

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

## **BILL—GOLD MINING PROFITS TAX ASSESSMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. C. G. ELLIOTT** (North-East) [6.1]: I should like to congratulate the Government on having brought forward this measure; though somewhat late, yet better late than never. The tax is expected to provide £80,000 and is ostensibly for the purpose of recouping Consolidated Revenue for amounts that have been paid and are payable to men notified under the Miners' Phthisis Act. But for some reason this is not specified in the Bill, and in my opinion this is unfortunate. According to the Minister, the major mining companies have given their unqualified endorsement and blessing to the Bill which, of course, simplifies matters considerably. This endorsement can be easily understood when a comparison is made with the taxation levied in other gold producing countries. The London "Times" last April recorded that the South African Government in 1933 took over 52 per cent. of the working profits of 17 mines under review, compared with 35½ per cent. in the previous year. Notwithstanding the tax levied, the dividends paid by those companies increased from less than £2,400,000 to £7,933,000, and the total taxation increased from £6,750,000 to £10,225,000. The Financial Minister on the Rand Goldfields, Mr. H. Havenga, points out in his yearly report that in 1933 Rand dividends increased 48 per cent., and he expects the excess profits tax for 1934-35 to yield £7,400,000. And it must not be forgotten that, besides this tax levied on the South African companies, the mines are responsible for all compensation payable to mine workers suffering from diseases contracted in the mines. The Dominion of Canada imposes a 10 per cent. tax on gold production, and New Zealand levies a tax of 15s. per fine ounce on all gold produced. It therefore can be readily seen that the proposed gold tax to be levied in this State pales into insignificance compared with similar taxation levied in other countries. I should like to suggest

that an amendment be inserted in the Bill specifically setting aside the whole amount collected for the purpose of forming and building up a fund, not only to liquidate the amount said to be owing to Consolidated Revenue for payments made under the Miners' Phthisis Act, but also to provide more reasonable and adequate compensation for the men suffering from diseases contracted as a result of working in the mining industry. The present rate of compensation payable to beneficiaries under the Workers' Compensation Act and the Mine Workers' Relief Act is totally inadequate and is a disgrace to a civilised community. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

On motion by Hon. H. V. Piesse, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.7 p.m.*

## **Legislative Assembly.**

*Thursday, 8th November, 1934.*

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

### **ASSENT TO BILL.**

Message from the **Lieut.-Governor** received and read notifying assent to the Supply Bill (No. 2), £700,000.

**QUESTION—BUTTER FAT, LEVY.**

Mr. McLARTY asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Are the Butter Manufacturers and Producers' Association entitled to put into effect the announced intention to impose an additional levy of 1¼d. per pound on butter fat supplied by producers? 2, Do the Government intend to take any action regarding the proposed additional levy, if made? 3, If so, what action is contemplated?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, The association referred to determine price paid to producers for butter fat. As a percentage of butter has been exported, the association claim a levy to equalise is essential. The amount of levy is entirely in the hands of the association. Government have no power to interfere. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, The Government are considering legislation regarding the marketing of butter.

**QUESTION—IRRIGATION COMMISSION.**

Mr. McLARTY asked the Minister for Water Supplies: 1, When does he intend to take action to reconstitute the Irrigation Commission? 2, What representation does he intend to give to ratepayers in the irrigation areas?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES (Hon. J. C. Willcock) replied: 1 and 2, The matter is now being considered by the Government.

**QUESTION—SECESSION.**

*As to Recall of State Delegation.*

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Deputy Premier: In view of the cabled announcement that the Agent General (Sir Hal Colebatch) presented the State's claim for secession from the Commonwealth to the Conservative Party's Private Members' Committee at the House of Commons, and further that influential leading daily newspapers declare that the manifest impossibility of an Imperial Act authorising this State's secession and the absence of any Commonwealth request make the issue one of academic interest only, will the Govern-

ment, to conserve the State's limited revenue, recall the delegation sent from this State?

The ACTING PREMIER replied: No.

**QUESTION—UNEMPLOYED RELIEF WORKS.**

Mr. NORTH asked the Acting Premier: Has he received any request from the Federal Government to submit proposals for additional relief works?

The ACTING PREMIER replied: No.

**QUESTION—RAILWAY GAUGE UNIFICATION.**

*As to Local Adjustments.*

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Has any compromise or new proposal eventuated regarding the difference of viewpoint between the Town Planning Commissioner and the railway authorities as to the removal of the Central Railway Station and shunting yards and the erection of a civic centre on the site? 2, Will the matter receive attention during investigation of unification of gauge proposals of the Federal Government? 3, Does the offer of the Federal Government—as part of the uniform gauge proposals—partially to finance the cost of a new railway and road bridge at Fremantle still hold good?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2 and 3, No proposals have been received regarding this matter.

**QUESTION—FISHING REGULATIONS.**

Mr. NORTH asked the Acting Premier: In view of recent complaints that nets are again being used in prohibited waters at Cottesloe, will he consider enlisting local assistance by arranging with the municipal council and possibly life-saving clubs to detect and report breaches of the law?

The ACTING PREMIER replied: Yes.

**BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).**

Read and third time and transmitted to the Council.

**BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.***Second Reading.*

**THE ACTING PREMIER** (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: This is the same tax that has been introduced in each of the last four years, the only alteration being a minor one made in the Bill of 1933. Apart from that the tax is the same; there has been no interference with its incidence in any way. I am sorry that we have to give attention to so many annual Bills. We have devoted the best part of the session so far to re-enacting Bills for another year or so.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I think it is a good plan.

**THE ACTING PREMIER:** The hon. member may think so while sitting in opposition, but he would change his mind if he were sitting on this side of the House.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I appreciate the difficulties.

**THE ACTING PREMIER:** To re-enact so much legislation year by year occupies the time of Parliament unnecessarily. The estimated receipts this year as compared with the actual receipts last year show only infinitesimal differences. Of land tax we estimate to receive £120,000 compared with £118,973 actually received last year, a difference of only £1,027. Of income tax we estimate to receive £175,000 compared with £173,225 actually received last year, a difference of £1,775. Those estimates were made by the taxation officials. There is nothing new to be said about the measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

**BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.***Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES** (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans) [4.38] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to make small amendments to the Inspection of Machinery Act. Though it contains 10 clauses, only three principles are involved. The explanation of there being 10 clauses is that one amendment affects three and an-

other amendment two sections. The first proposal is to add a definition of "haulage appliance." That will relate principally to the haulage of coal at Collie and has been found necessary. At present haulage appliances are not mentioned in the Act as regards certificated or other drivers, and it is necessary to have a definition to include such appliances. The next amendment is the chief alteration and represents an addition to the Act. It concerns passenger lifts. For a considerable time there has been an agitation that where lifts in private or Government buildings are frequently used by passengers, there should be a man in control. This amendment will bring lifts under the Act. The Chief Inspector of Machinery may direct that a lift should be controlled by manual power and that a man be employed to operate the lift. The Chief Inspector will have discretionary power to authorise that the lift be manned at certain periods only instead of all day. That power is essential, because in many buildings it would not be necessary to have a man in attendance at all times of the day. Members should understand that the Act provides the right of appeal to a magistrate from the decisions of the Chief Inspector.

Mr. Sampson: It would not prevent a maimed person at present operating a lift from continuing that work?

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** No, but I believe it will be the means of providing a little more employment for members of the Maimed and Limbless Soldiers' Association as well as other people. On appeal the magistrate may concur in, disagree with or alter the times specified by the inspector. I do not think that any individual or company has anything to fear from that alteration. The time is long overdue when passenger lifts should be placed under the control of the Machinery Department. Another provision is to add the word "haulage" in the section that deals with cranes and hoists. The section will then refer to crane, hoist or haulage certificate. The next provision will give additional power to the department, which I claim is necessary, although it is not new. Under the Act the examining board for drivers of winding engines have no power to endorse a certificate or grant a certificate to a man driving an electric winder.

Hon. members may recollect that some two years ago a Bill was introduced in another place for the purpose of amending this Act in the direction of empowering the board to grant a certificate to an electric winding driver without his having the qualifications of a winding driver under existing conditions. The Bill caused something like a furore in another place, and eventually was dropped. Personally I was not favourable to that measure, but I do want the board to have the right to endorse a winding driver's certificate. Nevertheless, before he can get a certificate endorsed as an electric winding driver, he must have a first-class winding driver's certificate under the existing law. That is the difference between this measure and the previous Bill. As regards men now driving electric winders, the board have examined them orally, and have endorsed their certificates, in case of emergency, for winding drivers. However, they have no authority to do that under the existing Act, and I do not consider it right to ask the board to grant such endorsements without legal authority. The Bill will not interfere with men who have already received the endorsement, but any winding driver wishing to have his certificate endorsed in the future will first have to satisfy the board of his competency to drive a winding engine by electricity. Here I may issue a word of warning to the mining companies of this State. As the result of inquiries made in various directions regarding this amendment, I find that there is difficulty even now in obtaining winding drivers. With the development of the mining industry, I am doubtful whether in 18 months from now it will be possible to get as many winding drivers as will be wanted. I am informed from reliable sources that at present there is little if any facility granted for the training of winding drivers, and I consider it is up to the mining companies to see that such facility is given. Should it not be given, that will be their funeral. If they cannot get drivers in future, they will be hard up against it. Personally I am not prepared to issue a permit to a man to drive a winding engine where there is raising or lowering of men, unless he is a certificated driver. Under no conditions will I do that. It is not fair to ask the Minister to do it. The department receive many applications for permits to drive friction winches and such things, where men are not

raised and lowered; and such permits are granted, but when it comes to either raising or lowering men, there must be a certificate. I hope the mining companies will see that every facility is granted to men in their employ to become winding drivers. If not, let me repeat that, in the course of 18 months they will find it extremely difficult to get winding drivers. The other amendments contained in the Bill affect clauses consequentially on the three items I have mentioned. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Stubbs, debate adjourned.

## BILL—GOLD MINING PROFITS TAX.

### *Second Reading.*

**THE ACTING PREMIER** (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [4.50] in moving the second reading said: I do not think there is any necessity for me to make a lengthy explanation of this Bill, which was practically discussed when the assessment measure was before the House. That was the machinery measure, and this Bill merely imposes the tax. Hon. members have had the whole of the facts put before them already. This measure deals with nothing but the imposition of the tax itself.

**Mr. Stubbs:** What revenue do you expect from the tax of 1s. 4d.?

**The ACTING PREMIER:** The estimate of the taxation officials is £80,000. Those are the only people who can advise on that point, because they are the only people having information on the subject. Nobody outside can give any data at all. The taxation officials tell us we want a tax of 1s. 4d. in order to obtain £80,000. That is an estimate which depends on the profits that may be made. No one knows what is under the earth, or how soon a gold mine may peter out. There is nothing more uncertain in the world than gold mining. We are told that this rate of tax is necessary in order to get the £80,000. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. C. G. LATHAM** (York) [4.52]: The House recently adopted the principle mentioned by the Acting Premier, and this Bill merely proposes the imposition of a tax of 1s. 4d. I can raise no objection to

the tax, seeing that the principle was approved in the assessment measure. Some hon. members may feel that this Bill should not go through, but I see no reason for delaying it. The question has been raised as to whether this is the fairest way of imposing taxation, but the Bill now before us has nothing to do with that question. It simply imposes the tax. You, Mr. Speaker, would not allow me to discuss the principle in connection with the present measure. I daresay the Government are anxious to obtain the money, and I suppose the companies are willing to pay. In the circumstances I raise no objection to the second reading of the Bill.

**HON. W. D. JOHNSON** (Guildford-Midland) [4.53]: I wish merely to say that if the Standing Orders permitted it, I would, as hon. members may have gathered from my previous speech on the machinery Bill, move to increase the tax so as to obtain what I think a reasonable contribution from the increased price of the commodity in question, gold. In urging that the Government should be guided by the revenue collected in other countries, I said that South Africa raised by this means in excess of £6,000,000 annually. The Minister for Mines said that my statement was not correct. His contention was that £6,000,000 was in excess of the amount actually received. However, that is not so at all. According to "Whitaker's Almanac," the revenue received by the South African Government amounts to £8,460,000 per annum. From the tax on excess profits the South African Government received £6,000,000.

The Acting Premier: I stated that when introducing the Bill.

**Hon. W. D. JOHNSON**: Then why did not the Acting Premier chastise his Minister for Mines?

The Acting Premier: That is under another heading altogether. The hon. member does not seem to understand.

**Hon. W. D. JOHNSON**: From a tax on the ownership of gold mining leases, the South African Government obtained £1,900,000.

**Mr. SPEAKER**: The hon. member must not discuss the principle of the tax, this being merely a Bill for the imposition of the tax.

