potatoes. No doubt the Minister will in the near future have the potato growers at him again. From what I can see, they are bound to be up against fluctuating prices for all time unless something is done to help the industry. In replying the Minister might state whether he intends to do anything regarding the colouring of margarine. Colouring, I believe, has been and is being carried out in some of the Eastern States. It represents unfair competition; and, what is worse, numerous purchasers of margarine buy the article in the belief that they are getting butter. Provision is made for the matter in the Dairy Industry Act. I shall be glad to hear whether the Minister intends to enforce the regulation dealing with colouring of margarine. I do not care what colour is given to margarine, as long as it is distinct from the colour of butter, so that people may know what they are getting.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I notice that margarine is sometimes coloured yellow.

Mr. McLARTY: I desire to congratulate the Minister on the amount of money he has made available for herd testing. Undoubtedly the hon. gentleman has done a great deal to encourage the dairying industry by making this money available. I trust that more herd-testing units will be brought into being during this financial year. I also desire to pay a tribute to the work of the herd testers and the enthusiasm they are creating throughout the dairying districts. Like other members who have spoken, I am glad to be able to express my appreciation of the energy and enthusiasm which the officers of the Agricultural Department have put into their work during the past year. Great help is afforded to farmers throughout the State by the organising of field days, by lectures, and by the informative pamphlets sent out

by the department. I look forward to the day when the officers will have decent housing accommodation in which to carry out their work.

**MR. NULSEN** (Kanowna) [8.41]: I desire to pay a tribute to the Director of Agriculture, Dr. Sutton. It is many years since I first came in contact with that gentleman, and I always found him highly enthusiastic and a man invariably ready to give of his best. Dr. Sutton knows my district well. The Esperance district is different from any other part of the State. Especially on account of his knowledge of that district, the loss of Dr. Sutton's services is to be greatly regretted. However, the Minister has said that perhaps those services may be made available when required. I am glad that this year's Vote is something over £104,000, or £13,000 more than that of last year. Most of the increase will no doubt be used to deal with the grasshopper pest. My district so far has not had any grasshoppers, I am thankful to say. Caterpillars we have, and they have cleaned up a bit of country. There are a few this year, but the number is nothing serious. On the other hand, we have a most serious pest in the emu. I ask the Minister to give consideration in that respect to outlying districts. The emus are doing a great deal of damage. In the best year the Esperance district has had, the emus are taking toll of the crops. The crops, I am glad to say, are the best for many years; and everybody in the district seems to be happy. The psychology down there is better than it has ever been. The Esperance farmer's prospects are brighter than they have been since the inception of farming operations there. He can see something ahead of him. Unfortunately he still realises that his capitalisation is too high for carrying sheep. At present he is paying only 75 per cent. of the interest on one block, whilst the remaining block carries a rental of only £1 per annum. While that position obtains, he will be all right; but he will not be out of the mire when he has to carry the whole capitalisation, as will be the case in a few years' time. The stock in my district is excellent. I have always told hon. members that Esperance is as good as any district in Western Australia for stock. The pastures are better this year than I have ever seen them, and hay will be abundant—as much as two tons to the acre. That is

not bad for a district which is not essentially a farming district, but rather a stock district. The experimental farm fleeces average 11.83 lbs., just on 12 lbs.; and generally speaking throughout the district the average will be high. Wimmera rye grass is doing exceedingly well, and will prove of great help. Shepherd's lucerne is a foreign plant that has been introduced into the district, how is not known; but it has helped to maintain the stock for many years. On the basis of the rehabilitation scheme, Esperance will go ahead. This year's average will be about 11 bushels, but the season is exceptionally good. Dr. Teakle's work has proved highly beneficial. Undoubtedly the Esperance farmers know now what is good soil and what is not. Nevertheless, when they get good seasons with adequate rainfall, the soil that has been condemned grows just as good crops as the soil that has not been condemned. It is a matter of rainfall. I am going to ask the Minister to give consideration to the establishment of a research farm in connection with the huge belt of reasonably good country known as the treeless plain. That plain is 10 to 20 miles wide, running north to south, and 100 miles long east and west. Dr. Teakle has not located salt there, and frosts are exceptional. The climate is good and the rainfall over 20 inches. We have all the transport facilities necessary, and facilities at the port. Although a good deal of money has been spent, that part of the country is practically unsettled except for a few men such as Spedding Smith, Fred Bowes, a man named Light, and a few others. All their experiments have been successful. The district grows very good tomatoes. I do not think I have seen better tomatoes anywhere in the State. Fruit, vegetables, potatoes and onions are also grown. Quite a lot of these commodities come from the Eastern States, especially Adelaide, and the industries could be developed in my electorate. Eggs could be produced in big quantities. The climate is suitable and the conditions are favourable. I would not, however, be in favour of anyone going there to settle. Impecunious settlers would be led astray, and that would only hold up the district. The job should be done thoroughly. Fertilisers are required. That has been proved conclusively by Pine Forests Ltd. The company tried out a plot and after

three years were very unsuccessful. In the experiments it was found that without super the country was hopeless, and with 1 cwt. of super it was little better. It was only after experiments covering three years that good crops were secured. Regarding the permanency of the land, the company had 160 sheep on 25 acres for a little over three months, that is, seven sheep to the acre. There was still good feed left afterwards, which proves conclusively that the country will carry stock if only cultivation is undertaken in a methodical manner. I was told that white clover seems to be a favourite with the sheep. The company had an acre of white clover which was cleaned up, but the year afterwards there was still a good crop of white clover, tangier peas, lupins and veldt grass. Since 1931 there has not been any topdressing at all, but each year there has been a good crop and the country has been heavily stocked ever since. I have an idea that fat lambs and baby beef could be produced for export if we developed that industry as we should. We have the goldfields to help us in the matter of consumption, and it should not be many years before the plain was developed on scientific lines. I have had a talk with Mr. Helms about it on many occasions. The member for Irwin-Moore (Mr. Ferguson) when he was Minister for Agriculture saw some of the crops there.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: What became of the pine plantation?

