Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 10th October, 1944.

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

QUESTION—GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY.

As to North-Eastern Wheatbelt Pipes.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary:

(i) Has the Government procured any pipes to cope with the certain unprecedented water shortage which will occur in the north-eastern wheat districts this summer?

(ii) If not, will the Government make an announcement as to the possibility of obtaining pipes of sufficient size to link up with the existing water storage reservoirs, such pipes being necessary to replace the present pipes of inadequate size which have deteriorated through corrosion and rust?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(i) Yes, but only a limited number.

(ii) Despite persistent efforts over a long period, the Government has not been able to obtain all of the pipes required. The attempt to obtain further manpower for pipe-making purposes is being persevered with.

BILL—FRUIT GROWING INDUSTRY (TRUST FUND) ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and *passed.*

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th October.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [4.35]: I commend the junction of these various boards into one. Without this measure, there would be at least three boards, as the Minister for Health pointed out in another place, totalling some 15 persons, whereas the Bill reduces the number to nine. Members may still feel that nine is too large a number for a working board. Nevertheless, I commend the junction of these boards. I think this proposed board will improve the status of nursing but, at the same time as I commend the Bill, there are certain factors mentioned in it which could be explained in more explicit terms, definitions could be tightened and, in instances to which I shall refer, I think the Bill could be improved. It is in the main a Committee Bill, and it is therefore one respecting which quite a considerable amount of what I am saying this afternoon could be left until the Committee stage. But, in order to give members a clear picture of the measure, I intend to refer to one or two matters so that consideration may be given to the points I raise by those who, in addition to myself, feel that they might care to move amendments later. The first point I would mention concerns the definition of a mental nurse. The Bill proposes to use the following definition:—

> A nurse qualified to engage in nursing persons who are insane or mentally infirm.

I am of the opinion that this type of nurse is the proper one to nurse the psychologically sick. If we include under the definition only those who are trained in nursing the insane or mentally infirm, there is a possibility of leaving out those who are trained in looking after the psychologically sick. We have Heathcote as well as Claremont, and I would much prefer to see a patient who is psychologically sick cared for by one who has had experience in nursing patients at Heathcote than by a generally trained nurse. It is possible that a psychologically sick person may require attention from a generally trained nurse as well as from one trained in dealing with psychological cases. I suggest that at the end of the definition we add the words, "and those who have been declared in need of nervous treatment." That is the term one uses when one sends a patient to Heathcote for treatment. It is a matter to which the Minister might well give his attention.

The Bill as introduced in another place provided that the members of the board

should include two matrons, but this has been altered in another place to include two senior registered nurses in active practice as such. Here again we must examine carefully the intention. What is the purpose of the measure? I read it in much the same way as I read the Medical Act. It is a measure not for the nurses but for the public to a very large extent or perhaps to the same extent as the Medical Act is an Act for the public. To the Medical Board we appoint members of the profession, and I think I am correct in saying that the profession does not elect those members. Under this Bill, however, we are asked to allow the nursing profession to elect its own members.

Hon. J. Cornell: The profession will not elect the two senior nurses.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Three at least are to be elected.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is so.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: That might be wise or unwise, because this board is to control discipline in the nursing profession and also lay down the terms of nurses' training. My one comment at the moment is that I do not think there is a sound definition of what constitutes a senior registered nurse. When the Act was originally framed I do not think the word "matron" was defined, and I think "matron" would be very difficult to define except in a strict nursing sense. What is a senior registered nurse? We have nurses on the probationary staffs of hospitals who are regarded as senior nurses but they are not registered nurses. When does a registered nurse become senior? After she has done one year of work in a hospital, after she has held a post of responsibility in a hospital, or after she has been qualified for five years? Which? There is nothing in this Bill to show the qualifications of a senior registered nurse. What is the intention behind the measure? The original intention was to appoint two matrons, and I still think that was a very good plan. The nurses, however, felt that the actual choice of senior nurses was limited by the use of the word "matron."

May I suggest, in order to overcome the difficulty, the addition of a few words after "senior registered nurses" such as "on the staff of training schools." That would mean that the senior registered nurses appointed to the board were holding positions of authority in the training of nurses. A senior registered nurse might be one who had done only a year or two of active practice and who was not associated with a training school. If this board is to lay down regulations under which the nursing training of our State is established, then the members of it should be associated to a large extent with a training school.