**Hon. W. D. JOHNSON**: I am endeavouring to point out that the taxation here proposed bears no proportion to the enormous revenue collected from the same source in other parts of the Empire. When I quoted figures in order to induce the Government to increase the tax, I was told I was wrong. I could still go on to say that this tax is too low, but I have no desire to proceed in that direction. Still I would be perfectly in order in discussing that phase, and in quoting the exact amounts of revenue collected in every other country of the world. I merely wish to say now that what I stated was correct, according to "Whitaker's Almanac," from which I obtained my figures. I feel that by imposing the tax fixed in the Bill we are not doing justice either to the State or to the people. It is true that vested interests deserve some consideration, but they are receiving consideration in the shape of the high price of gold and the exchange. The companies' burdens have not been increased to any appreciable extent since gold soared. There is justification for increasing the proposed tax. Careful analysis discloses that the best interests of Western Australia are being sacrificed when we do not take advantage of an opportunity to get greater revenue, so that more assistance may be given to those who look to Parliament for more than they are receiving at present.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [4.56]: When the assessment measure was mooted, I was unaware of the purpose for which the taxation was to be used. Accordingly I said I would wait until I saw the present Bill. This is really the effective Bill, because it imposes the tax. I desire to ask the Acting Premier whether it would be possible effectually to check the net profits referred to in the Bill. Will an effective check be made so that there will be no undue loading of costs or working expenses or anything else whereby the profits will be lost to sight so far as the balance sheet is concerned? Will care be exercised to ensure that reasonable net profits are disclosed, and that there will be no smothering up of the real position by the payment of heavy directors' fees, or by unnecessary renewals and other means whereby the balance sheet may not disclose the full and true position of the company's affairs?

**THE ACTING PREMIER** (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle—in reply) [4.59]: In reply to the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson), the tax is imposed on profits disclosed under the Dividend Duties Act. All the machinery which has been in operation for years past dealing with profits under the Dividend Duties Act will be available for this measure. The tax under the Bill will be imposed on profits disclosed under the Dividend Duties Act.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The shareholders would, of course, object if the profits were not disclosed, because they want the profits.

The **ACTING PREMIER**: The Bill proposes nothing new in that respect. The machinery already existing will continue to operate. If the company shows a profit of £50,000 under the Dividend Duties Act, an additional 1s. 4d. in each pound will have to be paid under this Bill. As to all this talk about smothering up the true profits, the same machinery that has been available under the Dividend Duties Act will apply under this measure. As members are aware, there are disclosures, from time to time, indicating that people who have not lodged correct returns have been found out and penalised.

Mr. Sampson: Possibly largely increased directors' fees might have an effect.

The **ACTING PREMIER**: That was attempted a week or two ago by one company. The directors attempted to vote themselves exorbitant fees, but a majority of the shareholders had something to say about it.

Mr. Patrick: The directors thought they had a majority of the shareholders behind them and said in a statement that although they had that majority, they would not press for the increased fees.

The **ACTING PREMIER**: They did not know what the shareholders would say, and the latter protested because they wanted the profits distributed amongst themselves. It may be possible to smother up profits for a time, but that will not continue long because experience shows that the officials of the Taxation Department find out the position, and matters are rectified. The imposition of this tax does not mean that any new machinery is being brought into existence. The present provisions under which profits are disclosed for dividend duty pur-

poses will continue. The necessary check has always been available. Of course, if companies have been able to hide the true position as regards profits, they may be able to do so under the Bill. We all know that most people try to dodge the Taxation Department, but they find it a difficult task. Companies have found that out to their sorrow when they have tried to evade taxation.

The Minister for Justice: Most people think the taxation authorities want to take too much.

The **ACTING PREMIER**: That is the experience of most people. They seem to think there is someone in the department who has a terrible set on them. As a matter of fact, I was under that impression myself, but I soon found out that many others held the same view. I do not think anyone is singled out.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

## **BILL—MINE WORKERS' RELIEF ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Message.*

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

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES** (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans) [5.6] in moving the second reading said: I am sorry it has been found necessary to again amend the Mine Workers' Relief Act. When the original Act was introduced, it was framed so as to embody two existing Acts and the combination has proved most difficult to administer. Members may find the Bill fairly hard to follow because of the complicated nature of the clauses. I do not know whether it is absolutely essential for them to be drafted as they are, but I have been advised by the parliamentary draftsman that the clauses are worded in the proper legal phraseology to cover what we desire. Even

if the Bill, with its amendments, be passed, I cannot say it will not be necessary to amend the Act again later on. With, perhaps, one exception, the amendments embodied in the Bill will not represent any marked difference regarding the benefits secured to the workers by the legislation. The first amendment is to Section 13 and deals with the issuing of provisional certificates. The Mines Regulation Act provides that before any person can be employed in, on, or about a mine, he must possess a certificate from the Government laboratory certifying that he is free from all diseases specified in the Third Schedule to the Workers' Compensation Act, and particularly that he is free from tuberculosis. Under the Act as it stands, if a man desired to secure work on a mine in an outback district, he could secure a provisional certificate from the local doctor. Subsequently, when the laboratory officials examined him, and the laboratory doctor found the man was suffering from tuberculosis and, in his opinion, had been so suffering when the provisional certificate was issued to him, the man had to be withdrawn from the mine and was not entitled to be registered or to receive compensation. I do not want to do anything that will prevent men from securing work on presentation of a provisional certificate, but it would not be fair if a man, found to be suffering from one of the diseases specified in the Third Schedule, and, in consequence, withdrawn from the mine, were to be entitled to compensation. If that were to continue, it would mean that no man would be able to get a job on a provisional certificate, and I do not desire that result to follow. Therefore the first amendment makes it definite that the man who obtains work on a provisional certificate, but is later withdrawn from the mine after the laboratory examination, shall not be entitled to compensation but to a refund of all money paid by him to the fund. There is no provision in the Act for a refund. I want members to understand that under the old Mine Workers' Relief Act, which is embodied in the present Act, it was optional whether the employer or the employee contributed to the fund, but when the Mine Workers' Relief Act of 1932 became law, it was made compulsory for all employers and employees to contribute to the fund. In those circumstances, as we compel a man to contribute to the fund, it is only

fair that he shall be entitled to a refund in the circumstances I have outlined.

Mr. Stubbs: What happens to the man then?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: He is withdrawn from the mine.

Mr. Stubbs: And he receives no compensation?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. That may be regarded as a hardship, but unless the amendment I have outlined is agreed to, that man will not be able to get a job at all, because mine managers will not employ a man on a provisional certificate if they have to take the risk. The manager will ask the man to produce a laboratory certificate. That is what I do not want to happen. Let me cite the position that might arise at Wiluna. It would be absolutely unfair if that position arose respecting a man who was out of employment at that centre. If he were to go to the mine manager and ask for work, the manager would ask him if he held a laboratory certificate. If he could not produce one, the manager would not employ him. Under existing conditions, the man can get a provisional certificate from the local doctor, who would merely be able to say that the man was free from tuberculosis. The local doctor has no X-ray plant or other accessories necessary for a proper examination. As I say, unless we secure this amendment, that man would not be able to get a job at Wiluna at all. The proposal under the Bill is that the man shall be able to obtain work on a provisional certificate and may be able to continue for 12 months or so before the laboratory officials can examine him. If they find his health is such that he should never have been employed on the mine, he will be withdrawn from that employment, but he will have had the benefit of 12 months' employment, and he will be entitled to a refund of all payments he has made to the fund. I want that position to continue. I do not want to put the man to the expense of going to Kalgoorlie in order to be examined at the laboratory. The amendment will enable him to secure work on a provisional certificate, pending subsequent examination by the laboratory officials. The second amendment deals with the same matter, but refers to Section 16. The next amendment is to Section 26 of the Act, and is most important. When the Act

passed through this House, every member who took any interest in it believed that all those then receiving compensation under the old Mine Workers' Relief Fund Act would continue to receive compensation under the new Act. That was definitely the intention of the Minister who introduced the Bill, and of the House. But when the Act came into operation and was incorporated with the old Act, there was some £7,000 in hand under the old fund, and the Auditor General ruled that when that £7,000 was exhausted the claimants under the old Act would have no further claim under the new Act. That, of course, was never intended by the House. However, the ruling was upheld by the Crown Law authorities. I was appealed to a little time ago by the board, who wanted to know whether they were to continue paying. I was not going to see the men, women and children deprived of their compensation, so I instructed the board to continue to pay out of the present fund. This amendment will validate what the board have done. Everybody believed that those claimants were entitled to compensation under the new Act. Certainly nothing less was intended. The next two amendments affect Sections 48 and 49 respectively, and deal with the same subject. During the first 3½ years, a person withdrawn from the mines is receiving compensation from the Workers' Compensation Act, which is limited to a maximum of £3 10s. per week, irrespective of the obligations of the employee. We amended the Act last year, giving the board power where the dependants were under 16 years of age to pay on account of those dependants in cases of extreme hardship. Now I have discovered that under the Act a wife is not classed as a dependant. This amendment gives the board power to classify a wife as a dependant and to pay on her account compensation up to £1 per week. It usually happens that a man withdrawn from the mines and having a fairly large family is a man on or about the basic wage which, in Kalgoorlie, is £4 2s. Suppose a man on the basic wage in Kalgoorlie has a wife and two children. The maximum he can draw in those conditions would be £2 2s., plus 7s. 6d. for each child, or £2 17s. in all. So he is not up to the maximum of £3 10s., and his wife is not included as a

dependant. Surely if a man is withdrawn from a mine because he is suffering from miners' phthisis or tuberculosis, or a combination of both, and he has a wife she ought to be classified as a dependant.

Mr. Thorn: Does a single man receive the same as a married man, less the allowance for children?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, the single man is entitled to half wages, and the married man to half wages plus 7s. 6d. for each child. This is a very necessary amendment and is giving only a reasonably fair thing. It is increasing the responsibilities of the board, but I find it is not likely to cost more than the fund can stand. I hope the House will accept the amendment, so that the board shall have discretionary power to classify a wife as a dependant up to £1 per week. That applies up to £3 10s., and I am assured that the previous amendment to the Act makes it apply to over £3 10s. If a man on half wages had one child, which would take him to over £3 10s. per week, the board had the right, in a case of extreme hardship, to grant him up to the basic wage, but if he was not up to the maximum, the board could not grant him anything. I am assured that this amendment will apply to amounts over £3 10s., as it applies to amounts under £3 10s. Section 49 is exactly the same as Sections 13 and 26. The reason for these three amendments under that heading, is that the Act is divided into three sections, and there are three classes of people who can claim compensation. To make the benefits equal, we have had to bring down the three amendments. The next amendment is to Section 50, which deals with men suffering from silicosis early. A man who, under laboratory examination, is found to be suffering from silicosis early, receives from the department a notification advising him in his own interests to leave mining. If he leaves within two years from the date of the notification, and registers with the Mine Workers' Relief Fund Board, he can take any other occupation he likes and there is no further obligation on him to pay. But he must renew that registration each year, even up to 10 or 15 years, and if, on examination at the laboratory, he is found to be suffering from miners' phthisis advanced, or tuberculosis he is entitled to the full compensation of £750.



Hon. C. G. Latham: He does not pay anything after going out of the mine.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not if he leaves the mining industry. Many have left the industry under those conditions. Unfortunately a good number have returned to the mining industry, having found it impossible to make a decent living outside the industry. There is no provision in the Act under which the name of such a man can be excised from the register. Without a provision, complications will arise.

Mr. Stubbs: Why do you let him go back?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is not altogether wise in his own interests, but the Act was introduced to give him that opportunity. Suppose he has not worked in the industry for two years and he goes to the laboratory, where he is found to be suffering from silicosis early. They cannot grant him a clean ticket, but he can get a re-admission certificate, which entitles him to employment in a mine at the will of the inspector, who specifies the places in which he can work in the mine. He will be permitted to work almost anywhere in the intake air, but he will not be permitted to work anywhere in the return air.

Mr. Thorn: He goes back at his own responsibility.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, if he goes back under those conditions he is entitled to all the benefits under the Act. If a man goes back within the two years, there is no necessity for a re-admission certificate.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Suppose he is suffering from silicosis plus tuberculosis?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Then he cannot go back under any conditions. There is a provision that a man suffering from silicosis advanced can get a ticket enabling him to go back to a job on the surface, but if he does that he does it entirely at his own risk.

Mr. Stubbs: Is silicosis an infectious disease?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, not from one man to another. The next amendment is similar to those affecting Sections 13 and 48. The last amendment is in connection with the provision in the Act which includes prospectors or men who are going out prospecting. We find this amend-

ment very necessary. If a man decides to leave mining when he gets his notice, in many cases he expresses a desire to go prospecting. These men want to get out of deep mining, and to do surface work such as prospecting or work in shallow shows. Under the Act they are not permitted to subscribe to the Mine Workers' Relief Fund because they have not been prospecting for five years. That was never intended. I want this amendment more particularly so that men may be able to get work in the callings to which they have been accustomed, but under conditions that will be better suited to their health. I am speaking of those who received notice that they are suffering, say, from silicosis early. I want them to be able to contribute to the Mine Workers' Relief Fund in the same way that a man has been prospecting for five years can do. A man who has received such a notice may go along to the board and say he wishes to go prospecting, and to be allowed to contribute to the fund. As I have stated, that is not permissible, as he must have been prospecting for five years. This amendment sets out that a man must have been mining or prospecting or both in Western Australia for five years. If this is passed, the man who has to leave deep mining can register the next day, provide his contribution to the fund, and will be entitled to receive the benefits.