Mr. NULSEN: That is what I am speaking about now. It has been abandoned, but the paddock is still there and wonderful crops still come on yearly. If the Minister established a research farm or experimented on the pine forest—there are 30 acres fenced—it would probably conclusively prove in a year or two that the place would warrant more consideration than it has had in the past. It is up to the department to experiment. The Minister saw the paddock. I do not know how long it was since there had been topdressing, but there was still good feed when he saw it. He also went to Fred Bowes' area and there saw a good growth of fodder. Since then it has considerably improved. Vested interests have not given that part of the State much encouragement, and it is only in recent years that it has come into its own. I believe that low capitalisation

and competent management would result in something of value accruing to the State. I am not speaking to my electors—I do not like talking—but I conscientiously believe that that part of the State deserves more consideration. I believe it is going to be one of the greatest assets we have in Western Australia. There is an area there equal to the area of Scotland with not such rugged country, and perhaps with not such rich country, but that part will carry stock equal to the average of the South-West country—not the picked country but the average country. This huge area of country is divided by the road and the railway. On either side of the road there is somewhere about 50 miles of country, and Esperance is only about 75 miles away. Vessels will not have far to call if in time to come we should have freezing and superphosphate works at Esperance, that is, if the provision of those activities should be warranted. I know people will say I do not know what I am talking about, or that I am talking through my hat, but I think that most hon. members in this House will see the time when the Esperance sand plain will come into its own. It is now proving to be much better than was anticipated. I might be thought to be too ambitious, but I do not think I am. We should do something, and we should not do it by half measures. I have every faith in Mr. Helms with whom I have often discussed the position. Mr. Ferguson knows him well. He is a very conscientious officer who knows what he is talking about, and his enthusiasm for the district has not waned.

Mr. Doney: Who is he?

Mr. NULSEN: He is now one of the research officers in the Forests Department. Getting away from the Esperance district I want to say something about producer gas. I am pleased that the member for Beverley (Mr. Mann) had something to say about it. I was once a cynical opponent of tractor agents. In my district I argued against them. I remember saying often to farmers that tractors cost a lot of money, and that one gets nothing from them, whereas with a horse team one can breed horses and feed them on locally grown fodder. But there are big possibilities in relation to producer gas, and I am going to ask the Minister to give consideration to the question of further research. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research should go into the matter

thoroughly. There are many aspects of it. It will reduce the cost of farming, and that is an important item in this State. Cylinder oil we import, and the diluting effect is only about half while the cost of gas is very low. Farmers can produce all their own fuel. I am told that mallee roots make good charcoal. Any wood does, as a matter of fact, but mallee roots are better. Charcoal costs 1s. 5d. a bag to buy, and with producer gas I understand one can do ploughing for less than 4d. an acre, taking capitalisation into consideration with the life of the tractor. A great saving is thereby to be effected. Some say it is not safe. I am told, however, it is more safe than the ordinary tractor, and certainly cheaper than using crude oil. More sheep can be run when tractors are used. I am told that every horse displaces ten sheep.

Mr. Mann: That is true.

Mr. NULSEN: If that is so sufficient should be got out of the sheep saved through the getting rid of the horses to pay for the whole of the fuel required to do the work by tractor. No stone should be left unturned to investigate the possibilities of producer gas. The Minister commented on liquid fuel, and I consider he is on the right track in the suggestion he made. By what I read there is only about 12 weeks' supply in the whole of Australia, and we import something under 300,000,000 gallons a year. Looking at the matter from that aspect every consideration should be given to power alcohol as well as producer gas. I was reading the leading article in "The West Australian" this morning about the liquid fuel problem and I have a good deal of information about it with which I agree. The fuel position in Australia is dangerous. Although every consideration is being given by the Commonwealth Government to companies engaged in the development of shale and coal, and Queensland has taken the matter up owing to its importance to the sugar industry, I consider that a continuous inquiry should be made. We should not be dependent on outside fuel, for such dependence would put Australia in an awkward position. I emphasise once more that consideration should be given to the question of producer gas because if we can use that on our farms and on our large road vehicles, it will be helpful to the State. I agree with the investigation proposed to be conducted on the subject of power alcohol, but as we know something about producer gas, that should receive our



first consideration. I hope the Minister will not forget about the emu pest about which he knows something. Unfortunately on account of our isolation, many of these matters escape attention and nothing is done. I trust, however, that the requests I have put forward will be borne in mind.

**MR. HILL** (Albany [9.2]): The Minister had every reason to be proud the other evening when he gave an outline of the work that is being carried out by the Department of Agriculture. If there is any department in this State that must be looked after, it is the Department of Agriculture, and if there is any branch of the Government service of which we have reason to be proud, it is that branch. I have come into contact with many of the officers of the department and I have always looked upon them as personal friends. I should like to pay a tribute to the services rendered to the State by Dr. Sutton. As Director of Agriculture, he certainly set a very high standard of efficiency. Dr. Sutton, however, knows nothing about fruit-growing; it is not his job, but as Director of Agriculture it is his job to see that a good man is in charge of the industry. We have that good man in Mr. George Wickens, who not only possesses outstanding knowledge, but he is highly respected by all with whom he comes into contact. We in this State are free from two dread diseases that affect apples—I refer to codlin moth and apple scab. When in South Australia a little while ago I saw orchards affected with both. We in Western Australia have had outbreaks of both codlin moth and scab, but on each occasion it has been possible to stamp them out. Mr. Wickens will tell us that that was largely due to the co-operation of the grower with the department. Fortunately those outbreaks occurred in orchards owned by what I might term dinkum orchardists and our thanks are due to Mr. Enright, of Mt. Barker, and Mr. Fontanini, of Manjimup. Both those orchardists rendered whole-hearted assistance to stamp out the pest. It is not my intention to say very much about the fruit fly. I have been a fruit-grower for 30 years and my only experience of the fruit fly was to see a dead one at Mt. Barker. I stand solidly behind the board, however, in the efforts that are being made to stamp it out and I hope success will attend those efforts. The pest is raging to a considerable extent

in the Swan electorate and if we do not stamp it out there, it will soon be all over the State, for the reason that it is easily conveyed in fruit that is purchased by occupants of motor vehicles and in that way is carried from place to place. The Minister referred to the Albany cool stores, and I assure him that it was with great regret that I had to wire to Albany to-day to inform the people there that the Minister would not be able to attend the show on Saturday. It was our wish that he should be present to open the show so that we might have the opportunity of thanking him for the work he did in making it possible for the firm now in control of the cool stores to take over that establishment. More revenue is now being received by the Government from this source than otherwise would have been the case. A few weeks ago I had the privilege of attending a field day at Wongan Hills. This was entirely a fresh experience for me and I was amazed to see the results obtained from land that appeared to be nothing but white sand. The work on that farm was an object lesson to every one of us. All of us in the State have one thing in common and that is the need for super. I would also like to suggest that the Government consider the advisability of establishing an experiment farm in the southern part of the State, because we have there thousands of acres of land which I am convinced can be improved and made to produce good pastures. I trust also that the Minister will as soon as possible appoint an agricultural adviser for the southern part of the State.