Hon. L. Craig: Would not that limit your field of selection?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: No. If we have senior sisters, we could ask the board to define by regulation which of those sisters should be eligible, and we would have not the limited number of matrons but quite a considerable number who could be regarded as senior nurses to choose from. Taking the training schools, we have those at the Perth Hospital, Fremantle Hospital, Children's Hospital, Mount Hospital and some of the larger country hospitals, and we might have the choice of as many as 20 senior nurses which, of course, would include the matron. If the term "senior nurse" is defined as one who has been five years qualified, we might appoint a nurse who has not any association with a training school, and I feel it is essential that some of the senior members of the training staff should be responsible for laying down the regulations under which training is carried out.

Surely there is nobody so qualified as is the matron of the Perth Hospital to say how a nurse shall be trained! I feel that thought should be given to that phase before we pass the clause as it stands. Firstly, we should define a senior nurse, and, secondly, we should give careful thought to having a training school representative on the board. As we proceed to peruse the Bill, we find other points that ought to be tightened up. I refer to Clause 8 in which disciplinary powers are to be given to the board so that if a registered midwife is found to be incompetent or incapable, her name may be erased from the register. I suggest that although there are some necessary provisions in the original Act, the words "midwifery nurse" should be taken out. I do not think it is really any more serious for a midwifery nurse than for an ordinary general nurse to be found incompetent, and I cannot see why the powers of this board should not be widened to enable it to erase the name of any nurse who is found to be incompetent.

I may be wrong, but I cannot see in the parent Act anything which gives the board the powers which it is proposed to give under this present amendment. Another curious feature is the penalties provided. Under the parent Act, any person who pretends that she is a registered nurse becomes liable to a fine of £20; or if she wears a badge in the prescribed form, or so nearly resembling it as to be liable to deceive, she is guilty of an offence which merits a penalty of £20. But in this amending Bill we find a much more serious offence for which a penalty is provided. An unregistered person shall not be entitled to use the name or title of midwife, or to conduct a midwifery hospital, and if she offends the penalty for the first offence is £2 and for the second £10. This offence is much less than the offence of unlawfully wearing a nurse's badge, the penalty for which is much higher. Attention should be paid to these penalties.

If an unregistered person is found guilty of conducting a midwifery hospital the fine for the first offence should be £50 or £100, and for the second offence six months' imprisonment, because she is actually taking life in her unqualified hands. Surely those penalties would not be too great having regard to the penalty of £20 for unlawfully wearing a nurse's cap. There is one point of which we must be careful. I take it this provision is meant to cover an unregistered person who wilfully conducts a midwifery hospital. If we alter the wording without exercising due care, we might make the penalty apply to a registered nurse who has inadvertently forgotten to register. A small offence of that kind should not be included in the major offence. The same penalty attaches itself to the looking after, for gain, of a woman in midwifery. There is the same penalty of £2 for the first offence and the same penalty of £10 for the second offence.

This offence, I think, is as bad as conducting an unregistered midwifery hospital. The penalty should be severe. There is a protecting clause which applies to those instances in which a nurse may not be available or may live more than five miles from the point at which she is required. So there will be no harm in increasing the penalty for this class of offence as well. What we require is a re-drafting of the clause so as to provide the minor penalty for merely failing to register. Recurring to the opening clause of the Bill, we find that "midwifery nurse" means a midwife or other female practitioner of obstetrics registered under the Act, and that "midwifery nursing" has a corresponding meaning. It may. If it has, I should be pleased to be informed of it by the Minister. The wording is rather loose.

Unless "midwifery nursing" is defined, trouble may arise, because later on in the Bill a term is used which I cannot find in the dictionary, namely, lying-in of women. I quite agree that the term is in common use, but is it a term which, if dealt with by a legal person, might prove to be of no meaning or of no significance? It may seem pedantic, but I would like that clause to be couched in medical terms rather than in the commonly accepted phrases used in the Bill. There are sections of the parent Act which are not amended by the Bill. One in particular is meaningless to me, although it may have some real significance. I refer to Section 15 of the Act, which reads—

> On the appointment of nurses in any public hospital within the meaning of that term in the Hospitals Act, 1894, or in Government hospitals, including hospitals for the insane, preference of employment in regard to future vacancies shall be given to registered nurses.