Mr. Stubbs: Why fix on five years?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We want this to apply to prospectors, that is, to men who leave deep mining and wish to take up prospecting. At the same time we have to see that it is not possible for a man who has been mining in some other part of the Commonwealth to come here, do a little prospecting, and then apply to the board and become entitled to all the benefits of a Western Australian miner.

Mr. Marshall: Such a man need only go prospecting for six months and receive compensation.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It was never intended that the man who wanted to leave deep mining should be debarred from contributing to the fund until he had been prospecting for five years. We desire to give every encouragement to such men to leave deep mining and go prospecting, where their health would not be so seriously

affected. There is only one other slight amendment which turns the second proviso in Section 57 into the third proviso. I am sorry we find it necessary to keep on amending the Act.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You will not have to do so next year.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If it is found that any injustice has crept in, further amendments will have to be brought down. I sympathise with the Mine Workers' Relief Fund Board, and also with the head of the miners' phthisis department who is responsible for the administration of the Act. It is a very difficult measure to carry out. Anything that we can do to make clear what the men are entitled to should be done. The amendment now before the House is to make the Act more clear and indicate how it will operate and what the intentions are behind it. The funds of the board will not be affected in any way that will prevent the board from carrying out their obligations. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Stubbs debate adjourned.

## BILL—DRIED FRUITS ACT CONTINUANCE.

*In Committee.*

Resumed from the 6th October: Mr. Sleeman in the Chair, the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Continuance of principal Act:

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I suggest that the Minister should have this clause struck out and a new one inserted as follows:—"Section 35 of the principal Act is hereby repealed." That section was originally put in to limit the duration of the Act. It is that limitation which has prevented the board from putting the industry on a satisfactory basis from the point of view of the consumers and the producers. Not much opportunity is afforded to the producers to exploit the consumers. The whole thing is in the hands of the Minister. If the board attempts to do anything unfair the Minister has power to veto it. There are too many middlemen in the industry. In the Swan area there are seven packing sheds, none of which is working up to capacity. All are capitalised beyond their service capacity, and have plants greater than the volume of fruit they get to

pack and condition. From the producers' point of view, a great deal could be gained if the packing sheds were organised in order that overhead costs might be reduced. Then there are the agent-dealers who have a grip upon the industry. They take a certain amount of profit that would otherwise go to the producer. There are also the distributors who are licensed by the board. There should be no one between the producer and the distributor. As it is, the organisation is top-heavy. The profit of the middlemen is out of all proportion to the returns received by the producers. The agent-dealers get a quota of all the dried fruits that are available for distribution. After the fruit is conditioned in the sheds it goes to the agent-dealers, who make their arrangements with the distributors. The output from the sheds is pooled and the dealers take a percentage of the total. If the distributors try to increase the sale of dried fruits, that increase is shared by the others. In the country districts Western Australian dried fruits are not displayed in a way to be attractive to the consumers. The Minister questioned my veracity. I had a conference with those connected with the organisation to see whether we could not do better through the country stores by packing the fruit in cartons so that they would have a wider appeal to the housewife. We went to some trouble to see what could be done in that regard and what a special carton would cost. After going fully into it we were told that while we would have to bear the cost of making the fruit more attractive, and if possible bringing about increased consumption, any benefit obtained as the result of our expenditure would have to be shared with the merchants. That of course was an impossibility. The co-operative movement could not bear all the expense and then share the result with merchant houses. There is another weakness which the present board cannot control.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. member intend to connect all this up with the clause?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes. The object of the amendment is to overcome the difficulties I have outlined, and I am trying to show how they can be overcome. The matter is very complicated. At one stage Boans realised that they were not getting an attractive article, and in their desire to improve the consumption of the local fruit, arranged with one special grower to put up the fruit

in a special package, and this was done. It is not done by others. If it were, the whole Act would fall to the ground. The point I am making is that we are not able to display the fruit in an attractive way because of the existing position of the distributors, and the matter has been so organised that they share the results on a percentage basis irrespective of anyone making a special effort. The board cannot create another organisation or an improved organisation because Parliament declares that the Act shall exist for a limited number of years. I appeal to the Minister to realise that we have had eight years of it, and that it has gone beyond the experimental stage. The producer is not getting a fair return for his product, and the consumer is not getting the product presented to him in an attractive way. If the Minister will agree to my amendment and take the limit out of the Act, the board can function and we can have a proper organisation. These people are deserving of encouragement, and the encouragement that the Minister can give is to assist them to have an unrestricted organisation. I move an amendment—

That Clause 2 be struck out with a view to inserting a new clause as follows: "Section 35 of the principal Act is hereby repealed."

The CHAIRMAN: It is only fair to the Committee to say if the clause is struck out as the hon. member desires, I shall not be able to accept the amendment the member for Guildford-Midland desires to put in its place.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I have consulted the Crown Law Department who framed the amendment. Surely I should be directed by the Chairman and told why the proposed amendment cannot be accepted.

The CHAIRMAN: If the clause is struck out, I shall rule out the amendment the hon. member desires to substitute.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Surely the Chairman should indicate where the proposed amendment is wrong. My position has been made impossible.

The CHAIRMAN: It is not within the scope of the Committee to make a temporary Act permanent.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The Government then should move the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: The Government would have to introduce a new Bill.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The only effect of the amendment would be to strike out the section in the principal Act which provides that, "All proceedings for offences against the Act shall be disposed of summarily, and such proceedings may notwithstanding any other Act to the contrary be commenced at any time within 12 months from the time of the commission of the offence." If members look at the Bill before the Committee they will find the words—

This Act may be cited as the *Dried Fruits Act Continuance Act, 1934*, and shall be read as one with the *Dried Fruits Act, 1926*, as reprinted in the appendix to the sessional volume of the Statutes for the year 1928.

It does not mean the *Dried Fruits Act* in the Statutes of 1926 at all. If anyone were stupid enough to look at the 1926 Act he would be led astray, because the *Dried Fruits Act* which I have in front of me is the Act of 1928, Section 35 of which relates, not to the duration of the Act, but to the time for commencing summary proceedings.

Mr. Thorn: Then it is no use wasting any further time of the Committee.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

## **BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Council's Amendment.*

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The Council's amendment is as follows:—

Clause 2.—Delete all the words after the word "by," in the first line of the clause, and substitute the following.—

"(a) Inserting after the word 'Asia' in the first line of paragraph (d) the words and parentheses '(except British India and Ceylon)';

(b) Inserting after the word 'Pacific' in the second line of paragraph (d) the words and parentheses '(except New Zealand)';

(c) Inserting at the end of paragraph (d) the following:—

'but the disqualifications created by this paragraph do not apply to any person who is a naturalised subject of His Majesty.' "

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This Bill and the Constitution Act Amendment Bill are similar in character. They were introduced in this House at the specific request of the Commonwealth Government and the Indian Government, to provide that the franchise be extended to British Indians who happen to reside in Australia. The principle has been adopted by the Commonwealth and by all the States of Australia and New Zealand also, and it was expected that it would be adopted here as well. When the Bill was before another place it was amended to bring it into line with the Commonwealth, but other words were added which I would be prepared to accept if the effect were to just follow what had been done by the Commonwealth. The amendment made by the Council, however, goes further. For instance, the Commonwealth Act provides for aboriginal natives of Australia and Asia, except British India. The amendment from the Legislative Council includes not only British India, but Ceylon, and while it may be desirable to include natives of Ceylon, perhaps because they are people of the British Empire, the only reason for accepting the amendment would be to make the law uniform. In order to secure uniformity, we should confine the amendment to excluding British Indians from the disqualification. I have no objection to removing the disqualification on Maoris. The natives of New Zealand are an intelligent people.

Hon. C. G. Latham: With a Minister of their own.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. Paragraph (c) of the Council's amendment is all right so far as it goes, but the Commonwealth law applies only to persons naturalised under the laws of the Commonwealth or the States. That limitation should be adopted. Otherwise the amendment would embrace a person naturalised in any part of the British Empire. I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out of paragraph (a) the words "and Ceylon."

Hon. N. KEENAN: The reason for inserting Ceylon was to clarify what to many

was a matter of doubt. Most members would have said that British India included Ceylon. One member even became angry with me for suggesting that that was wrong. I am of opinion that the Commonwealth Parliament laboured under a similar error. It would be absurd for us to draw a distinction between Ceylon and British India. I agree with the Minister, however, that the concluding paragraph should be amended.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The desire is to secure uniformity with the Commonwealth and other States. They have not excluded Ceylon from the disqualification, but the reason for it I do not know. If we exclude Ceylon, it might create difficulty in the event of steps being taken to amalgamate Commonwealth and State rolls. We have received no request to exclude Ceylon from the disqualification, but for seven or eight years there have been repeated requests from the British and Commonwealth Governments to exclude British India.

Mr. SAMPSON: If we desire to exclude Ceylon from the disqualification, it is essential to specify Ceylon apart from British India, because Ceylon has the status of a dominion and a separate Government. The Minister might agree to that part of the Council's amendment.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I support the Minister for the reason he submitted. An amalgamation of rolls would reduce the cost to the taxpayers, and uniformity is desirable. It is not solely a question of extending the franchise to Cingalese already in Western Australia; it would apply to every Cingalee coming here from other parts of Australia.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: And he would not have the franchise in any other State.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is so. So far as I know, the Commonwealth law contains no definition of British Indian.

Amendment on amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That the amendment be further amended by adding the words to paragraph (c):—"by virtue of a certificate of naturalisation issued under the laws of the Commonwealth or any State of the Commonwealth."

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

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: When this Bill was in Committee, I induced the Government to agree to the inclusion of Lebanese, who are people who have been become naturalised within Australia. In view of that fact, I think they will be included in the amendment moved by the Minister for Justice. It would be very unwise to permit anyone to have the franchise who might have obtained his naturalisation papers in some other part of the Empire, which papers might be totally different from those that are given in Australia.

Amendment put and passed; the Council's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

### **BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT.**

#### *Council's Amendment.*

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

#### *In Committee.*

Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The Council's amendment is as follows:—

Delete all the words after the word "by," in the first line of the clause, and substitute the following:—

"(a) striking out the whole of the second proviso to the section and substituting the following:—

'Provided also that—

(i) no aboriginal native of Australia, Asia (except British India or Ceylon), Africa or Islands of the Pacific (except New Zealand), or person of the half-blood, shall be entitled to be registered unless he is a person who was registered as an elector prior to the thirty-first day of December, 1933, but the disqualifications created by this paragraph of this proviso shall not apply to any person who is a naturalised subject;

(ii) no elector possessing more than one qualification within a province shall be thereby entitled to be registered more than once for that province";

(b) adding the following paragraph at the end of the section:—

'In this section "naturalised subject" means a person who has obtained a

certificate of naturalisation under the laws of the United Kingdom, or under the laws of the Commonwealth, or any State of the Commonwealth, or under the laws of any of the British Dominions, and whose certificate of naturalisation is still in force and has been in force for at least twelve months before making the claim."

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This amendment is exactly on the same lines as that which we have just dealt with. Accordingly I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the words "or Ceylon," in paragraph (a).

Amendment on amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That the amendment be further amended by striking out the words "under the laws of the United Kingdom or" and the words "or under the laws of any of the British Dominions" as they appear in paragraph (b).

Amendment put and passed; the Council's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

### **BILL—SANDALWOOD ACT AMENDMENT.**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

### **ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1934-35.**

#### *In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 1st November; Mr. Hegney in the Chair.

*Vote—Child Welfare and Outdoor Relief, £130,819.*

MR. DONEY (Williams - Narrogin) [7.40]: The Minister for Employment was enthusiastic about the achievements of his department during the past year. I do not altogether share his enthusiasm, although I compliment him upon his attempts to promote the sale of goods made in Western Australia. The Minister's activities in that regard are all right up to a point, but they do not go far enough. They do not go nearly as far

as those of the Mitchell-Latham Government went. The late Government's work in respect of local industries was of a highly practical and durable nature. Due largely to overtures of the last Government, numerous factories were started. I have a list of some of them—a condensed milk factory at Harvey, a similar factory at Waroona, a cheese factory at Serpentine, a match factory at West Perth, a wooden staves factory at Carlisle, an asbestos pipe factory at Fremantle, the Yalumba Winery, and butter factories at Spearwood and elsewhere. There were also other factories which at the moment I do not call to mind. All this was accomplished away back in the time when money was very scarce indeed. I put it to the Minister that he should go and do likewise. He will have a far easier task to-day, money being relatively plentiful. Certainly, during the period of the last Government some factories were closed down; but others were, as I have just indicated, built to take their place. It is agreed that road and similar work is all right in its way; but, after all, it is only a temporary employment, whereas employment brought into being by factories of the kind I have referred to is permanent. I suggest to the Minister that there are still many profitable avenues to be explored. I hope the hon. gentleman will manage to do something in that direction. When introducing his Estimates the Minister mentioned the possibility of his sending into the country a train laden with Western Australian made goods, for advertising purposes in the rural areas. He said, if I remember rightly, that the cost would be heavy. I fervently hope the Minister will not do this thing at all. While not saying that the project is useless, I do say that its value is at best doubtful. It would in any case be an extremely costly method of advertising our goods. I am wondering whether the Minister has any idea of the cost likely to be incurred. It would depend, of course, largely upon what parts of the State he intended to cover, and also upon the intensity of the campaign and the length of time over which it extended. But assume that the amount to be expended would be only £1,000, that figure, of course, being only a guess. Lately I have been having great trouble in regard to building of new schools

in various country centres. Admittedly, there was precisely the same trouble when the previous Government were in power. However, I now have in mind a case where, provided only the Education Department would make available £50 worth of material, the interested parents would be prepared to erect the building. I have no doubt but that in other parts of the State there are many situations on a par with that. If only the £1,000 proposed for the advertising campaign were handed over to the Minister for Education, he could then secure the erection of twenty schools of the kind I am mentioning. The benefit from the Minister's advertising trade is doubtful, to say the best; but education, I am sure hon. members will agree, is an ever-accumulating benefit to the State.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: In any case, the centres of consumption are in the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Employment: There are numbers of consumers in the country, too.