**MR. STYANTS** (Kalgoorlie) [9.7]: Last year when speaking on these Estimates I urged on the Minister the necessity for taking immediate measures for the eradication of Bathurst burr in the vicinity of Kalgoorlie. I now desire to convey to the Minister the thanks and appreciation of stock owners in the districts where the burr existed for the prompt manner in which he set about dealing with the pest. Whilst the Bathurst burr was more of an inconvenience and a nuisance to the stockowners of Kalgoorlie, it represented an actual menace as far as the agricultural districts of the State were concerned.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: And the pastoral areas too.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, although while there is not in that part stock in great numbers,

some stock has been running in and around Kalgoorlie and that stock is sent from time to time to the agricultural and pastoral areas. The burr from the plant had clotted up the tails and manes of the horses and had fastened itself to the fetlocks, and of course it would be only a short while before the pest made its appearance in other important pastoral and agricultural areas of the State. I congratulate the Minister and his officials who have been dealing with the pest in and around Kalgoorlie. They made an excellent job of it. The dairyman who reported the matter to me originally and specially requested that I should bring it under notice last year, drove me around in his car a little while back and where previously the thickets of the burr were so dense that it would be impossible to get stock through it, now the country is quite clear. Like most pests, Bathurst burr grows prolifically in the richest portion of low-lying flats and in creeks and so I urge upon the Minister the necessity for continuing the crusade against the pest for at least another two or three years. If that is done I feel certain that we shall have nothing to fear in respect to the spread of the pest. From information I could glean, it appears that the pest was first introduced to the goldfields by sheep coming from the Eastern States, sheep that were brought over to stock up areas in the Leonora and Laverton districts that had previously been used for cattle raising. Again I thank the Minister very sincerely on behalf of the dairying and pastoral industry in Kalgoorlie and Boulder districts for the prompt and efficient way in which he dealt with this matter.

**MR. HEGNEY** (Middle Swan) [9.10]: The Middle Swan electorate which I represent is a diversified one inasmuch as many people are engaged there in earning a living from the soil, and in many directions also. There are some engaged in viticulture, in poultry and pig raising, apiculture and quite a number are developing horticulture. Many of these people have benefited considerably by the present Minister's administration of the Agricultural Department. I rose, however, particularly for the purpose of bringing under his notice the fact that some help should be given to the plant pathologist so that he might assist the district I represent. Many people are obtaining a living from horticultural pursuits and considerable success has been achieved in growing roses and

gladioli. At the present time Western Australia is being regarded as possibly one of the best States in which to obtain these plants. In years gone by a considerable amount of money was sent out of the State to Eastern Australia to obtain plants, particularly roses from Hazelwood Bros. in New South Wales, and also from firms in South Australia. To-day, however, that no longer obtains, and it is realised that roses can be cultivated here as well, if not better than in the Eastern States. If disease should affect a rose bush or a gladiolus plant and it should require inspection, the plant pathologist is unable to visit the district because of the multiplicity of his other duties. It is important that his advice should be obtained. I suggest that an amount of £250 or £300 be provided for further assistance for the pathologist, and that would enable him to leave his office more frequently. Nearly all the gladioli specialists are cultivating this beautiful flower in my electorate, and they have brought the matter to my notice. I understand that representations are to be made to the Minister in this direction, and I trust he will give them serious consideration. The plant pathologist, everyone admits, is doing very good work, but he can only work to the limit of his capacity, and if he were given assistance for routine work in the office, he would be able to render the help required outside. We passed a law some time ago to provide for the registration of orchards. Within my own knowledge, the inspections are not at all satisfactory. I know of an instance where the inspector went to the door and asked if the occupants of the premises had fruit-fly on their trees. He was answered in the negative, but did not bother any further.

**Hon. P. D. Ferguson**: You do not believe that?

**Mr. HEGNEY**: I do believe it. In another case, fruit-fly was rampant in the area at the back. This indicates that the inspection is not satisfactory. If the inspector does not take the trouble to see things for himself, how can the inspection be satisfactory? Inspectors do go to the door, and when given an answer, go away without making further inquiries.

**Hon. P. D. Ferguson**: People cannot put it over the inspector as easily as they can put it over you.

**Mr. HEGNEY**: How can the inspector know what is in the backyard unless he pays a visit? If he neglects to do that, he is not

carrying out his duty. We know that certain people are dragged into court if they have a small fruit tree in the backyard and have not registered it. They are prosecuted because they have not complied with the Act. In other cases the inspectors are not carrying out their duties, and the Act is not being satisfactorily policed. The Plant Diseases Act is not of much avail in such circumstances. The horticultural industry is deserving of assistance. It is developing very fast. Some time ago large sums of money were sent to the Eastern States for rose trees and plants of various descriptions, but to-day that importation has ceased. In cases where the plants are subject to diseases, and the advice of the pathologist would enable people to cope with those diseases, growers should be in a position to secure that advice.

**MR. PATRICK** (Greenough) [9.17]: I agree that this is probably the most important department of all. If a casual visitor were to view the buildings in which the department is housed, and the relative buildings at the University, he would probably have a different idea. It is remarkable, when we consider that a Chair of Agriculture was endowed by one of our leading citizens, that the buildings at the University are not in better shape. I believe there is a proposal to effect some improvement there now. I hope the Minister will say something concerning the proposal which the University is said to have put before the Government. Apparently the institution is prepared to find £14,000 of the trust funds for the erection of certain buildings, provided the Government will guarantee the interest. I understand that if the Government will do this, the C.S.I.R. will be willing to find the officials necessary to carry out research work, and that the University will provide a wing for the use of the officials of the department. One of the troubles with agriculture is that we have so much improved on Nature, both in animal and plant breeding, that we have created problems that require the assistance of science. We have doubled the yield of wool from sheep, and this has made sheep largely artificial animals, and made them liable to disease, and to attacks of the blow-fly. Man is to-day an artificial product because of our modern civilisation, hence we have the necessity for such men

as the member for Victoria Park to attend to our teeth.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: A necessary evil!

**MR. PATRICK:** Yes, but it has been created largely through the artificial conditions under which we live. Agriculture is so important that no expense should be spared to provide the necessary buildings and equipment for the carrying out of scientific experiments. There is the question of breeding varieties of wheat that are immune from disease or are disease-resisting. Constitution is the most important thing we have to obtain, both in plant and animal breeding. In this State we have had very notable varieties of wheat, which, for a number of years, gave larger returns than other varieties, and then proved to have a weak constitution, and went out of use. I need only instance Federation wheat. Once the constitution is established, it is possible to build almost anything upon it. There has been red rust amongst wheat in the northern areas. I have urged the testing by the department of varieties of wheat before being recommended for general use. When I spoke upon this subject on a previous occasion, someone interjected that it required a suitable season for the testing of wheats to see whether or not they were liable to rust.

The Minister for Agriculture: Or else create the conditions.

**MR. PATRICK:** That is being done in the other States, and to some extent in this State. When reading a report of Roseworthy Agricultural College a year or two ago, I came across the following statement:—

A building roofed with straw will be used in summer as a rust laboratory with sprinklers to provide the necessary humidity. Tests will be carried out to improve wheats in rust resistance.