Does that section seek to provide against the time when we might not have enough trained nurses to fill the responsible posts in our training schools? It would appear to me to be unwise to give power by legislation to a board to employ untrained nurses, when it is the board's responsibility to train nurses. I am not at all sure that it would be the responsibility of the proposed board to ensure that enough nurses were available.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is a general provision. It says that if they are available they will get preference. That is what it means.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I am wondering if it would not be better to place upon someone's shoulders the responsibility for ensuring that the staffs in the training schools comprise registered nurses. I do not like the wording of the section, which is not referred to in the Bill. It could be worded differently so that the position it is designed to meet may be clarified. I remind members that this is veritably a Bill of regulations. The clauses in it are relatively unimportant compared with the regulations that will be drawn up

by the board. The board will be clothed with authority now to lay down the training of every nurse in our State. This means that Parliament, as such, will take little hand actually in the framing of the regulations but will hand over that authority to the board. I realise that regulations are tabled in the House, but I am sure many members will agree with me that government by regulation is undesirable. I ask members to remember that the important side of the measure is the power to frame regulations for the training of nurses. In those circumstances this board should be one with which we are perfectly satisfied, and one to the filling of which we have given every consideration.

HON. J. CORNELL (South): I have given the Bill some consideration. I may be showing some temerity in following Dr. Hislop, but I have made inquiries in certain quarters of the people most concerned, namely, the womenfolk who will be brought under the measure. I understand the Bill has the unqualified approval of the A.T.N.A. So far as it affects general nurses and to a large extent midwifery nurses, there is practically no interference at all. What the Bill is designed to do is to bring mental nurses within the purview of the board. Mental nurses are, in a sense, in a kind of no-man's land in the nursing profession of Western Australia. They have their own method of examination, but have no standard which will bring about reciprocity in the other States. To overcome that is one of the objectives sought by the Bill. As the position stands today, the Bill in no way departs from the policy of having a board so far as registered general nurses or infant welfare nurses are concerned.

The present board consists of five members, and has upon it, in addition to the principal medical officer, a medical practitioner, two matrons and a direct representative elected by the A.T.N.A. What is now being done is proposed largely to meet the case of midwifery nurses and mental nurses, and by increasing the membership of the board to bring them under its aegis. I presume that so far as the board is today constituted those who are at present members of it will remain in that capacity. Dr. Stewart is a member of the board and someone is no doubt functioning for him, just as Dr. Leedman is functioning for Dr. Le Souef on the examination board. I see no danger in bringing in the new members that are provided for in the Bill, for each member will act in his or her own sphere. I presume the board is being enlarged to give representation to the mental nurses and the midwifery nurses.

I was rather taken by Dr. Hislop's remarks concerning the need for altering the definition of "mental nurse" to provide that such a nurse should be a person who is learned in psychology. There is a gentleman here now assessing soldiers' pensions. He is a lawyer. On his own admission, when dealing with nervous cases, there is one thing he has satisfied himself upon, namely, that the last man he wants to deal with such cases is a psychologist. He said that the only help he could get was from the good old general practitioner. He declared that every case of mental neurosis that came before him had a different background and a different outlook. His conclusion was that a psychologist would be of no use to him in dealing with such cases. The registered nurses on the board were originally two matrons. I do not think the parent Act worried very much whether they had to be matrons or senior nurses. I know that for many years Sister Symons was on the board, and I take it that Sister Reid has filled her place, and will be re-elected by the Government, not by the organisation, and that some regard will be given by the principal medical officer to the appointment of the two senior registered nurses. I understand that it is to be done at the request of the A.T.N.A.