Mr. DONEY: Naturally so. The Minister could utilise the walls of country schools, and for that matter, the walls of schools in the metropolitan area, for advertising purposes. I claim that that method would achieve a more lasting effect than would the costly proposal of sending trains into the country areas. The Minister expressed himself as being surprised at, but deriving great satisfaction from, the fact that 160 manufacturers had agreed to assist him by taxing themselves, as he put it, to the extent of £3,000 annually in order to assist him in his campaign. I see nothing whatever surprising in that, and I do not think other members will. Obviously, so long as the Minister is prepared to spend public money in assisting Western Australian manufacturers to advertise their goods, so long would the manufacturers be prepared readily to join in the good work. The Minister naively concluded this phase of his speech with the remark—

I feel sure the £3,000 which the manufacturers have decided to make available annually for this campaign will be returned to them tenfold.

I consider that the Minister has not experienced much trouble in coming to a conclusion of that kind. No one will dispute the value

of a campaign to buy Western Australian goods, but hon. members will surely concede that in agreeing to help to advertise their own wares the manufacturers of this State are, after all, merely exhibiting ordinary business ingenuity or astuteness. I question, indeed, whether it can be called ingenuity. No ingenuity is needed. So far as the manufacturers are concerned, it is just a matter of grasping a profitable opportunity. The Minister reported that these 160 manufacturers were so keen to start the fund that actually they embarrassed him by starting to write out cheques there and then. Just so. There is nothing whatever surprising about that. In fact, I think all members, with the exception perhaps of the Minister, would have been surprised had the manufacturers acted otherwise. It was the natural thing for them to do. The Minister claims to have saved considerably on relief expenditure. Undoubtedly he has, and I do not wish to belittle his achievement at all. However, I do think those savings have been made largely at the expense of the single men. It seems to me that the cost of maintaining single men has been lifted from the Treasury and put upon the householders in the country, and of course in the city as well. I believe the Minister said there were 4,000 fewer men on relief work or sustenance last month than there were in October of last year. I would like him, if he has the necessary figures available, to tell the Committee just how many of those 4,000 men were single and were in work but were put off because they were single. If he can do so, I think that information will give us a truer idea of the number of men actually absorbed into industry. There is no doubt there has been a substantial improvement in the unemployment position while the Minister has been in office. We must concede that. I think it is commensurate with the trade improvement that has been general throughout Australia; perhaps it has been even a little better than that. The Minister may agree that the administration and control of his department has been far easier during the past year than it was in 1929, 1930 and, to some extent, in 1931, during which years the problem was so great as almost to overwhelm the Government of that time. I think, too, there is no doubt that the Minister's work has become, year by year, progressively much easier. It is a pleasure to reflect that the Minister has an expert staff, and he will probably agree—if

he does not, I think members generally will—that he has had no financial worries at all. Last year the amount available on revenue and loan account exceeded that of the previous year by £944,544, made up by additional loan funds amounting to £795,000 and the net increase in Western Australian State revenue of £149,544. This year, of course, the position is better still. The increase will be £1,779,454, being made up of additional loan funds, £1,265,000, and net increase in State revenue, £514,454.

The Minister for Employment: The longer the Government are in office, the better the position will be.

Mr. DONEY: The longer the Government are in office, the larger will be their borrowings. Of that there can be no doubt. The Government entirely overlook the fact that every £1,000,000 borrowed by the State means an additional £37,000 to be found by the taxpayers every year. It is necessary to stress the fact that, although so much more money is available, it does not necessarily imply any improvement in the position, seeing that the augmented amounts are still a charge on the public purse. There is also this to be noted, that the savings the Minister has effected respecting unemployment relief will be considerably reduced by interest on sinking fund payments in respect of the greatly increased borrowings. I want very briefly indeed to compare not this year's position with that of last year, but the Minister's actions generally, and promises made by responsible Ministers in the present Government to the workers during the last election. One assurance given on that occasion was that the then existing condition, that no one was entitled to receive work unless he was receiving sustenance, would be repealed. If the Minister is satisfied that that condition has been repealed, very well. Another assurance was that the then existing condition that men had to work away from home, irrespective of whether they were physically fit and without regard to their domestic obligations, would be repealed. I wish to point out that that condition could not be repealed in the strict sense of the word, because no such condition was ever laid down, and, consequently, could not be repealed. As a matter of fact, from time to time statements have appeared in the Press that would seem to indicate, irrespective of whether that condition did or did

not exist during the regime of the previous Government, that it certainly does exist to-day. I will quote from a letter that appeared in the "Daily News" in January last from the Relief and Sustenance Workers' Union. The letter was addressed to the Fremantle Road Board and appeared in the "Daily News" under the headings "Unemployed Seek Relief," "Government Methods Criticised." The letter was as follows:—

Dear Comrades, We wish to bring under your notice the position existing at Fremantle whereby unemployed have been denied work or sustenance. There are a number so situated. This is due to (1) being denied sustenance owing to refusal to accept relief work in the country because of physical disabilities or domestic obligations. Many of these cases possessed doctors' certificates that they are only suitable for light work, or that it is not advisable to leave their homes on account of the sickness of wives or children. (2) Refusal of the Unemployment Relief Department to grant or continue sustenance despite the inability of the department to place applicants in employment either locally or in the country.

I am not dealing with the question whether the stand taken by the Minister was right or wrong. I am merely drawing attention to the fact that he said the previous Government were guilty of this injustice and that if he were returned, he would see that it was repealed. In the "West Australian" of about the same date there appeared a statement from the secretary of the Fremantle Lumpers' Union in the course of a report headed "Job Refused," "Man's Sustenance Stopped," "Lumpers Threaten to Strike." The statement of the secretary of the Lumpers' Union contained the following:—

Considerable dissatisfaction exists among members of the Fremantle Lumpers' Union over a position that has been created by the Minister for Employment (Mr. J. J. Kenneally) in ordering a member of the union with a family of six children to take a job under his scheme, beyond Geraldton, at a wage that would work out at £3 6s. a week over the period for which he would be engaged. The member referred to was told that if he did not accept the position, the sustenance allowance for himself, his wife and family would be discontinued.

It is quite likely that the information set out in that statement is not correct. I merely say that if it is correct—the chances are that it is—it certainly would show that the Minister has not fulfilled his pre-election promise, to which I made reference earlier. There is another small complaint

that I know the Minister will take in the right spirit. I have brought it under his notice before. On a number of occasions at Narrogin—I imagine the same thing happens at Perth and all over the State—it has been the practice to give relief workers an undertaking that they shall have so many weeks on and so many weeks off, according to the number of dependants they have. That is all right. We do not grumble at that at all. The work naturally has to be paid for at the basic rate. After the standing-down period has elapsed, the men return to the job for further work. In some instances they have found that no work is available for them. They have stood down for another week, then made further inquiries with the same result, and have repeated the performance for upwards of a month or five weeks in excess of the anticipated standing-down period. There would have been no great harm in that if, when they went back to work, they were given extra work to make up for the period during which they had had no work and consequently no pay; but such extra work is always refused. The Minister when replying might explain his reason for dealing with men on those lines. Personally I can see no excuse whatever for it. Now I come to a question involving the policy of compulsory unionism, which I believe is still being enforced. I understand that men who refuse to join a union are still being denied sustenance, and I should like to hear from the Minister in defence of his attitude in that regard. I have here a letter signed H. S. Pearce, which appeared in the "West Australian" on the 20th of last month. This is part of the statement Mr. Pearce had to make—

Not being able to get work, I was forced to apply for sustenance. This I obtained until last March, when it was cut off because I refused to become a member of a union, preferring to stick to my liberty and my principles.

I do not know whether that statement is right, but if it is I should like the Minister to attempt to justify the attitude taken by his department. I admit that joining a union is quite right and proper, provided the action is voluntary, but to force a man to join a union on pain of starvation is a different thing altogether. There is no doubt unemployment is gradually decreasing. Actually of course we cannot by any Gov-



ernmental effort abolish unemployment, although we can control it, and I agree it has been effectively controlled by this Government and the previous Government. Actually of course it can only be materially improved by an improvement in industry. There is that improvement noticeable in this State, and fortunately for the Government and the country it is being substantially helped by the improvement in the price of gold and the consequent general improvement on the goldfields.

**MR. CLOTHIER** (Maylands) [8.4]: After hearing the Minister in regard to sustenance, I do not think I should be doing my duty if I did not have a few words to say. When he made the remark that last year there were 4,000 men receiving sustenance without work, as against 960 at present, and when it is remembered that those 960 are practically C grade men and cannot do anything in the nature of heavy work, we realise that it is hard to find work for such men in the metropolitan area. But I cannot agree with the member for Williams-Narrogin, who said he did not think it was much improvement as against the improvement shown by the previous Government.

Mr. Doney: I did not say that.

Mr. CLOTHIER: Had the officers of the department continued to work with the same idea as they had when working under the previous Government, the present Minister would have found himself in somewhat the same position. However, when he introduced a roster, as the result of which the departmental officials knew how to place the men, much of the trouble vanished, and those officers, in conjunction with the Minister, can claim the credit of a decided success. In the early stages of the depression, when going to the department to find work for men, I was driven from pillar to post. Still, I did not blame the then Minister, but I blamed the officers, because they did not seem to know where they were. However, as I have said, since the roster came along things have been very different with the department. Under the scheme introduced by the Government for the renovation of homes, we see many houses undergoing improvement in the shape of new fronts and extensions. That is an excellent move-

ment because it provides work for skilled men, and so the ordinary labourers have a much better chance with the other jobs. I was pleased to hear that the scheme had been so keenly appreciated, as the Minister told us when he said that although £20,000 had been allotted, no less than £23,000 had been applied for. Then the Minister told us we were importing from the Eastern States manufactured goods to the value of £9,300,000 as against our exports to the Eastern States, which were valued at only £1,300,000. In my opinion that is a crying shame, for if every householder when shopping were to demand locally produced commodities, the discrepancy between our exports and our imports would be cut down by at least one-third. In some of the shops in Perth one can hear customers asking for such and such an article, without ever demanding to be supplied with the local article. I blame the shopkeepers and their assistants for not urging their customers to support local industry. Most of the shopkeepers and their assistants have children of their own, and should be looking forward to the time when those children will require jobs. If those men behind the counter were to advocate the support of local industries, there would be a living for all. I disagree with the member for Williams-Narrogin, who said he did not think much good would be effected by sending through the country a train carrying an exhibition of locally manufactured commodities. Many years ago in Sydney I saw a train, painted white, which was sent around the suburbs and the country districts with an exhibition of locally-manufactured goods. It is an excellent idea, because school children, seeing the train, will go home and tell their parents that it is advertising local industry. When the children talk about that sort of thing it shames their parents, who then go off and buy locally produced commodities. The Minister for Education should see to it that the school children are instructed day by day to ask their parents to buy the local stuff. There has been a wonderful improvement in the building trade during the last 12 months, so much so that building permits have represented practically a million pounds. In the peak period the record was only £1,700,000, so it shows that things are improving and that the public are satisfied

with the improvement and so are putting their money into circulation. The result is that many additional men are being employed, and most of them tradesmen. This is a consideration, because the relief work provided by the Government is not altogether designed for tradesmen. So it is sincerely to be hoped the building trade will be kept going. I can endorse the statement of the Minister regarding his visit to a certain factory at which he was offered a cigar of foreign make. I was in his company at the time. When I saw the brand of the cigars, I remarked to Mr. Macartney, "Wait until the Minister sees it." I did not think he would notice it, but he did, and he refused to accept one of the cigars. About a quarter of an hour afterwards, a box of locally-made cigars was produced. The Minister has his eyes open to anything of that kind, and he said that if it was good enough to foster the industry of that factory, it was good enough for those concerned to patronise locally-made cigars.

Mr. Thorn: I wish the Minister had put one in his pocket for me.

Mr. CLOTHIER: I am perfectly satisfied with the progress that has been made. In view of the success attained by the Minister and his staff during the past 12 months, I do not think there need be any doubt that success will reward their efforts during the ensuing year.

**MR. SLEEMAN** (Fremantle) [8.12]: While I can endorse many of the statements made by previous speakers as to the improvement that has taken place during the last 18 months, quite a lot still remains to be done. We are still far from rounding the corner. Quite a lot of people say we are around the corner.