That sort of thing is very necessary in the northern districts which suffer from outbreaks of rust at different times. It is interesting to note that up to date most of the rust-resisting varieties of wheat that have been bred in Australia have been bred by individual farmers. The Department of Agriculture would do better to concentrate upon such problems than to butt into questions such as the marketing of wheat, which is in the hands of experts. I refer to the scheme known as selling wheat upon a

clean wheat basis. This is a most impracticable proposal. It would be absolutely unworkable at sidings, and cause endless argument and waste of time. The oversea buyers are perfectly satisfied with our f.a.q. system, but are said to be very dissatisfied with the Canadian system, where there are 100 grades of wheat for the farmers, and four grades for the buyers. That is not a scheme to improve the quality of wheat. To-day, the better the quality of wheat, the higher the payment for it. Some people do not understand that wheat is not sold actually by weight, but by measure on the bushel basis. When it goes 62 lbs. or 63 lbs. to the bushel, the farmer who is producing wheat of that weight, gets a much higher price for it. The Council of Agriculture would do better to leave well alone. It is a body of theorists, with no practical experience in marketing. There is one thing the Department of Agriculture can influence, and that is the improvement in varieties. In the past we have had criticism of Glueclub; Merredin, Nabawa and Totadgin not being much better, and Yandilla being inferior to Glueclub according to the Pelshenekin test. One can see, therefore, that there is a big opening for an improvement in the varieties. There is a very wide variation in quality, even of the same variety of wheat on different soils.

The Minister for Agriculture: According to the district and the season.

Mr. PATRICK: There are low-grade wheats that are suitable for certain markets. That is why Victoria, which produces the poorest quality wheat in Australia, has been successful in marketing it in China. There are also other aspects than the high protein content. Scotland requires a special flour for the biscuit trade. This State actually ships a certain quantity of that suitable wheat to Scotland for this purpose. To-day the quality and yield have not been obtained in the one wheat, so that millers, if they want premium wheats, must be prepared to pay a higher price for them. In spite of the criticism concerning the quality of our wheat, in the opinion of a Japanese chemist, our wheats are definitely superior to those grown in the Eastern States. The biggest mistake in Western Australia has been the tragedy of the one-crop farm. The Agricultural Department until recent years has paid insufficient attention to diversified

farming. There was a scheme some years ago to appoint a commissioner for the wheat-belt, a commissioner for the fruit belt and a commissioner for the dairy belt. This seemed to imply that certain parts of the State should be confined to certain industries. At one time I remember the Minister for Agriculture and the Director making a campaign throughout the wheat districts urging farmers to put in bigger areas of wheat so as to create a new record for area under crop. That seemed to be their sole object at the time, apart from the method by which the crops were put in. It is significant that Victoria, the smallest State in the Commonwealth, should collect the largest sum in super. bonus. Farmers must realise that a farm with livestock is a better economic proposition than one with wheat alone. Apart from the economic side, it is better farming practice, because it is necessary to maintain the fertility of the soil. With wheat alone the land steadily goes back. I have seen that in my own district in many instances. Men have started by growing splendid crops of wheat, but one could see the land, after a number of years, steadily going back, until to-day it is producing nothing like the crops it did. Agriculture is an old science. Virgil, the great Italian poet, laid down the system of fallowing in rotation with legumes. Amongst the legumes he specially mentioned were lupins. Not many years ago in this State I saw farmers pulling lupins out of their crops as if they were noxious weeds. In the Chapman Experiment Farm we have an ideal farm for the making of experiments, the testing of fodder plants and experiments in connection with fat lambs and pigs for export and dairying. The district served by Geraldton must become a large producer of fat lambs and dairy produce. References have been made to the quota system but I do not think we need worry much about that. As far as I have been able to read, quotas can only be fixed for Australia as a whole. A year or two ago Victoria and New South Wales assumed that all that was necessary was to go back over a period of three or four years and average the annual export in order to fix the quota for the different States on that basis. I believe to-day there is strong doubt as to whether anything of the sort can be done under the Federal Constitution because undoubtedly it would be differentiating

as between the States if, for instance, we gave Victoria a quota of 85 per cent. of lamb exports and Western Australia only 5 per cent.

The Minister for Agriculture: We are undeveloped as yet.

Mr. PATRICK: That is so. Undoubtedly the Commonwealth has power to fix the total quota for the export of fat lambs from Australia, but it is questionable whether it has the power to fix a quota for individual States. In that direction there is great scope for an increase in our export of fat lambs. There should also be closer relationship between the Agricultural Department and the Agricultural Bank as recommended by the Royal Commission that investigated matters affecting the latter. I remember some years ago a client of the Bank shocked the officials of that institution by writing in and pointing out that he could not make his farm pay. He asked the Bank to tell him how it could be done. I believe that letter was hawked all round the Bank and treated as a joke. There is no doubt that it is not enough for a farmer to be able to produce what can be grown on his property; he must produce at a profit. That is the final test of farming practice. The officials of the Agricultural Department may yet have to study the economics of farming. It may be said of them that they have failed if they cannot show the farmers how to conduct their operations at a profit. We are all aware that there is much showmanship in farming, not only by the department but by individual farmers. I have known of an individual being given a great write-up in the newspapers with regard to a small plot of crop on his property, although everyone in his district knew that he was one of the greatest failures there. He was a good publicity man, and that is what I referred to as showmanship in farming. To-day the greatest sphere of usefulness of the department is undoubtedly in the breeding of new types of wheat and the controlling of pests and diseases. The grasshopper pest has been referred to, and that trouble has extended this year. Probably one of the worst outbreaks occurred at Carnamah on the Midland railway. The settlers there used a great quantity of poison bait and by taking action promptly were able to perform splendid work. I know the Minister and the department have been criticised regarding the handling of the problem, but the extraordinary thing about the grass-

hopper pest is that other countries, such as the United States of America, have spent millions of pounds in endeavours to eradicate grasshoppers, yet, according to the latest reports, they have apparently come to the conclusion that so far no method has been discovered to eradicate the pest, and the only method is a system of control such as is being adopted by the department in Western Australia. I would also like to refer to the good work done by the wool and sheep officer, especially in the direction of practical demonstrations. The wool and sheep officer attached to the Agricultural Department is apparently much handicapped by lack of means of transport. Another official partly attached to the Agricultural Bank seems to experience no lack of transport facilities, whereas the permanent official attached to the Agricultural Department has great difficulty in getting round the country. With other members who have spoken, I wish to pay a tribute to all the officers of the department for the magnificent work they have done, and are doing, under adverse conditions. Scientific training is not everything. To lend point to that remark, one has only to mention a man like Luther Burbanks, who probably created more new varieties of fruit, flowers and vegetables than any other man who ever lived. Burbanks knew absolutely nothing about science and when questioned in that regard said he was always too busy doing things to have time to devote to science. I also wish to pay a tribute to the type of man in Australia who has spent money freely and used his knowledge and experience to improve flocks and herds. The improvement of stock in a country with such a brief history as that of Australia has been almost a miracle. It has largely been due to the work of individuals. The whole Commonwealth has been the gainer from their work. I am pleased to add that this year there is a somewhat brighter outlook for the farming industry, and I hope that by this time next year the clouds will have lifted entirely and that we shall be in for a run not only of good seasons but of good prices.