Some time ago Dr. Hislop asked me if I could define a matron. I married a matron and asked her to define one. She said that when she carried on a hospital a medical officer asked her to give a definition of the term, and she said, "A matron is a person who owns and conducts a hospital and does everything that no one else will do." I think Dr. Hislop will agree that that is a good definition. The present Act allows direct representation to the A.T.N.A. and the midwifery section. It is proposed to allow the same privilege to mental nurses in appointments to the board. I do not think Dr. Hislop was right when he said that the full effect of the Bill would be felt in the regulations. The

board fixes the standard of nurses by regulation. That standard, I understand, is arranged in collaboration with the medical profession and the registered nurses with regard to what appertains in other parts of the Empire so that a degree of reciprocity may be brought about so far as registered nurses are concerned. I think it is intended to extend that principle to mental nurses who, I understand, have no machinery at all for reciprocity.

I have also inquired as to the extent to which the board has any say in the decisions of the board of examiners, which comprises a surgeon, a general practitioner, and a matron. I find that the decision of the examiners is final, and that the board we are now dealing with has never yet upset any decision arrived at by the examiners. That is a wise proviso because the door should never be open to anyone to approach the board on a matter of that description. So far as I can understand, the board of examiners is all-powerful in the matter of examination results. It is indeed the whole concern. They set the questions, and allot the marks. With one exception the A.T.N.A. gave the Bill its blessing. The exception was the appointment of two senior registered nurses instead of two matrons. There is more difficulty in defining a senior nurse than there is in defining a senior matron. For years past I believe there has been a move in the direction of having matrons of training schools appointed to the examining board. I do not think Dr. Hislop would agree to that. Trainees who are trained in hospitals should not be subject to examination by their chiefs. I support the Bill. If in Committee any improvement can be effected to it. I shall be pleased to help in that direction.

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

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Companies Act Amendment (Hon. E. M. Heenan in charge).

2, Evidence Act Amendment (Hon. J. Cornell in charge).

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTION).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [5.7] in moving the second reading said: It will be recalled that in 1941 the war situation was such as to render it necessary to prolong the life of Parliament for 12 months, and that in 1942 it was further prolonged for an additional period of 12 months, making two years in all.

By this action, the ten members due to retire in 1942 had their elections postponed until 1944, and members normally due to retire in 1944 had their elections postponed for 12 months till 1945, thus overcoming any possibility of a clash in the election of the members concerned.

When dealing with the previous enactments which were passed by Parliament authorising these postponements, I indicated that it would be necessary to submit further legislation in an endeavour to establish the normal continuity of elections for this Chamber, as provided for under the Constitution. The Bill now submitted proposes to achieve this, and it provides that the ten members whose elections now stand postponed until 1945 will have their elections further postponed until 1946, and that the members normally due to retire in 1946 will have their elections postponed until 1948.

If the Bill is agreed to, the net result will be that each member of the Legislative Council will have his period extended for two years in the same way as each member of the Legislative Assembly has had his term extended for a similar time. That is all the Bill deals with. Members understand the position just as well as I do, and the Bill requires no further explanation. It follows the same form as that of previous measures already passed and, as I mentioned earlier, will bring the election of members of this Chamber into line with the requirements of the Constitution. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put.

The PRESIDENT: It will be necessary to divide the House to ensure that the Bill is carried by an absolute majority.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	25
Noes	—
Majority for	25

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. C. R. Cornish	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. W. R. Hall (*Teller.*)
Hon. V. Hamersley	

NOES.

Nil.

The PRESIDENT: As there is more than an absolute majority voting with the "Ayes", I declare the motion carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th October.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [5.29]: Any amendment proposed to the Electoral Act should receive most careful consideration, more especially when it concerns the government of the country and the franchise. Were it not for the fact that the Government's actions in connection with this Bill are of the "stand and deliver" order, the measure could be classified as one of expediency. Happenings in another place have left the impression that sincerity is lacking. When introducing the Bill here, the Chief Secretary appeared to me to be very uncomfortable. He indulged in much one-sided ancient history not at all applicable to the measure. He quoted opinions expressed by two or three members 50 years ago, and said that he could cite others. In my opinion he ought to have also cited opinions in opposition to the proposal. At that period probably all the members of the Legislative Council would have been prepared to agree to the establishment of a second Chamber, and one would expect very little opposition indeed. I have not looked up the debate from which the Chief Secretary quoted; it is not worth while to do so. The effect of the quotations made was to disclose little opposition to the proposal.