Mr. Doney: Can you see it yet?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Certainly we have improved our position considerably, but I do not believe that we are yet around the corner. There are one or two serious protests I wish to enter, and I consider that I would be lacking in my duty if I did not lodge them. First let me refer to the Child Welfare Department and to the miserable cheese-paring policy pursued by the department in relation to old-age and invalid pensioners. The old-age and invalid pensioner receives 17s. 6d. per week. In some instances in my electorate, the wife and children are

receiving relief from the Child Welfare Department, because the pensioners are not able to keep the members of their families.

Mr. Moloney: That pension is paid by the Commonwealth.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Yes, but it is taken away by the Child Welfare Department. The pensioner receives 17s. 6d. from the Commonwealth, and the wife and children are supposed to get 7s. or 9s., as the case may be, to enable them to keep body and soul together.

Mr. Thorn: You would not think that old-age pensioners would have children.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Quite a lot of things happen that would not occur to the hon. member's mind. Quite a number of invalid pensioners, unfortunately, are unable to provide for their families, and the Child Welfare Department should pay the wife and children 7s. or 9s. per head, but the department take into consideration the pension paid to the husband by the Commonwealth, and spread the amount over the whole family. It is all put into a pool, and the result is that each unit in the family receives 7s. or 8s. That is wrong, and I protest emphatically against it. As a matter of fact, I am beginning to think that we are getting hypocritical. A few months ago I took the platform in support of Labour candidates for the Commonwealth Parliament, and promised the electors that if those candidates were returned, the pension would be increased, as 17s. 6d. a week was not enough for either an old-age or an invalid pensioner. I believe that had the Labour Party been returned and had Mr. Scullin become Prime Minister, he would have carried out the promise and increased the pension. The Federal member for Fremantle certainly would have done everything in his power to secure the increase. But what is the use of our telling the people that we will increase their pensions if the Child Welfare Department can rob sick men of what they should have to maintain themselves. Their condition is different from that of a man who may be out of work for a month or two. An invalid pensioner is permanently and totally incapacitated, and 17s. 6d. a week is not sufficient to keep him. He has to buy medicines and emulsions, and keep himself in food and clothing. The action of the Child Welfare Department is deserving of censure. I have been to the department and to the heads of the department on

the matter, only to meet with refusals. The first time I met the head of the department, I said, "You cannot do that." His reply was, "But we are doing it, and we are going to do it." The right place to ventilate that grievance is in this Chamber, and if that state of affairs is allowed to continue, something drastic should be done to ensure that pensioners are not further robbed. I hope that now I have made my protest, something will be done. If it is not, I shall not hesitate to ventilate the matter at every opportunity in order to ensure that the interests of those people are preserved. The unemployment relief figures show a decrease. I am sure that the Minister and his department have done quite a lot to decrease unemployment, but here I have another protest to make. I do not agree with the practice of sending relief workers to piece-work jobs. I maintain that it is not right and proper to put relief workers on piece-work. I do not believe in piece-work at all, although there are unions belonging to the Labour movement that favour piece-work in certain callings. They may be right, and I may be wrong, but certainly it is not right to put relief workers on piece-work. Amongst relief workers are all sorts and conditions of men. There are big, strapping young fellows and there are weaklings classified by the doctor as Class A. or Class B., and they are treated as being equal. There are men who have never handled anything heavier than a pen. One man I know had never done work heavier than watchmaking all his life. All those different types of men are drafted out and put on piece-work. While the board can regulate the price to be paid to average men, the other men have no possible chance of making anything like what they ought to be able to earn at such work. No doubt piece-work was instituted in order to permit men who are prepared to half kill themselves to make a little extra money for the benefit of the employer. I say without hesitation that piece-work has been one of the greatest curses to the workers of this country. I refer to the district of the member for Murchison, where piece-work has been in vogue in the mines for many years. I know that when men have been engaged on piece-work underground, they have rushed back into places thick with dust and fumes, and the result has been that

they very soon finished up in Wooroloo. Piece-work has been advocated in other walks of life, but no matter what might be said in its favour in the ordinary avocations for which men may be considered skilled, it should not apply to relief workers. Those men should be allowed to earn the requisite amount in return for an ordinary day's work. Judging from letters and reports that have reached me from the country, I am satisfied that while there may be many men who, under the piece-work system, can earn the basic wage, and some of them even more, a large number have no possible chance of doing so within the limits of the ordinary working hours. I therefore raise my voice against piecework for relief workers. I now come to the "C" class men. Whatever benefit may be enjoyed by the man who is skilled at his trade, and whatever argument may be used to indicate that the "A" and "B" class of relief worker should be put on piece-work, something I do not believe in. I contend that in no circumstances should a "C" class man be sent out to piece-work. Most of the "C" class men for whom I have been able to secure employment have been sent to piece-work. I have received dozens of letters complaining that they have had to work as much as 5½ days a week to earn what they should have earned in two or three days. The heads of the department say they cannot do anything. I hope this will not be allowed to continue much longer. There are "C1," "C2" and "C3" class men. In some instances these men are sent out to work alongside "A" class men. A "C" class man should not be sent away to fell timber, saw it up and burn it. I hope no more of these men will be sent away where they have to work all hours in order to eke out an existence. Seeing that we are now getting into the summer, I advocate that steps should be taken to provide for the coming winter. It is no use leaving things until winter arrives and then endeavouring to see what can be done. I do not blame the department for what occurred last winter, because the officials were kept busy. Next winter there will be no excuse for them if they allow those things that occurred last winter to occur during the ensuing winter. I refer to those people who were sent into the country to work under all sorts of condi-

tions and in all sorts of places. Some of them had to live in tents, when it was not necessary for them to do so. Of course there are places where that is necessary. There are also works which should not be continued in the winter time. The member for North-East Fremantle and I visited some of those works at the end of last winter. I would not have liked to work on those jobs up to the waist in water shovelling out sludge. Some of the men had such bad coughs as to suggest that they should be at the Wooroloo sanatorium. Something should be done to obviate that sort of thing next winter. There are important works that could be carried out in the metropolitan area during the winter months, so that the men engaged upon them need not keep two homes going and be compelled to live under bad conditions. There are such things as housing schemes and bridges to build in the metropolitan area, where the men could be better employed than in the country, and from whose work better results could be obtained. If these works were proceeded with in the winter, and the men could attend them from their homes, a lot of sickness would be obviated. There is another section of the community the members of which are not receiving the treatment they should have. We are told that only so many men are out of work. That refers to sustenance men. Some of the grandest old men imaginable, those who have blazed the track, are not able to get sustenance, either because they have a few pounds in the bank, or they have a son or daughter bringing in earnings equal to more than 7s. per unit in the family. Something should be done to give those people a chance. If we have gone as far around the corner as is said, they should be provided with an opportunity to get back to employment. Many of them live in my electorate. They are grand old battlers who have blazed the trail, and some of them have walked the streets for as long as two years. Their sons and daughters have been able to earn more than 7s. per unit in the family, and they are debarred from getting sustenance. Because of that the department will not have them picked up. I hope the negotiations of the Minister to increase the 14s. and 20s. men will soon bear fruit, and that he will, as stated,

do something more for these people. I understand that the Industrial Development Committee are now going into a scheme for the construction of homes. Mention has been made in the newspaper of a number of £400 homes being built. The rent for these will work out at about 12s. and 14s. per week. Most of the people who are urgently in need of homes could not afford to pay 12s. Something should be done by the committee to reduce the rents. The previous Government built several homes for unemployed workers at a cost of £65. Whilst they were not all that could be desired, they represented a step in the right direction, and the families concerned were very thankful to get them. I know most of them. Only about 20 homes were built, and most of them are in the Fremantle area. The people concerned have made themselves comfortable in those dwellings. I do not advocate cutting things down as low as that, but at the time I was very pleased to get them. They were erected out of money made available by the Mitchell Government. To-day a small cottage could be erected for about £150. That would be very acceptable to people who are particularly desirous of having a home. I hope something will be done by the committee in that direction. The housing problem is becoming a very serious one for those who are on small wages and on sustenance. If cottages costing about £150 were erected the occupants would not have to pay as much as 12s. a week, and the capital available would go further. After all my complaints I now wish to congratulate the Minister on the work he is doing in repatriating from the State those who should have been repatriated many years ago. It is some years since the House, at my instance, carried a resolution that dissatisfied migrants who wanted to go Home and were likely to become a burden on the State should be sent Home. I congratulate the Minister on what he has done in that respect.

Hon. C. G. Latham: How many have gone Home?

Mr. SLEEMAN: I require notice of that question. For this country's good some should be sent Home, and for their own good others. I do not know in what way many of the migrants managed to get here. It is no fault of mine that numbers of them were not returned years ago. Had that been done

when I advocated it, or even before, Western Australia would now be much better off. I know of men at Fremantle who have cost this State just on £500, and will go on costing something until they die; and after that their relatives will still go on costing this country something because of having inherited the diseases of their unfortunate parents. We go on smilingly carrying them. We ought to adopt some coherent scheme separating those who will be useful to the State from those who never will be. I do not condemn the migrants. I know many good migrants. There are good and bad in all classes. However, amongst the migrants are some very poor types. Some are debarred from working, not through any fault of their own, but because while the heart is willing the general physique is poor. This country would never miss them.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Of course, there are a few Australians of that kind too.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Quite a lot of Australians. I do not say that the migrants are all bad and the Australians all good. I have knowledge of Australians who are just as bad as any migrants known to me. Unfortunately, the bad Australians are our responsibility. We must keep them and look after them. We should not suffer, however, on account of people who have been sent here but should never have been sent here. I believe the Minister will realise that it is for the benefit of the State to bring down a scheme for sending Home many more, some for their own good and some for the good of Western Australia.

**MR. TONKIN** (North-East Fremantle) [8.33]: It is quite obvious that considerable improvement has taken place in the unemployed position in Western Australia. To my way of thinking, there are two outstanding factors responsible for that improvement. Firstly, there is the tremendous expansion which has taken place in local industry. For that expansion I give great credit to the Minister. I remember saying, in the course of my maiden speech in this Chamber, that we could not afford to pay other people to do work which we should do ourselves. I meant, of course, that we must buy local products, so that the work might be done locally. On that occasion the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) was pleased to refer to that kind of thinking as permitting one's imagination to run riot with one's common

sense. Despite the hon. member's view, I still hold the opinion that we must put our own men and women to work first—before we buy the products of other people and thus give work to them. It is because of the expansion in local industry that fewer men are dependent on the Government to-day for relief. Secondly, the Minister has made it possible for men on relief to obtain considerably more money than they did under the previous Government. That is not an idle statement; we have had proofs of it in this Chamber. Both the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Nationalist Party have said that the present Government have been able to do well because they have had so much more money at their disposal. That is true. The Government have had money at their disposal, and they have given it to the people. It is because of the increased earnings which men on relief work have been able to get, that this vast improvement has taken place in the industries of Western Australia. More money has been put into circulation; a fillip has been given to industry, and private employment has absorbed numerous men who previously were dependent on the Government. I again commend the Minister for making that possible. However, much remains to be done. A perusal of the last report of the Child Welfare Department gives ample proof that there is a considerable field to be explored yet. On page 18 of the report, under the heading "Inspections," we find that the inspectors report—

In visiting the homes of those in need over the past year, the inspectors are of opinion that the poverty in these homes is more apparent than before . . . The homes are becoming destitute of bedding of all descriptions; clothes and household utensils are wearing out and cannot be replenished.