MR. DOUST (Nelson) [9.36]: Owing to the fact that the discussion on the Estimates has been rather long drawn-out, I hope the Minister will not consider the debate as a form of criticism. It must be conceded that nearly every member has extended congratulations to the Minister on

the presentation of his Estimates. While I would like to add my meed of praise and congratulation, I would point out that the future of agriculture in this State will require a great deal more assistance, not perhaps so much actual assistance to the farmers themselves as in the direction of determining how to deal with the many troubles that the men on the land have to contend with. While considerable success has been achieved, there is much more to be done in the future. I trust congratulations will again be showered upon the Minister next year in respect of advances made in various directions. I have in mind more particularly pests that the farmers are troubled with, especially in the South-West. While possibly the red-legged earth mite is to-day causing more trouble than any other pest in that part of the State, much has to be done in dealing with other pests. One would be quite safe in saying that throughout the South-West, and particularly in the lower parts, the depredations of the red-legged earth mite decreased the quantity of feed available for stock by at least 25 per cent. Then, again, rabbits have caused some damage in the South-West. They were very numerous in the wheat belt. Nevertheless, we do not hear much about the rodents these days. Some say the trouble has eased off on account of the season. Certainly the rabbits have migrated to the extreme South-West in large numbers. While we have dealt with them as we have done in the past eight or 10 years, I really think the difficulty in regard to rabbits has been somewhat magnified. No doubt we shall require to spend a fair amount of cash and devote much time to the destruction of the rodents each year, but I am certain they can be kept in reasonable check and, therefore, they present no insuperable difficulty. Foxes do much damage to the flocks, but, in my opinion, they possibly represent a greater menace to bird life throughout the State than from the standpoint of lambs and poultry. It is even possible that the grasshoppers would not present the problem that they do to-day if it had not been for the destruction of so much bird life by foxes. Vast numbers of plovers, ducks, swans, larks, and other birds that nest on the ground have been destroyed, and it would appear that their numbers will be tremendously decreased in the near future. In

fact, we may be almost depleted of that section of our bird life. It is natural to suppose that the accretion of many insect pests is due to the depredations of foxes among our birds. For that reason I think the fox is a greater menace from that standpoint than in connection with lambs and poultry. Sheep growers in the Upper Blackwood and the Bridgetown districts have been troubled with foot rot, which has also affected cattle. It is a difficult disease to remedy. We have also what is known as the falling disease. I know little about it but I know one settler in less than two months lost eight of his dairy cows from that disease. So far there appears to be no way of dealing with it, nor of ascertaining its cause. The appearance of red water in the Bridgetown district alone has been responsible for the loss of more than 250 head of stock this year, while mammitis has been responsible for losses to dairy farmers. It is on that account that I urge the Minister to do everything possible to have further research work carried out. Veterinary surgeons are very scarce in the South-West, and, in fact, they are scarce throughout Australia. So far as I know, we have only one registered veterinary surgeon in the South-West. Of course, I do not include the departmental officers. There are several partly qualified veterinary officers and while they are of inestimable benefit to farmers with regard to minor ailments amongst stock, and are doing good work from that standpoint, they are not sufficiently advanced in their science to be able to cope with new diseases or to find remedies for diseases that have been with us for many years past. The Minister, of course, is aware of the rapid strides being made in the tobacco industry. I could have wished that the same could be said in regard to the hop growing industry, because both soil and climate are suitable, and the few individual farmers engaged in it are doing just as well out of that industry as are those who are growing tobacco. It all goes to show the justice of what I was asking the Minister to do just now in respect of pests that much has already been done towards the eradication of blue mould on tobacco. This can be ascribed to the efforts of the departmental experts, and I am sure that if benzol were used by the growers in the proper way this tobacco disease would be overcome. But un-

fortunately, while we have a number of people who are making a living out of the growing of tobacco, people who have time thoroughly to test out their young plants nevertheless do not give the necessary time to their plants and seedlings, and so quite a number of the plants on being transplanted develop blue mould. The Minister would be well advised to go into the matter of his departmental officers growing tobacco plants and selling them. I think possibly that with the employment of one or two of those officers the whole of the tobacco plants in the South-West could be grown under departmental supervision and sold at a price that would repay the department. At present tobacco plants are sold from £6 per 1,000, and the cost of them would probably be only 50 per cent. of that. The large growers and those with time and inclination to look after their seedlings would not be purchasers, but there must be purchasers for large quantities of tobacco plants.

Mr. Sampson: Are not the plants obtainable from nurserymen?

Mr. DOUST: No, nor do I think the settlers would be wise to purchase their seed from nurserymen. The tobacco plants, as they are treated are developing blue mould and growers have suffered large losses in consequence.

Mr. Sampson: A lot of tobacco plants have been propagated in other parts of the State.

Mr. DOUST: Yes, the first such plants we heard of came from Cunderdin way, and those plants developed the first blue mould seen in the South-West. I wish to make a few remarks on the subject of butterfat. Recently the London market has risen very much and is now at 151s. per cwt. That, I understand, represents a price of 11s. per cwt. more than the Australian price. It is quite probable that it will rise still further in the near future, and I sincerely hope it does, although I well remember that some time ago, when the Australian price rose to 149s., there was an outcry on the part of a section of the consumers. Yet the cost of living throughout Australia was raised and the only protest I heard was against the increase of 1d. per lb. on butterfat. The raising of the basic wage during the last few years has meant roughly £10 per annum to the workers, to each of whom the increase of 1d. per lb. in butterfat would mean an increase of only 2s. 4d. per annum.

Suppose the worker is maintaining his wife and three children, it would represent only 10s. or 12s. a year to him out of the £10 increase he has received through the raising of the basic wage. It seems very unfair that when the farmer has a chance to get an extra 1d. per lb. for his butterfat a protest should be voiced by the consumer in Western Australia.

Mr. Marshall: It was not by the consumer.