In addition, the Chief Secretary related the old story that housewives, soldiers, and others were not eligible to be enrolled for the Legislative Council. Such argument is, of course, merely an appeal to the feelings of the people, and does not in any way come within the category of creating influences favouring the amendment of the Constitution. An inference which has forced itself upon me is that several of the proposed amendments would mislead the people. The preparation of the Bill seems to have been careless. Many people outside Parliament speak of it in derisory terms, and small wonder! The Chief Secretary brought up the old bogie about the Government having a mandate. In the Premier's policy speech there was only one reference to amendments affecting the Legislative Council. The hon. gentleman said—

> These proposals are in accordance with the democratic ideals for which we stand——

I like that phrase "democratic ideals"! If anybody can show me democratic ideals which the people supporting the Chief Secretary live up to, I shall be highly interested. I continue the quotation from the Premier's speech——

> ——and indicate the desire of this Government to give effect to its undertaking at the last general election, that if returned the earliest opportunity would be taken to seek Parliamentary approval for the adult franchise to apply to the Legislative Council.

Going back to 1939, we find in the Premier's policy speech the following:—

> I ask the electors to liberalise the franchise for the Legislative Council, the first being to give every householder a vote.

Every householder has the vote today. In 1943 the Premier spoke these words—

> I wish to say that the Government is seeking approval for legislation to widen the franchise for the Legislative Council, so that ultimately adult suffrage will be the only qualification necessary.

It would be interesting to know what the Premier meant when he introduced the word "ultimately" in his policy speech. It is a peculiar word to appear in such a speech. What is meant by it? However, the amendment has now been submitted. The Chief Secretary said—

> Labour Governments have been consistently hampered over the years in legislation which they brought forward. The Legislative Council has always proved obstructive to measures designed to improve industrial conditions, or of a reform nature.

That extract will not bear analysis at all, for the simple reason that industrial measures brought up by the Labour Government were of such a nature that they would have killed the industries to which it was sought to apply them. That has been consistently the attitude of this Government from 1933 onwards. The Government continually brings forward measures giving more and more to employees, who do not benefit in the end, because such a process means that industries go out of existence and thus create unemployment. Take some awards existing today. Are they for the benefit of the wage earner? Is the wage earner now in as advantageous a position as he was in two or three years ago receiving 9s. or 10s. a day? He is not, for we have built up such a high cost of living in Western Australia, through the tariff and bonuses and otherwise, that the pound Australian is not now worth anything like its value in 1910. The Chief Secretary also stated—

> In order to show the limitations imposed by the present Legislative Council franchise, I desire to refer to the last elections for the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. We find that 274,856 persons were on the roll for the Legislative Assembly election, and that only 78,889 electors were on the roll for the Legislative Council. These figures show that less than one-third of the people entitled to vote for the Legislative Assembly were enrolled for the Legislative Council.

The Chief Secretary showed himself exceedingly clever there, but, without any doubt whatever, the words convey an inference which will create in the minds of people the idea that the Legislative Council represent only some 78,000 electors. It has been harped on by the Labour people year in and year out that the Upper House represents only that number of persons, whereas by reference to the ratepayers' rolls and allowing for a percentage not entitled to enrolment, it is plain that not half of the persons qualified for enrolment are in fact enrolled. The comparison, by using the figures for the Legislative Assembly against those for the Legislative Council is another matter which I had in mind when I stated, earlier, that inferences were used to bolster up a very weak case. The election of 1936, that is to say the election prior to the enactment of compulsory voting, supports my contention clearly. The total number of votes then cast, was 136,309 for the Assembly, representing 70.13 per cent.; whereas in 1939, under compulsory voting, the number of votes cast was 209,331, representing 91.59 per cent., whilst in 1936 the roll disclosed 247,465 enrolments, and in 1939 the number was 265,987.