Those are the words of inspectors who have visited the homes on behalf of the Child Welfare Department. Therefore, I think we may take it as true that, generally speaking, poor people are poorer this year than they were last year, and this despite the improvement in local industry and in the unemployment position. There are several obvious reasons why the poor people are poorer, despite our scale of relief. Take, for example, the way in which the department deal with the standing-down period of a man. When a man comes off Government relief work, if he has any energy at

all he looks around for work in private employment. If he is successful in obtaining that work, he augments his earnings by whatever wage he receives for the time he is working; but unfortunately he does not get the full benefit of that money. The department lumps that money in with what he has received for relief work, and then calculates his standing-down period. As a result the man is obliged to stand down for a further length of time without receiving any sustenance. In my opinion, that practice makes it impossible for any replenishment to take place in the man's household. Many men and women refrain from going to the department for relief until absolute necessity obliges them to do so. Numbers of people do not like the idea of going on Government relief. Their rent falls in arrear while they are struggling along without assistance. They run up bills with the storekeeper. Perhaps they have been dealing with him for years, and he stands them for a month or two. They wear their clothes threadbare before they go near the department. They are absolutely down on bed-rock when they are forced to approach the department. By rigorously enforcing the standing-down period on these people, and by taking into consideration the amount of money they may earn during the standing-down period, the department make it impossible for them to pay their rent if it is in arrear, to pay off the storekeeper wholly or partly, and to replenish clothing and household utensils. I should like to see a more liberal policy pursued in that regard. Otherwise, seeing that according to the departmental report the poor are becoming poorer, the downward movement will never be checked, and these people will soon be completely in the slough of despond. I do not think the Minister desires that, but it is obvious that that is what will happen. Therefore some liberalisation is necessary in that direction. The member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) mentioned that the department take into consideration the amount of pension a man draws. That, of course, has the same effect as calculating the amount of money earned during the standing-down period, though the case is really harder. The invalid pension is paid because a man is unable to work. He has to be in a very bad way indeed before he can

qualify for the invalid pension. It is nearly always the case that an invalid needs special diet. He needs emulsions, especially if he is drawing the pension because of tuberculosis. He needs other expensive articles. Out of his 17s. 6d. per week he is obliged to pay for his accommodation. If the department take the amount of the pension into consideration and as a result cut down the amount of sustenance allowed to the wife and children, they are unduly penalising the invalid and making it impossible for him to obtain those comforts which are so essential to his well-being during the few years he has left on earth. I think some liberalising is necessary there. Then there is the question of piece-work for single men. To use the words of the Minister, he places on that class of work men who are not fit to do an ordinary day's work. Of course the original idea of piece-work was that a man who was fitter than the average, would have an opportunity to earn additional money because of his extra fitness. But the Minister says this work is provided for men who are not fit to do an ordinary day's work. Piece-work for those men, in the circumstances, is entirely wrong. I know of one instance where it took a man at Forrest Grove seven days to earn his 30s. I do not think he worked eight hours a day; he would not be physically capable of working such a stretch at that class of work. That sort of thing should not be. The Minister will say that there is an appeal board to which these men can appeal. That board is all right for men of average physical fitness. The board could go along and say that the work was worth so much, if it had to be done by a man who was physically capable. But these single, "C" class men are, in many instances, not capable of doing a full day's work, such as one would expect from an average man. In such circumstances, it is quite useless for those men to approach the Appeal Board because if the board fixed a rate that would be sufficient to enable them to earn their money in a reasonable time, the board would have to fix a ridiculous figure and, of course, that could not be done. The only way out of the difficulty would be to put the men on a different type of work. I know of some men who had to do axe work but they were physically incapable of swinging an axe for any length of time. They could not undertake that forestry work. If a rate were

fixed to suit those men, the position would be well nigh impossible. The only remedy is to find for them a different type of work altogether. The Minister pointed out that the task in which these men are engaged does not lend itself to day work. I can see the reasoning of his statement, but that does not mean that the men should be kept on that class of work. Men who are fit enough should be given those jobs and "C" class men, who are not fully capable, should be given work of a much lighter description. There is one important feature that is a recommendation for piece-work, and it is that it permits men, who are not capable of sustained effort, to jog along quietly on their own and possibly take three or four days to earn their money, whereas if they were employed under day labour conditions they would have to work at top pressure. I do not believe that weak men or those suffering from disabilities should be called upon to do a full day's work, nor do I think they should be asked to work the full week. The rates of sustenance that apply in the higher scale are satisfactory, but for the 14s. and 21s. men, the rates are much too low. Something should be done to relieve their position. Men who receive 14s. a week, work for five weeks and two days on the job and then have to stand down for five weeks and three days, or one day longer than they work in the 11-week period. If their earnings at the full basic wage rate are averaged, plus camping allowance, it works out at £1 18s. for the 11 weeks. On that weekly amount, the men are obliged to keep themselves on the job in the bush and provide food, lodging and clothing for their wives in town. Candidly, I do not know how they do it. Some men have been obliged to board because no camp site was available. I have been told that it costs them 27s. 6d. a week for board and lodging. If that amount is taken out of the average weekly wage of £1 18s., very little is left to provide food and lodging for their wives, and clothing for them both. The position is almost as bad for the 21s. man with a wife and child. I hope the Minister will take advantage of any extra money that he may receive for his department and improve the conditions of those men. The provision of cheaper homes will have a very important bearing on the plight of unemployed people. I understand the Industrial Development Board are investigating the posi-

tion with the idea of providing very cheap homes for men in receipt of £3 or £4 a week. I commend them for their efforts in that direction. Rent constitutes a problem. The man in receipt of the 14s. rate is obliged to find rent for his home, and the rent amounts to practically the same figure as that which has to be paid by the 21s. man or the 28s. man. There are very few houses than can be obtained for less than 12s. 6d. a week. If that amount has to be taken out of the limited earnings of sustenance workers, very little is left for food and clothing. Anything that can be done to provide cheap houses for these people must be welcome. If the Government can build houses for, say, £300, it will go a long way towards easing the position. Money is cheap to-day. We have read of the conversion loan that has been put through successfully at 3¾ per cent. If £300 were spent on the erection of a home, £12 a year should be ample to cover interest charges on the money, and the Government should not look for much beyond that, apart from the rates that would accrue. It would not be necessary for the houses to be paid for within a short period, if sufficient return was received to provide interest and rates. If that were done, it would be possible to provide homes for the sustenance workers for less than 10s. a week.

Hon. C. G. Latham: More like 5s. a week.

Mr. TONKIN: Yes, but taking interest, rates and a small amount for the repayment of capital, it should be possible to provide houses for much less than 10s. a week. If that were possible, it would be the equivalent of an increase in sustenance rates. In my opinion, that would be the better way to deal with the situation. It would give these people an interest in life. It would provide the husband with something to look forward to during the standing down period, and he would return to his work in much better heart knowing that he was leaving his wife and family safely housed, without danger of their being thrown into the streets. That has been one of the worst features of the unemployment problem. It has been necessary to send men to work in the country and many of them have left after being threatened with eviction orders, and they did not know whether, on their return, they would find that their wives

and children had been turned out into the streets. The provision of houses by the Government would obviate that, and so improve the lot of poor unfortunate people who are out of work through no fault of their own. I will not detain the Committee any further, other than to say that with the grave problem confronting the country, and the small amount of money which is available—although considerably in advance of what the previous Government had—taking these two things into consideration, the Minister is to be commended for the good work he has done. However, I have directed attention to features in the scheme which I think could be considerably improved for the benefit of the people and the smooth running of the department.

On motion by the Acting Premier, further consideration of the Vote deferred.

(Mr. Sleeman took the Chair.)

#### *Public Utilities:*

*Vote—Aborigines Native Stations, £5,001—agreed to.*

*Vote—Goldfields Water Supply, £110,931:*

The ACTING PREMIER: I have given complete information on the Loan Estimates, so there is no need for me to go over this again. The Committee have had full particulars of the works.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Kalgoorlie Abattoirs, £3014; Metropolitan Abattoirs and Saleyards, £28,445; Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Department, £96,327—agreed to.*

*Vote—Other Hydraulic Undertakings, £33,222:*

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington) [8.55]: I should like from the Minister some information regarding the reconstitution of the Irrigation Commission. I asked a question to-day, and the Minister told me the matter was being considered; but 12 months earlier I received very much the same answer from the Minister. I hope he will give immediate attention to this question. What the future personnel

of the commission is to be is causing great concern amongst the settlers on the irrigation areas. At present the commission is composed solely of public servants. There is Mr. Munt, the chairman, who is also Under Secretary for Works and chairman of the Transport Board. Then we have the Commissioner of Public Works, who does not seem to be able to give any time to the work of the commission. Then there is the Chief Hydraulic Engineer, Mr. Dumas, who has now become head of the Metropolitan Water Board, and is in charge of the works at the Canning Weir. Previously he was closely connected with the irrigation work and knew what was going on. Then of course there is the Irrigation Expert, Mr. Clifton, and the only officer from the Agricultural Department, but unfortunately he is not enjoying the best of health just now. This commission is very unsatisfactory and, on account of its members being so fully occupied elsewhere, it is not possible for them to give attention to this urgent matter, and of course the irrigation season will be on us again in a very few weeks. The settlers in the irrigation area have asked that they should be given direct representation on the commission. The time has arrived when the Department of Agriculture should take a greater interest in this work. All the members of the commission save one are from the Public Works Department. Of course, they had to do the construction work and the supplying of water to settlers, but those tasks are now finished, and it seems to me this great work will devolve on the Department of Agriculture. It is an urgent matter and should receive immediate attention. There is the practical side to be considered, and the members of the commission are all engineers, save one. There are many vital questions requiring immediate consideration. The settlers have to learn new methods of farming, and it is now they require expert advice in order to avoid great losses; advice, for instance, as to the proper method of watering. In the Eastern States great losses occurred by over-watering. Settlers should be advised in this regard. Then again, settlers should be advised what grasses to grow, and many other things. It is imperative that the commission should be reconstituted and should become actively engaged in



their duties. I do not know whom the Minister may have in mind for appointment to the commission, but I do hope he will give the settlers representation so as to have the practical side brought to the front. There are three different irrigation districts, Waroona, Harvey and Collie. Collie is the largest, and it is there where advice will be most urgently required. I should like to hear from the Minister whether he intends to appoint the commission immediately, and whether he will consider giving representation to the Department of Agriculture and the settlers. The Acting Premier decided that no more similar works should be put into operation until those in hand had proved their value; he did not wish to make losses such as had been made on other land settlement schemes through rushing them too quickly. To avoid losses, it is urgently necessary that proper advice should be given to the settlers. In the Waroona district a considerable amount of dissatisfaction exists. The present commission is insisting on the settlers making provision for stock water at their own expense. The settlers claim that they could not do so even if they desired, and that the request of the commission is unreasonable. The water will be required in the near future, and unless a decision is given at an early date and the commission visit those areas, I can see a considerable amount of trouble brewing in that district. I recently visited some of the irrigation areas in the Eastern States, and found that irrigation commissions in all the States were most active in visiting the settlers and giving advice.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Not one of them is paying. New South Wales has lost millions over irrigation.

Mr. McLARTY: Very few farming propositions are paying at present, but that is due to economic conditions. We can help our new irrigation areas to pay at some future day, and we can avoid the mistakes that have been made in the Eastern States. I hope the Minister will tell us that he has definitely decided to reconstitute the commission, and that its members will closely co-operate with the Department of Agriculture, and that representation will be given to the settlers.

**MR. WELSH** (Pilbara) [9.3]: A number of bores in my electorate sunk some years ago have been allowed to fall into a state of disrepair. I should like the Minister to say whether it is possible to have them re-conditioned and put into working order so that the prospectors can utilise them when travelling through the outback country. At the present time there is scarcely one from which it is possible to get a drink. The bores are an absolute necessity to travellers in the back country. There are men in the north capable of undertaking the re-conditioning work, and the cost would not be heavy. If the Government had the bores put into serviceable condition, it would be a distinct advantage to the men who are battling along in the outback country.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [9.5]: I wish to refer to the need for water supply in part of the Swan electorate. I should like the support of the member for Kalgoorlie (Hon. J. Cunningham), who will recollect some of the many efforts made to secure a desired extension of water supply to Parkerville. The hon. member, when Minister, was good enough to visit Parkerville and learn something of the difficulties suffered by the people. A one-inch pipe from the York road supplies nine homes including the local hotel, a poultry farm or two, and the Parkerville Home. Those nine places constitute a small section of Parkerville, and it is for Parkerville as a whole that I appeal. The Mundaring Road Board have offered to make good a portion of any loss that may occur, and the people of Parkerville are prepared to sign guarantees, but they ask that the guarantee given by the nine already supplied by the one-inch main should be accepted as well, because their supply would form part of the main supply. I should be glad to hear from the Minister that this long-delayed facility will be granted. The lack of an adequate supply makes life burdensome in the hot weather. For years past requests have been made for water to be laid on to the Parkerville school. I understand that there are no complaints regarding the train service, and if water is provided, a greater number of people will travel to and reside at Parkerville. I hope to hear that the Acting Premier is favour-

ably disposed to provide this much needed facility.

**THE ACTING PREMIER** (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [9.10]: I agree to an extent with what the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) has said about the irrigation area. The Public Works Department have practically finished their part of the job, and can well get out of it and hand it over to the Agricultural Department, whose work it is now to handle the position. The Public Works Department know nothing about the subsequent handling of the area, and do not want to be mixed up with it. The Agricultural Department have the experts, and asked us to carry out the work, which is just about completed. It is because of that position I expressed the opinion that the board might now be reconstituted. The desire of the local people to have representation on the board is probably due to their opinion that this board will fix the rates and collect the money.

Mr. McLarty: It will have a great deal to do with it.

**The ACTING PREMIER**: Nothing at all. I thought that was at the bottom of the matter. The hon. member can tell the settlers that, no matter how many local men are on the board, they will have nothing to do with fixing the rates or collecting the money. That will remain with the Minister.

Mr. McLarty: They will advise the Minister.

**The ACTING PREMIER**: I would not be inclined to take advice from people who owe money. Advice given by those who are independent may have some influence with the Minister. The settlers had better get it well into their heads that, if they are given representation on the board, they will have nothing to do with that aspect of the matter. It will remain entirely with the Government. It seems to me the board should be composed of men who understand irrigation. What do the settlers know about it?

Mr. McLarty: There are practical men in the irrigation area.

**The ACTING PREMIER**: Where will they be found?

Mr. McLarty: You can get them from the Harvey area.

**The ACTING PREMIER**: Are they there?

McLarty: Yes.

**The ACTING PREMIER**: Have they had the necessary experience?

Mr. McLarty: Some have been there for years.

**The ACTING PREMIER**: Where?

Mr. McLarty: In the Harvey district.

**The ACTING PREMIER**: I do not think much benefit would be derived from their experience, if that experience is reflected in the accounts of the Public Works Department. I do not propose to accept their opinion to any extent. If the irrigation areas are to be a success, the controlling body should be comprised of men who are able to advise the settlers, tell them what to do, how to do it and when to do it.