Mr. DOUST: Well, by the consumer's representatives. Two Royal Commissions have been appointed in New South Wales to determine the actual cost of producing a pound of butter. The first Commission placed the cost at 1s. 11d. per lb., and the second placed it at 1s. 9d. per lb. If we had such a commission appointed in this state I think it would place the price at something more than 1s. 6d. per lb. Should the price of butterfat rise in the near future I hope the Minister will use his influence to see if the Australian price could not be fixed at 1s. 6d. per lb. If that could be done the difficulties of the South-West dairy farmers would be almost entirely overcome, and instead of pulling up the railways of the South-West—which are at present serving farming communities—those railways would not only be continued, but the service would be increased, and instead of a deficit there would be a profit on the running of the railways. I trust that the Minister will endeavour to secure an increase in the Australian price of butter fat. Another subject of interest to my district is the control of markets by the Government or by Government boards. I have in mind the Whole Milk Board. The member for Murray-Wellington spoke of the great difference between the price to the producer and the cost to the consumer. In conversation with a retailer of milk a few weeks ago, I learnt that in the distribution of 60 gallons of milk on his round, he has to travel no less than 75 miles by motor car. The time has arrived when the Government should take a greater control over the whole milk and the metropolitan area should be divided into zones. The whole milk should pass through one or two stores controlled by the department where the milk should be tested and when it has been proved to be of the required quality, it should be distributed by certain people in their respective zones. If that were done, I am certain that at least 2d.

more could be paid to the producer and the cost to the consumer reduced by 2d. The proposal merits consideration and I hope the Minister will give attention to it. I had that in mind when I said there would be indirect benefits to be derived by the primary producers. I intended to refer to potato growing, but the member for Murray-Wellington has already dealt with it and I shall not go further into the matter. I hope the Minister will investigate the question of introducing Government control for many of the State's primary products. It may be claimed that there are certain business men who are trained for the work of handling those products and are better able to make a success of it than any Government department could do, but I point out that while those men make a success of it from their own point of view, their success in nearly every instance is gained to the detriment of the primary producer.

Vote put and passed.

*Vote—College of Agriculture, £9,389—agreed to.*

*Department of Education (Hon. F. J. S. Wise, Minister).*

*Vote—Education, £733,309:*

**THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION** (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [9.59]: It will be noticed that the estimate this year shows an increase of £17,352, but except for £190 all of this increase is necessary to provide increased salaries for teachers under the reclassification. The actual expenditure last year in excess of the estimate was £55,175 from the same cause, making the expenditure for the year higher than the peak year of 1929-30, when the amount was £692,672. This year the figure has reached a new high level in £733,309. It is to be regretted that further funds cannot be found in proportion to the ratio of salary increase to enable additional laudable activities to be carried out. There are many directions in which the Government would like to further the educational interests for the children who will be the future citizens of the State, but of course we are circumscribed by the amount of money available. I realise that there is much heartburning amongst members in connection with their desires and the needs of the districts they represent. All of those things are very important to the individual and to the

district. I can only say that whenever a matter is submitted for consideration, it receives impartial consideration. Irrespective of where the claim comes from, we endeavour to view it in that light, as well as in the order of the urgency or extra urgency of the demand. In the matter of buildings there is a great deal of competition between members who vie with each other to obtain for their districts better accommodation, new schools, new buildings and other school incidentals.

The Premier: I was in the competition.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes. In that competition three branches of the service are concerned, and only by the closest co-operation between the Education Department, the Public Works Department and the Treasury has so much as has been accomplished been possible of achievement.

Mr. Marshall: It is a wonder that anything is accomplished having regard to the complex nature of its travels before one can get anything at all.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Since the matter of building is one for the Works Department and architects to determine, it is only by forcefully and, I hope, faithfully presenting the case that very much has been accomplished. Each year a greater and wider interest is being taken in education and educational methods, and new demands are being made. Recently we had a visit from a prominent and important international body, the New Education Fellowship, and the views as expressed in all cities of the Commonwealth were certainly very interesting. They pointed out many frailties in our education system and many directions in which improvements could be made. This is a very complex subject. Matters that are theories and ideals also have to be given the greatest consideration. Although some of them may be regarded initially as dreams, some of the greatest successes within our time have resulted from carrying into practical reality the dreams of theorists. That applies also to education. Last year the expenditure on buildings was £50,681, compared with an expenditure of £101,000 in 1935-36. The difference in the main represents the cost of the East Perth Girls' School. New schools were erected in six centres, and additional rooms were provided at eight existing schools. Since the beginning of this financial year several contracts have been arranged for, and several tenders



called for new schools in the metropolitan area and country districts. The total number of schools now open within the State is 858, of which 63 are assisted schools in receipt of a subsidy based on the average attendance. Of the remaining 795 Government schools, 426 are small schools with an average attendance of under 20. Consequent upon that our education costs in the country districts are proportionately high. The effect of the expenditure, because of the schools being maintained with such small attendances, is obvious. There have been many requests during the year for extensions of the manual training and domestic science centres. We are endeavouring to comply with as many of these requests as is possible, subject to the limitation of funds. It is hoped to extend the scheme in at least one centre during the coming year where children from outlying districts can be brought for domestic science and manual training, particularly to the larger centres. There is an increasing demand for the type of commercial education undertaken by the department. Schools have been established in many of the large country centres to provide facilities for people outside the metropolitan area to have tuition in these subjects. The Parents and Citizens' Association in many centres has again been of very great assistance. Last year the policy of consolidating small schools was proceeded with, and three more districts were brought into the scheme. I think one of them is in the Greenough district, another in the Murray-Wellington, and another in the Geraldton district. The better teaching facilities at the larger schools were availed of by consolidating certain districts which were within a reasonable range of a bigger centre. Wherever the proposition can be considered to be economic, the department has given consideration to that aspect of better education. Through the correspondence classes, the record of previous years has been solidly maintained. The maximum enrolment reached last year was 1,900 pupils. If desired, a very extensive post primary course could be undertaken, also through the correspondence classes. Four pupils of the group last year gained the junior certificate, and two others passed in the subjects taken. The work of the correspondence classes is increasingly important in providing facilities for children where schools are not available, and in

affording the best possible tuition by means of correspondence. The tuition by correspondence, emanating as it did within Australia, is a remarkable contribution to the education systems of the world, and is something of which we should be very proud. There are special group classes and tuition undertaken by correspondence which extends to certain types of education in certain districts. The trustees of the Public Education Endowment, of which the member for Irwin-Moore is a member, continue to utilise the revenue from endowment lands towards the payment of scholarships. Very close attention is paid by the members of this organisation to the proper utilisation of the endowment lands, and the wise investment of the money earned from those lands. Scholarships for selected students under the endowment fund were particularly applied to small country schools and correspondence classes to enable students to attend the district high schools. Three children's scholarships were in existence in 1936 valued at £30 per annum, and two were valued at £24 per annum. During the current year it is intended to provide two additional scholarships from that source. A very great tribute is due to be paid by members to Parents and Citizens' Associations, which are still carrying on the excellent work of past years. In connection with advances in educational methods, the work of these associations deserves extra commendation. There are now 140 wireless receiving sets in schools, as a result of the efforts of these bodies. It is interesting to note that at the end of last year 220 of these associations were in existence. In collaboration with the Medical Department the useful work of inspection and medical examination has been continued. In the metropolitan area last year 9,732 children were examined in 96 schools, and 5,301 were examined in 148 country schools. Three dental officers were last year made available and they visited 43 schools, and gave attention to 3,709 children. For increased accommodation at the Narrogin School of Agriculture 2,700 was made available by the trustees of the Jubilee Appeal Fund. We are hoping that further necessary improvements at the college will shortly be possible.