In further condemnation of this Council, the Chief Secretary gave other figures. The ratepayers' roll of 1944 for the City of Perth contains 26,048 names. A digest shows that approximately 10 per cent. of these are ineligible for Legislative Council enrolment; and the Metropolitan Province electoral roll shows only 5,682 names. The Metropolitan Province, I have to add, was the only province for which I could take out the figures. As regards other provinces I could not do so, because the ratepayers' rolls were not available. The position is very plain; a huge number of qualified electors are not on the roll. It will be seen that of the 26,048 names on the Perth City ratepayers' roll, allowing 10 per cent. deduction, only 5,682 were enrolled. This makes it plain that the Legislative Council represents more than double the number of electors enrolled. Yet the Government and its supporters are never tired of using the enrolment numbers as representing the strength of the Legislative Council electorate.

Not the slightest effort has been made by the Government, during all its 18 years of control, to bring the rolls up to date. The North-East Province is an illustration of this. At the last election the North-East Province roll contained 5,487 names. Between the 31st December, 1943, and the 21st March, 1944, a period of barely three months, a supplementary roll was issued on which 2,067 additional claims were made, 133 of these being rejected as the result of objections lodged. The balance voted. We members of this Legislative Council represent the whole of the people qualified to vote for this Chamber, whether on the roll or not. It is idle to assert that in respect of 2,067 claims objections could be lodged in three months.

What a terrible state of affairs is disclosed by the fact that even 1,700 more names could be placed on the roll! Why was that large number of claims sent in? Because of the roll-stuffing that goes on during the last few weeks, and also because of the necessity for closing the rolls in plenty of time to give the Chief Electoral Officer a chance to investigate. How can that official, with the small staff he has in Kalgoorlie,

check a couple of thousand claims coming in during the last three weeks?

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Why not remedy that by the adult franchise?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Nothing can be more misleading than comparisons of the voting rolls of the two Chambers. Enrolment is compulsory for the Assembly. If it were not, the percentage of available enrolments would be equivalent to those for the Council. The same reasoning applies to polling. These arguments are, in spirit, manufacturing prejudice. The Chief Secretary said—

> In many other cases where the family has not been able to obtain a home of its own, arising mainly from the expense of rearing a family, should the wife and mother be denied a vote?

The Chief Secretary knows perfectly well that it is not necessary for persons to own a home to qualify for enrolment. He is aware that those rearing a family have to live somewhere. If they have not a home of their own, they have to pay rent. They do not live under trees or rent-free. Such people are fully entitled to be on the roll, if they are paying rent of 7s. a week. That is the rent of a garage and has been for some time. No house rent has been lower than 7s. a week at any time; a house of a lower rental would not be habitable. The Chief Secretary further stated—

> This hostility to the Legislative Council is really of its own making, for, while we have the adult franchise for the Lower House, its political effectiveness is completely nullified by this Chamber when progressive legislation is submitted to it. It is because of this attitude that the demand for a single Chamber arises.

What hostility is there to the Legislative Council? I do not know of any except that from a circle of Labour agitators. As a matter of fact, I know very many strong Labourites who stand by the present franchise. They say, "We want protection for our party, even though we are Labour supporters." Again, where is there any demand for a single Chamber except from the Labour Caucus?

Hon. A. Thomson: It comes from the Trades Hall.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes, but from nowhere else. It comes from a little circle of Labour agitators who want to clear the way for the passage of any legislation they desire. No measure for the common good of the people has ever been rejected by this Chamber. Furthermore, this Chamber does not single out Labour Government measures for rejection. Any good legislation that comes from the Labour Government receives every consideration and as much consideration as has been accorded to measures coming from the other party when it has been in power. I have reason to know that, because at one time I was Leader of this House. The Legislative Council has every reason to be proud of its achievements.

Consider the Commonwealth Powers Bill! The Legislative Council of this State did splendid work in shaping that Bill and gave an excellent lead to the other States. It saved this State and prevented the Government from being as foolish as the Governments of Queensland and New South Wales which the Chief Secretary held up to us as examples. The Governments of those States fared so badly that if they had been decent they would have resigned. In Queensland there is no Legislative Council, and the Government, hot-footed, rushed the Commonwealth Powers Bill through the House with all of the 14 points—there were not 17 points then—and the Queensland Bill gave no protection whatsoever to the State. No provision was made for the withdrawal of the powers at any time. This Council provided for such protection through a motion that was passed in both Houses. In New South Wales there is a nominated Council.

Hon. J. Cornell: Where?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: In New South Wales.