Mr. Patriek: Is that not the work of the Agricultural Department?

**The ACTING PREMIER**: I think so. It is not the work of the engineers who constructed the works, and who have taken water on to the highest spot on each block. What use is to be made of the water, what part of a block is to be used, and when it is to be used, and all the other questions will have to be the subject of advice that is given by the Agricultural Department experts.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Not many men in that department have had experience of irrigation schemes.

**The ACTING PREMIER**: There are none in the Public Works Department. If the Agricultural Department has not got them, I do not think the Government will have them.

Mr. McLarty: Advice is very necessary.

**The ACTING PREMIER**: The Minister for Agriculture will be able to say what his department has done up to now. I do not think it has been altogether idle. The controlling body should be comprised of men possessed of a knowledge of irrigation. They should be able to advise the settlers, otherwise we may easily enter upon another tragedy. I agree that the necessary arrangements should be made as early as possible, and I give the hon. member an assurance that there will be no unnecessary delay. I have not decided definitely about the settlers having representation on the board. I suppose there would have to be a different settler for each area.

Mr. McLarty: One from each and three in all.

The ACTING PREMIER: They certainly could not be in the majority. That would mean increasing the size of the board, which might make it unwieldy. If there were three settler representatives, the board would have to consist of seven members.

Mr. McLarty: The present board has not functioned, to the knowledge of the settlers, for some months.

The ACTING PREMIER: I have expressed my view about altering the personnel of the board. The hon. member may take it that this will be done at an early date. With regard to the wells on the stock route from Meekatharra northwards, I replied only the other day to the member who asked the question. The difficulty has been that the road board at Meekatharra has fallen down on its job and is keeping our money. The Government paid out the money for the work, but the road board have kept the money and have not done the work. I had an inspection made of the route, and a report has been furnished which supports what the hon. member told me. The stock wells have been very much neglected.

Mr. Welsh: It is a vitally important question.

The ACTING PREMIER: Yes. It is important to the owners of stock who run the risk of travelling their animals along the route. I know the subsidy was reduced. The Government allow the local authorities to look after the wells. If the road board had spent all the money they had and had said, "We did the best we could with the money available, and can do no more without further funds," there would have been something logical in their attitude, but in this case they kept the money and did not do the work. They must either refund the money or do the work. I have a full report before me as to the condition of the stock route and the water supplies. I hope to give an early decision and to be able to do something. I regret that a difficulty has arisen. Somehow the department does not seem to be able to do anything right, or anything to suit the secretary of that particular road board.

Mr. Rodoreda: Is the position satisfactory with the other boards?

The ACTING PREMIER: They have spent their money. If they found they could not do all the work that was necessary with the money available, and were to apply to the department for additional funds, point-

ing out what they have done and what remains to be done, we would try to meet them in every case. The secretary of the Meekatharra Road Board adopted a different attitude. I think the local authorities were allowed £10 a year for each well, if they would look after them.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We reduced the amount to £5.

The ACTING PREMIER: Some of the road boards complained that the wells were not being attended to, but they had not claimed their allowance for a couple of years. The money was lying to their credit all the while.

Mr. Rodoreda: Should they not have been advised about it?

The ACTING PREMIER: If money was owing to me I would not require to be advised about it. Every road board knew about the annual grant.

Mr. Patrick: They must have been collecting it for two or three years.

The ACTING PREMIER: They have been collecting it over all the years.

Mr. Rodoreda: The road boards were advised to draw less money if they could do without it.

The ACTING PREMIER: I know nothing about that.

Mr. Rodoreda: Some were conscientious and did not make application for it.

The ACTING PREMIER: Whether it was £10 or £5, the money has been made available every year. The road boards only had to show that they were ready to do the work, and the money was paid to their credit. It cannot be said that we have delayed paying up, if the board have not written asking for the money and saying they proposed to go on with the work. A big department like the Works Department would wait until they received notification from the local authority. If there was no work to be done in one year, the money was available for work necessary during the next year. It is not the desire of the department, and especially not the desire of the Government, to centralise the work. The Government cannot be expected to do the work from Perth as efficiently and as economically as the road boards can do it in their own districts.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Of course, the districts are large.

The ACTING PREMIER: But a road board would not be nearly so far away from the work as we are. I have actually had to send a staff with a truck from Perth to ascertain the condition of the route.

Mr. Marshall: Where?

The ACTING PREMIER: In the hon. member's district.

Mr. Marshall: No.

The ACTING PREMIER: I say, yes.

Mr. Marshall: I shall have a little to say presently, and I shall say no. I actually met the contractor on the road.

The ACTING PREMIER: The hon. member is talking of an entirely different place. However, I am not going to put up with a road board secretary writing such letters as this man wrote, couched in an insulting tone, while he is hanging on to Government money and declining to do the work. And after that he abuses the Government because the work has not been done. The money of the previous Government as well as of the present Government has been made available. If it was not all that the board thought necessary, that is no reason why the board should fall down on their job. They should do the work as far as the cash will allow. They ought to be able to do it far more cheaply than the Government could do it, because the Government would need to have men travelling up and down along the stock route. Under such conditions there is no hope of keeping contact with the men or of supervising them, and consequently the work becomes more expensive. Most of the boards complain that Government work is more expensive than work done by the boards themselves. I should mention that I cannot call to mind another board similar to this one in that respect. I think the board in question is unique in Western Australia. As regards the secretary—

Mr. Marshall: He is a good secretary.

The ACTING PREMIER: Good for himself. If I had any work to do, I would not have him around. He simply stands in the road, blocking the work and causing inconvenience to the producers. In addition, he writes letters containing a lot of stuff that is irrelevant, useless, and not based on fact. I am sorry this situation has arisen, but I have to find my way through it. The Government may yet have to take drastic action in regard to the board. We have the power,

but we do not wish to use it if it can be avoided. However, I do not want to leave the stock owners in their present unfortunate position, with the wells along the route in such a bad way. As regards a water supply for Parkerville, it is months since I heard anything.

Mr. Sampson: The department has discussed the matter during the last two months.

The ACTING PREMIER: It is a long way more than two months since I heard anything about it. Whatever the situation may be, I will undertake to have it looked into.

**MR. MARSHALL** (Murchison) [9.26]: I sympathise with the Minister as regards the many calls on his time and the many worries he has. No doubt because of those two reasons he gets many cases hopelessly mixed. He cannot be expected to register indelibly on his mind every individual case brought before him by every member. On this occasion he is a little out. The hon. gentleman is not to be caught often, but I think we have him this time. I gave the Minister a fair hearing, and we will see now how the matter pans out. Before commenting on that phase, let me point out that the North-West does not ask for much and is not given much.

The Acting Premier: Do you call Meekatharra the North-West?

Mr. MARSHALL: It is often called the southern suburb of the North-West. Before one gets out of the Meekatharra district—through which the Acting Premier has travelled two or three times—one has to go as far north as the Tropic of Capricorn. The Meekatharra district includes a much larger area than the Minister appreciates. It is one of the largest road districts in Western Australia, and has more miles of road and of stock routes, and more wells, than any other road district. Meekatharra, being far removed from the seat of Government, gets less consideration from the Government. The further from the seat of Government, as the Minister has said, the higher the cost of the work. The hon. gentleman said that the Government could not do such work as well or as cheaply as applies to the Meekatharra district. This the road boards could do it. That remark district being so large, a considerable pro-

portion of the money spent is represented by travelling expenses rather than by practical work. The Minister's argument is good. Now let me remind the Minister that throughout last summer, and even prior thereto, the position of the Meekatharra water supply was brought under the notice of his department. Notwithstanding the shortage then existing, little or no move was made to supply the demand. There was then an acute shortage of water at Meekatharra. Numerous requests were made to the Government, and engineers who visited the town accepted it as a fact that an acute shortage existed. The population of Meekatharra has increased twofold during the last 12 months. When I left that centre four or five weeks ago, nothing had been done, other than boring, to supplement the water supply available last year. With the increased demand and no augmentation of supply, unless the department has taken action very recently, I do not know how Meekatharra will tide over the summer months. I do not wish to make any complaint against the department. The engineers know all about the position. They have had 12 months in which to consider it. They have carried out the necessary boring operations and, having fixed upon a site. I do not know whether they have commenced to sink the well and equip it. The summer is now upon the people in the gold-fields. If the departmental officials intend to get on with the work, they will have to provide the equipment and necessary adjustments, if they are to provide the additional supply to meet the extra demand. I hope the departmental officials will be reminded of the position, and will see that the extra water supply is provided immediately. The same position applies at Reidy's. When I visited that centre recently, I was informed that the departmental officials were co-operating with the local mining company in the provision of a water supply. From information I gleaned, I understand the department cannot act until the company have completed their reticulation scheme. I hope they will not neglect to take the first opportunity, immediately the company notifies them that they can commence work, to carry out their part of the undertaking. It is very hot at Reidy's; the sanitation at present is not of the best, and

people are living under primitive conditions. I fear if an epidemic should break out, seeing that there is no hospital there and no doctor available except at Cue, 30 miles away, it will be a tragedy. Whatever else happens, I hope the engineers or whoever is responsible will see that the necessary water supply is provided for both Meekatharra and Reidy's, in view of the rapid increase in the population of both centres. Now I come to the matter that has agitated the mind of the Minister, and we will see exactly what has happened. In reply to his remarks, I would point out that the trouble really commenced within a year or two of the abolition of the North-West Department. During the interregnum there have been repeated interviews with those responsible, voluminous correspondence, and repeated overtures to various Ministers stressing the point that owing to the alterations made by the department, the financial interference with the Meekatharra Road Board was such that they could not maintain the wells at the price paid. If it came to a legal battle, I do not know that the Meekatharra Road Board have not a particularly good case against the department for breach of contract. The department entered into a definite contract, which was fixed up by the Crown Law Department, to pay the board £10 per year per well for maintenance purposes. That contract has not been broken except by the department. Without any consideration for the contract made with the board by the North-West Department, the subsidy was reduced from £10 to £5. It was then that the trouble really commenced. The Meekatharra Road Board diligently endeavoured to carry out the work at the reduced price of £5 per annum per well. The Minister himself admits that the extra mileage to be travelled materially adds to the cost of the work. The Minister also admitted that it was extremely difficult to exercise supervision over employees on such work, with the result that added costs were heaped up, and the Minister's complaint from the departmental point of view applies equally to the position of the Meekatharra Road Board. The department caused the trouble long before the present Minister assumed office on the second occasion. Members representing the North-West, who were concerned in this matter, waited upon the

then Minister for Goldfields Water Supply, who is now a member of another place, and pointed out to him that the board had endeavoured to carry on and do the best they could, but the difficulties arising from the reduced subsidy had proved insurmountable. If my memory serves me aright, the Minister promised that an increased subsidy would be provided, but no effect was ever given to that promise. From that time onwards, I have interviewed the Minister on a number of occasions and have written frequently to the department as well. I admit that he always found it impossible to reconcile the difference of opinion, not between the Minister and the road board, but between his Under Secretary and the secretary of the Meekatharra Road Board. The road board secretary has some justification for his attitude, after years of parleying with the department to secure what was the board's right under the contract entered into. The board endeavoured to carry out the work but found it impossible, notified the department accordingly and were promised an increase. Then later on, when they were refused the additional payment, the board finally decided to give up the ghost and allow the department to do the work themselves. When the Meekatharra Road Board decided they would have nothing more to do with it, I interviewed the Minister and pointed out the position to him. He agreed with me that the board could do the work more cheaply than the department. I told the Minister then that I would appeal to the board to place a proposition before the department, and I did so. The Minister agreed with me that the wrangling as to who was to maintain the wells was finished, because the wells were in such a state of disrepair that no supply of water was available for people overland stock. Had it not been for the good season and natural water catchments being filled, goodness knows what would have happened to the Anna Plains stock. After years of tribulation, the Anna Plains people would have lost all their stock had not the water holes been filled. At present the wells are in a deplorable condition. The board did their best to carry out the work while they were negotiating with the department. When I left the Minister I did exactly what I had arranged with him, I appealed to the Meekatharra Road Board to

make a definite proposal for the purpose of having the work done as cheaply as possible. Here is the letter I wrote on the 20th March, 1934. The Meekatharra Road Board put up the proposal to the Minister. I saw the proposal, and this was the Minister's reply: He said, "the Meekatharra Road Board can go to somewhere; they are not going to put that over me." The Minister was angry about something. The point was, he did not accept the proposal. He was annoyed, and I suppose he championed the Under Secretary. I am not championing anybody, but I am worried about the people of the North, who ask for very little and do not even get that. And I am concerned about those wells, because I have experienced something up there. I have seen the Minister's officer there, and seen the work he was doing, and I am doubtful about the results. But here was a proposal submitted by the Meekatharra Road Board on the 20th March, it is now seven months later, yet the department have not had the courtesy to reply.

The Acting Premier: That is wrong. We have written half a dozen letters to the board.

Mr. MARSHALL: The board have had no reply to that proposal.