Mr. Doney: I am glad to hear that.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It is intended that two or three officers of important branches of the Public Service shall shortly visit the college in an endeavour to formulate a plan for the future so as to

make things very much easier in deciding what work can be carried out progressively. For very little extra cost the Narrogin school could now take 45 students where previously only 35 could be taken for a two-years course. The school remains very popular, and the number of applications for admission is far in excess of the accommodation provided. As regards technical education, we are most anxious that the excellent work of that particular branch shall extend as widely as possible. It is bound up, of course, closely with the limits of finance available; but we are hoping that much more can be done in the near future than has been possible in this respect during recent years. The Government has co-operated by all possible means in the effort to obtain from the Federal Government a grant of £2,000,000, payable in four annual instalments, and a permanent subsidy of £100,000 annually, to be used in extending facilities for technical education.

Mr. Patrick: That is to all the States.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes. We are hoping that something will result. The revenue from technical education last year was £2,579. There were 4,628 technical students enrolled at the end of last year, an increase of 484 as compared with the previous year. The total expenditure last year was £24,161. The Department of Education, with its numerous ramifications, includes many important phases that can be dealt with at length and without any statistics being quoted. There are numerous features of new education proposals, the requirements of the child, and the State's responsibility towards the child, which could be discussed at great length. Many hon. members have their own particular plans for the improvement not only of education, but of the health of the child within our schools. All of these, without any qualification, are highly commendable; but they are also circumscribed by the power to pay. No matter how enthusiastic we may be towards any project relating to education, we always come back to that essential. I hope that before long it may be possible, by effecting economies in service and not necessarily economies in money, to have the knowledge of certain expert officers applied even in other directions besides those in which it is now applied. In that category falls the writing and the issuing and publishing of school books. We are hoping that a complete revision can shortly be made in the school books available for the pupils of schools in

this State. That is an important work, and one which should be brought up to date. Realising that this important department will be the subject of some commendation, I hope, and possibly of much criticism, I have pleasure in submitting the Estimates to the Committee.

MR. BOYLE (Avon) [10.19]: I listened with close attention to the Minister for Education introducing his Estimates. It is highly gratifying to know that a large increase has this year been made available to the department. The sum now approaches three-quarters of a million, £733,000; but I am afraid that it is even yet a sum far short of the educational requirements of a far-flung State like Western Australia. Deficiencies in our rural education are strikingly apparent when one travels the outback areas. I have in mind the struggle we have just completed in the eastern end of my electorate, the Collgar district, to obtain a bus consolidation service. It is nearly 12 months since the first application was made. Meantime 17 children in that district have been practically deprived of education. Six of them, it is true, were sent to Merredin and boarded in that centre. This illustration merely serves to show the difficulties experienced by children in the back areas of the State. The Minister has certainly done his best in these matters, and I am gratified to be able to convey to the parents of the children affected the hon. gentleman's promise to finalise the matter shortly. There is also great need in the wheat belt, altogether apart from my district, for the establishment of a high school. Several high schools have been established in the State, but they follow the coastal fringe pretty closely, with the exception of the Boulder High School. Geraldton has a high school, and so have Bunbury and Northam. Northam, represented by the Minister for Employment, is really a suburb of Perth in these days. The road brings it within about an hour and a half of the capital city. Therefore Northam High School is not fulfilling any of the functions of an inland high school. Under the conditions at present obtaining in our agricultural areas, it is almost impossible for parents whose children have passed the primary stage to give them anything in the nature of a secondary education. One instance: a young girl of promise in my district, one of a family of ten, found it impossible to attend the Northam High School because provision

could not be made for her being boarded in that town; and on application to the Director of Education we were informed that 128 children with certain qualifications were necessary for the establishment of a high school. That is setting up a ridiculous proviso for the securing of secondary education in inland areas. A little while ago the Commissioner of Police drew attention to the fact that primary education was not available in the case of numbers of recruits for the police force. He mentioned that recruits who passed in every physical requirement could not pass an ordinary educational test. I am quite sure that 75 per cent. of the failures would be among magnificent young men from our agricultural districts. Recently I interviewed one of those young fellows, about 24 years of age, regarding his failure to pass a simple test in arithmetic. In him the police force lost a fine recruit simply because he could not do a sum in the ordinary, simple rule of three. He told me the reason for his failure was that he had never had a chance to go to school. He lived remote from any school, and as soon as he could do anything he was put to work on the farm. When he tried to better his condition, a simple educational test stopped him. I should like to see the Minister introduce some system of farm scholarships such as exists in Queensland, where the Government have established a splendid form of farm scholarships. It is not necessary under the conditions obtaining there for boys to pass an ordinary set form of examination. It is laid down that if in the opinion of his head master a boy is of a certain educational standard, he is qualified for a farm scholarship at the rate of £33 per annum. In addition to that there is a clothing allowance amounting to £6 10s. per year and the lads receive vocation passes to enable them to return to their homes. The result of that statesmanlike attitude in Queensland is that the State is developing a fine type of young, educated, scientific agriculturist, such as we in Western Australia will feel the need of very shortly. In that regard I think a start could be made at the State Farm at Merredin. It is an excellent research station well officered and in charge of a splendid official in the person of Mr. Langfield. Accommodation could be provided there for a certain number of boys. They could attend the local State school for a number of days during the week and then they could secure agricultural education at the State

Farm during the rest of the week. By that means a simple and inexpensive type of education could be made available, and I can assure the Minister that quite a number of boys would be forthcoming for the purpose within a radius of 50 miles of Merredin. The department should also give attention to the question of the bicycle allowance. Perhaps Opperman has had something to do with it but throughout the agricultural areas, and particularly in the Eastern wheatbelt, it is quite a common sight to see 75 per cent. of the children travelling to, or leaving, the schools on their bicycles. The roads to-day are infinitely better than they were some time back. They are perfectly safe and well made and graded. It is contended by the department that 6d. per week is an adequate allowance. I have already asked the Minister to amend that regulation. I was told by the departmental officials that the regulation is there and only the Minister can alter it. It would be a boon to the people if he were to do so and those who have to send their children to school on bicycles would greatly appreciate consideration in that direction. Another matter that should receive the Minister's attention is the income exemption in respect of the driving allowance. According to the departmental regulation a person in receipt of £250 or more per annum is not eligible for the driving allowance. At the moment I am not disputing the amount, but the difficulty is that unless the applicant furnishes the necessary certificate from the Taxation Department he cannot secure the allowance. It is obvious that there are many farm labourers and small farmers who have been hard hit through the depression that have not sent in taxation returns for years. The resultant delay in securing their certificates is very irksome. The certificate cannot be obtained until a return is sent in and the individuals concerned are hard put to it to know how to furnish the necessary details. The income enjoyed by such men has not been in excess of the stipulated amount probably at any time in their lives, and the obsolete, irksome regulation tends to keep many children from school. I advised the farmers to send in "nil returns," but it was found that they were not acceptable by the department.