The Acting Premier: That is wrong. That is his tale.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is unfair, and unworthy of the Minister. When I was a member of that board a few years ago, and the department wanted an auditor to do the books of another board, they appealed to us to let them have this man. We let him go to them for a definite time, after which they got his time extended. He did much good work for the department. However, this is not between the Minister and me, after all, but between the two secretaries, both a little autocratic.

The Acting Premier: His was a most insulting letter. He talked about our hanging on to Government funds.

Mr. MARSHALL: Actually the Government have hung on to funds the property of the Meekatharra Road Board, for instead of paying £10 on their contract, they have been paying only £5 for years past. For seven months the Minister's department did not give us the courtesy of a reply. I saw the Minister's officer at work, and I was not struck with it. I would rather a more

practical man, not an engineer, had been sent to do the job. However, I do not suppose the department could furnish such a man. This young engineer may be brilliant, and right up to expectation; I will wait and see the result of his work. We have a list of the wells that must be cleaned out very shortly. They have gradually silted up.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I suppose the trouble is the timber has gone at the bottom.

Mr. MARSHALL: In some of them, yes, but in the main these wells are in fairly good holding country. Many of them have silted up. They are in a terrible state. If some unfortunate man were dependent on some of those wells for a supply, he would die of thirst because there is no windlass and no rope. The collar of one well has quite gone. I cannot see how this young engineer could tell whether a well required to be cleaned out, for he cannot see down below where the silt is rising. However, I hope the lad will do the work, and do it well. But since the 20th of March, the department have not replied, although on the 23rd October, when the member for Pilbara got his reply, no one was more astonished than I was on hearing that reply, which was that it was due to the fact that the Meekatharra Road Board were holding money, and until they paid up there was no prospect of going on with the work. The Minister did not tell me that, or I would have told the board to send the money back. But not until the member for Pilbara asked his question did the Minister say he could do no more work. He had previously told me he would send up engineers; and he did, for I saw them there. He did not say to me that he would not go on with the work until the money came down. At all events the money is now in the Minister's office.

The Acting Premier: How long has it been there?

Mr. MARSHALL: For a week. When the Minister made that answer I forwarded it to the secretary of the board and asked him to refund the money immediately. It left Meekatharra on the 31st October, so they do not owe the Government any money, and the Government made no application to the Meekatharra Road Board. The money has been lying in the Treasury and has

never been drawn by the Meekatharra Road Board. Why did not the Minister tell me what the obstacle was?

The Acting Premier: That has been mentioned in the correspondence over a long period.

Mr. MARSHALL: That may be so, but the Minister did not tell me. He agreed that the work ought to be done, and done expeditiously. In reply to the member for Pilbara, he said the work had not been prolonged; yet we have been struggling for five years with him and his predecessors to get it done.

The Acting Premier: You have not been struggling with me. You talk to that secretary of yours. He is to blame.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am not going to worry about him. I do not intend to argue on the difference of opinion between the Minister and the road board secretary. I am concerned about the growers of the North-West. Now that the money is there, will the Minister promise to have the work begun?

The Acting Premier: No.

Mr. MARSHALL: It will be pathetic if the reconditioning of those wells is not undertaken. I endorse the statements of the member for Pilbara. At this stage, when gold is worth a minimum of £8 an ounce, the provision of water supplies for goldfields should be the Government's chief concern. There is no possibility of men prospecting the country unless water supplies are provided. The prospectors may depend on the generosity of pastoralists, but some pastoralists do not like strangers, and the men have to move on. I know that they have certain rights, but they cannot trespass. It should be the objective of the departmental engineers to ensure that wherever State money has been spent on a bore, it should be cleaned out and put into serviceable condition. If prospectors had not produced gold previously, there would be no bores. They were put down to provide a water supply for the early prospectors. Gold is produced without effort on the part of the Government, but it entails great sacrifices on the part of the prospectors. The people of the North-West do not ask for much, and what little they require in the way of national assets, it be-

hoves the Government to concede. The growers in the North-West and in my electorate have sufficient trials and tribulations. They contribute largely to the revenue in the shape of railway and shipping freights and rates and taxes, and receive little in return. The work is urgent and should be commenced immediately. I appeal to the Minister not to worry about any difference existing between himself and the road board secretary.

The Acting Premier: I will not take his word for it. I will check up the statement to see whether the money is there.

Mr. MARSHALL: I wish to stress the urgent need for the wells.

The Acting Premier: I will let the growers know whose fault it is.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the Acting Premier has to summons the Meekatharra Road Board—

The Acting Premier: I know of an easier way than that.

Mr. MARSHALL: Then for God's sake do not delay! It will be tragic for Meekatharra if the well there has not been commenced.

Mr. Patrick: What water had Meekatharra?

Mr. MARSHALL: Artesian well water, but the salinity made it objectionable.

Mr. Patrick: Meekatharra must have been a much larger town years ago.

Mr. MARSHALL: The decline in population is accounted for by the fact that whereas eight mines were working in the peak period, the number has dwindled to one.

Mr. Patrick: Meekatharra must have had a water supply then.

Mr. MARSHALL: It had a good supply, but that was 30 years ago, and a new supply is necessary now. Immediate attention should be given to reconditioning the stock wells, and then some decision could be reached as to who should be responsible for their maintenance.

MR. WELSH (Pilbara) [9.57]: Now that the member for Murchison has given information that the money has been paid over, I hope the Minister will devote attention to the reconditioning of the stock wells. This is a vital matter to the people of the North-West, and it is essential that it receive attention before the next season

opens. This year, owing to the heavy rains experienced, the stock could be taken through on surface water, but that will probably not apply next year. Unless the wells are reconditioned, it may be very difficult to get any stock down. I hope the Minister will see his way to have the reconditioning work put in hand.

The Acting Premier: Will one of your boards take charge of the wells?

Mr. WELSH: I cannot say, but I will inquire. Nullagine would be the nearest board, but that is a good way off. The wells at the lower end require reconditioning.

Mr. Marshall: Nullagine would be closer than Meekatharra.

The Acting Premier: Will any of the station owners take charge of them?

Mr. WELSH: I cannot say. People like those at Anna Plains, who are sending down sheep, are the ones who require the wells.

The Acting Premier: We shall have to get a different board at Meekatharra.

Mr. Marshall: We can come to some arrangement.

The Acting Premier: No hope while the present secretary is there.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. WELSH: I hope the Minister will endeavour to have the work done before the next season opens.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE** (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn) [10.0]: The difficulty with the North-West is that the people there either have too much water or none at all. If we could devise some scheme for equalisation between the North-West and the South-West there would be fewer complaints.

Mr. Marshall: If we could conserve the water when we get it there would be fewer complaints.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** I desire to deal with the matter raised by the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty), particularly in connection with the proposed irrigation experimental farm. The Irrigation Commission recommended that an experimental farm should be cleared and operated by the Agricultural Department. Inquiries were made and the necessary reports presented. The settlers in the irrigation areas have had the advantage of all



the advice of the departmental surveyors attached to the irrigation section, and the advice of our irrigation officer, Mr. Clifton, and field officers operating with him. I think there are three altogether. We were negotiating for the rental of a good farm, but there is extreme difficulty in operating on someone else's holding. On an experimental farm it is necessary to gain exact knowledge, otherwise it is impossible to guarantee the results of the experiments. Experimental plots have been put in on private holdings. Our advisers have also given the settlers such advice as is available. The first thing to do is to make a survey, then carry out grading operations, then advise the settlers in respect to the irrigation itself. The object of irrigation is to grow pastures. We have information of extreme value, and that is made available to the settlers. It deals with the type of pasture they should grow. In irrigated areas Dutch clover and paspalum are thought to be the best, but in non-irrigated areas other pastures are suitable. If a pasture experimental farm were established in the South-West it should provide for irrigable land and non-irrigable land. We are on the edge of our investigations into South-West pastures. Although we are well advanced in respect of wheat and other cereals, we have much to learn, as have the settlers, too, about getting the best results from pastures in the South-West. Fairly good work has been done with the irrigation plots. Dr. Dunn, a pasture research officer, who is associated with the Muresk College and is paid from the Agricultural Research Fund, is prepared to co-operate with the departmental officers, and is doing good work. New grasses and pastures are being tried out. We have experience of what has taken place in the Eastern States, around Adelaide at the Roseworthy College and at other places where pastures are specially dealt with. It would not be advisable to rush in and either rent or buy a farm. Some time must elapse before results can be made available to the settlers, who want to know at once what to do. If we acquired a farm to-morrow, it would have to be cleared, fenced, sub-divided, graded and planted. There is a diversity of opinion as to what that would cost. The farm would have to be stocked. On an experimental farm correct records have to be kept if the research work is to be of any

value. Feeding tests have also to be made, if exact knowledge of the feeding value of the pastures is to be obtained. By that time the settlers would have been crying out for information. Then comes in the question of finance. This farm would not be a commercial concern. Even the wheat farms which affect bulk crops are not commercial concerns. A pasture proposition would constitute an outgoing of funds all the time. I should say that very little revenue would come in from it. With the limited funds at our disposal it was a question whether we should establish a farm or carry out a system of plots on the holdings. Such officers as are available have done good work amongst the settlers. Although there may be some difficulty financially with the Water Supply Department, information has been gleaned as a result of actual and practical irrigation farming in the Harvey district. There are always some people who are successful.

Mr. McLarty: Some of the settlers could give very good advice.

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** In pasture growing and farming propositions generally much useful information has been acquired. Those who have undertaken work in the irrigation areas will have to be self-reliant. They must endeavour to acquire such knowledge as is available. We cannot do the work for them that would be done on an experimental farm. They must recognise that they will have to work their own holdings. Men engaged in agriculture have to know where to go for the information they require, and put it to the best use when they get it. The department is doing the best it can with its limited number of officers. We propose to continue the experimental plots. Dr. Dunn is making his information available to those who are trying to make a success of the irrigation areas, and I advise them to avail themselves of the information that is at their disposal. I have not yet gone through the district and the director has not had time to inspect it. The Superintendent of Dairying is moving about amongst the people, and he has an expert knowledge of pastures. The director points out that those people who are acting as irrigation experts or advisers must have an agricultural outlook, as well as a knowledge of irrigation. We are looking for those men. If more responsibility is placed upon the department, and its activities are associated with additional financial

assistance, we may be able to make some advance. In the meantime we are doing the best we can. The hon. member should advise his people that if they are going to do any good for themselves they must be self-reliant. They are not going to be spoon-fed like a lot of group settlers. We expect a different class of men there.

Mr. McLarty: The Minister will agree that they are making themselves self-reliant.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I hope so. I know that those who have availed themselves of the information have had their lands surveyed and perfectly graded, and are well satisfied. I could quote instances which are within the hon. member's knowledge. Even now it is possible for those desirous of doing the work to get the necessary advice. However, the Government cannot afford an army of inspectors and advisers. The people concerned had better understand that. But we shall certainly do our best. The reason why the farm in question has not been established is that the Department consider that with the limited funds at their disposal they can do better work, and secure better value, by establishing experimental plots in various areas, having regard to the differences in soil and conditions generally throughout the irrigation areas. We are gaining information as we go along, and those anxious to take advantage of it will have opportunities to do so. I hope this advisory and experimental and research work will be extended. I regard it as highly important not only in regard to irrigable but also in regard to non-irrigable areas. If we have the money, it would be well spent in the establishment of experimental plots for pasture in the South-West. I agree so far. But the settlers must not get into the frame of mind that the department can assure success for them. That is a job they must do for themselves.

Mr. McLarty: I think they realise that.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The department will do their best. We are sympathetic with the settlers, particularly if they are hard up, because that is our position also. I must repeat that so far nothing has been definitely decided with respect to the establishment of an experimental farm.

MR. RODOREDA (Roebourne) [10.12]: We have heard from the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) a great deal about

maintenance of stock route wells. Whilst agreeing with him on several of the points raised, I am inclined to think there must be something wrong with the Meekatharra Road Board as to maintenance of stock wells. So far as I am aware, no other board in the State that is under the agreement has failed to maintain its wells in good condition. I agree that there is a heavy drain on the stock route wells adjacent to Meekatharra, but the member for Murchison is quite wrong in saying that all the stock routes from the North-West run through Meekatharra. I see no reason whatever why the Meekatharra wells should not be maintained on the grant that is allowed. Possibly there may be some special circumstances attaching to the upkeep of those wells that I am not conversant with, or the wells may have been in very bad order when the board took them over, and this might account for the difficulty. As the matter is so vital to the North-West, I join in the appeal to the Minister to come to some agreement with the Meekatharra board to have the wells put in proper order for a start. Then perhaps he could arrange for this board to keep them in good order. I suggest to him that he have a comprehensive report furnished on the condition of all wells on main stock routes. This information could easily be obtained from the various road boards concerned, and the Minister would then have an idea of the finance required to put matters in proper order. Undoubtedly most of the North-West depends wholly and solely on the stock routes to get stock down; but not all the stock go to Meekatharra; a lot go to Mullewa. The Nullagine board, which adjoins the Meekatharra board on the north, is under the same arrangement with the Government; and the member for Pilbara (Mr. Welsh) has given his assurance that the Nullagine wells are in good order. I hope the Minister will look into the matter soon with a view to arriving at some arrangement with the Meekatharra board.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Perth City Markets, £600—agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.