The Minister for Education: The regulation provides that the income of the indivi-

dual for the preceding year shall not exceed £400.

Mr. BOYLE: I was informed that the amount was £250. The difficulty is not in respect of the income, but in respect of the issuing of the certificate. In one instance five children have been for more than two months deprived of the benefit of the driving allowance because of the necessary certificate not being issued.

Mr. Marshall: Why do they not send in particulars regarding the previous year, and that would enable them to keep a year ahead all the time?

Mr. BOYLE: That would be a good scheme.

Mr. Marshall: They could do it too.

Mr. BOYLE: Junior farmers' clubs have also been referred to. In my district there is an excellent and vigorous club of that description at Kellerberrin. In Victoria the Government provide a subsidy of £5,000 a year for the assistance of junior farmers' clubs. The Kellerberrin club has a membership of 35 junior farmers, and to-day I received from their secretary a copy of their annual report and balance sheet. It was most heartening to learn how those young people are helping themselves to attain a high degree of agricultural education. It would be a step in the right direction if those junior clubs were assisted in securing the education they are endeavouring to secure. The Minister referred to Federal assistance. In that respect we are badly treated in this State. Without any trouble at all £11,000,000 can be found for the purposes of defence or for blowing people's brains out, for that is what it amounts to. On the other hand we cannot get a penny from the Commonwealth Government to assist us in cultivating the brains of the children we have to-day. Even in the City of London where the expenditure is £14 per head, the assistance is far ahead of that which is spent on our children. It is a fair thing that the Federal Government should assist the big spending departments in the smaller States, particularly when the Commonwealth authorities enjoy such a healthy, vigorous income. I hope the Minister will give attention to some of the requests that I have submitted this evening.

**MR. NORTH** (Claremont) [10.33]: I move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

Mr. NORTH: The consideration of the Estimates for the Education Department gives rise to the question whether universal education has justified itself. As a matter of fact, if one analyses the position since the advent of that type of education, it will be agreed that we have not progressed very far. We have gone from burning witches to bombing babies. That has been the effect of universal education after 150 years or more. This gives us an opportunity to take stock of the situation. Here we have from the Education Department a valuable report providing all kinds of details regarding matters of administration, of various clubs to which the children can belong, and so on. For instance, there is a calf club. From that arises, I suppose, the expression "a fair cow," which is made use of in later years. I note that the teachers themselves are not very pleased so far with broadcasting. I see that one of the subjects given in a broadcast, according to the report at page 30, is "Wind as an Agent of Denudation." In regard to this Chamber it might be referred to as an agent for emptying it. I support the teacher for having commented on the value of such an address over the air in these words—

I think any metropolitan sixth-class teacher could have given a much better lesson and stressed the important points more effectively. I am not satisfied that the problems facing the teachers are insuperable but they are extremely difficult, and I have a sympathy for those persons who, in a changing world, have to impart an education that will prepare their pupils for the years ahead. Those whom teachers train now may be in a world, five or six years hence, which is vastly different from that of to-day. It seems to me that the public themselves are taking a very potent hand in trying to alter the course of public affairs, and in that sense are attempting to direct the work of the teachers in a more profitable direction. It is noticeable that the public, in the last few years, have been taking a drastic hand in regard to public affairs. The action they have been taking has been to keep away from meetings where public questions are discussed. The result of their staying away is that they seem to be inducing members of Parliament and other representatives of the people to adopt a new outlook in their promises at the parliamentary elections. Years ago, when the public attended debates, questions were discussed such as "Hang the Kaiser," "Law and

Order," and things of that sort. There has been a change in the subjects discussed, and now that questions like education are raised, they are not even there to listen to the discussion. All stay at home. We are now getting a new class of promise on the hustings. The manner in which the power of the public is being used to force public life back to the direction in which the public wish it to go was exemplified during the Federal election campaign, when we were promised economic security. We were told, too, that man was a most valuable possession in Australia, that the human family was a most valuable asset. That is the attitude we need to adopt when considering the Education Vote. If only we could have saved that 150 years of roundabout discussion of unimportant questions and come to the question of economic security long ago, we should not to-day be surrounded with world problems to which one's attention is drawn by a consideration of this Vote, through which we find that the teachers are being told, and are telling their children, not to think or talk war. The real problem has always been economic security and that realisation has now been forced upon Parliament. Parliaments have come to realise that it is the main question by means of the fact that the public themselves, by staying away from political meetings, have forced us to their view. I trust that educational authorities in the future will be able to handle far more valuable problems than have been handled, as a result of the establishment of economic security whereby Ministers will be able to spend the necessary money to provide needed reforms, and that the children will have in their bodies the strength to enable them to absorb the lessons they are there to learn. Thus the time will come when they will feel, if they are called upon, as is now the case, to bomb babies, that they have a better objective in life.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 10.11 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 10th November, 1937.*

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

### BILL—ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTHDAY OF THE REIGNING SOVEREIGN.

*Third Reading.*

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

### BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY TAX ASSESSMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. H. TUCKEY** (South-West) [4.38]:

This Bill is connected with the legislation that was brought down to assist the State over a very serious depression. Now that the conditions are practically back to normal, I hope that within the next two or three years it may be possible to do away with the tax altogether. In some quarters it is considered that the tax will never be abolished. I ask the people who subscribe to that belief if they are looking forward to a new, similar tax when the next depression comes along. I agree that in many respects the Government has done its best for the State, but that we must look ahead so that we may be prepared for the future. It is surprising that there are not more protests against the present system of relief work. In nearly every rural district there is a shortage of labour. Yet to-day we are told there are 6,000 men on sustenance. As a State matter the position is becoming very serious. The system not only contributes to the necessity for the financial emergency tax, but it destroys the initiative and enterprise of numbers of men. Farmers have offered up