Hon. J. Cornell: The members are not nominated, but elected by the Assembly.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It is practically the same thing; where is the difference?

Hon. J. Cornell: There is a big difference.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: There is no difference. The party in power floods the Chamber at any time. Whatever Government is in power puts its members in. What was the result? There was no check on the Government's haste in agreeing to what it now knows was a terrbile error, namely, the passing of those 14 points without providing any protection for the State. Here we have cause to say, with the member for Boulder in another place, "Thank God for the Legislative Council." The Chief Secretary dwelt on the reduction of the

powers of the House of Lords. Possibly there was some reason for that reduction, but we now find that there was too great a reduction and considerable dissatisfaction exists in England as a result. All is not well in the Parliament there. They went too far in England, and now they regret it. If there is to be some amendment, we must be very careful to ensure that it is sound. Personally I do not say that there is not room for some amendment.

The Chief Secretary: What suggestions have you?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am not going to suggest anything. The matter is one for a thorough investigation, and no member should be prepared at present to say what alterations should be made. The House of Lords is not responsible to the people. This House is a responsible Chamber and members are here to protect the rights of the people. The British House of Lords is a nominee Chamber.

Hon. J. Cornell: And hereditary.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes. Moreover, it is most undemocratic into the bargain. The members of the Legislative Council are elected on a household franchise of 7s. per week rent and the Council is the most democratic House in the British Empire. The persistent, childish misrepresentation of the property qualification of the Council franchise continues. The basic principle was enunciated in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech in 1939. I feel that there is room for amendment of the Constitution Act and the Electoral Act, but I am not prepared, and I do not think many members are prepared, to agree to any amendment without a thorough investigation. Let us obtain the opinions of those who are working under the Electoral Act.

Let us have a full inquiry before taking any action in connection with this Bill. It would be foolish for this House to agree to any amendment of the Electoral Act or of the Constitution until such investigation is made. I am sorry that my motion for a Select Committee is so far down the notice paper. Naturally it was held up during the Address-in-reply debate, but notice of the motion was given to the House long before I had any idea that an amendment of the Act was proposed. I did not take much notice of the Premier's policy speech, and until the Chief Secretary referred to the matter I did not know that the Premier had made mention of it. When the Chief Secretary mentioned it, I looked up the speech and saw that there was a reference to this proposal.

However, when I prepared my motion I had no idea that an amendment to the Act was proposed. What I had in mind was that we should embark upon a thorough inquiry with a view to putting the Electoral Act on a sound foundation and effecting improvements to it and to the Constitution Act to meet our altered conditions. We would be wanting in our duty to the electors if we did not mark time on this Bill, and other Bills of a like character that are to be submitted, until such time as a Select Committee is appointed and has an opportunity to make a thorough investigation. Then, of course, it would be for Parliament to say whether it would accept the committee's recommendations.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: The only principle in this Bill is that of adult suffrage.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: We may find some other way of extending the franchise as distinct from that proposed in this Bill, but before we accept this measure we should make a complete inquiry and see exactly where we stand. I withhold my judgment on the Bill in the hope that the House will agree to the appointment of a Select Committee, and that it will hold up this measure. There will be no election for the Legislative Council—except a by-election—for 18 months. In the meantime a Select Committee could make investigations and submit a report and amendments could be made, if necessary, to meet the conditions that will arise at the next election.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan): I move—

That the debate be adjourned till Tuesday next.

The Chief Secretary: I would not mind an adjournment till tomorrow, but not till Tuesday next. I believe in a fair thing.

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

Ayes	16
Noes	9
Majority for	7

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. H. Seddon (*Teller.*)

NOES.

Hon. C. R. Cornish	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. C. B. Williams (*Teller.*)
Hon. W. R. Hall	

PAIR.

AYE.	NO.
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. T. Moore

Motion thus passed; debate adjourned.

BILL—SHEARERS' ACCOMMODATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th October.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [6.2]: I am disposed to vote against this Bill. As a rule I am in accord with proposals for the betterment of conditions for any workers, but I have read the parent Act of 1912 and I think it is an extremely well drafted piece of legislation. It seems to me to cover practically everything dealt with in this amending Bill. I cannot understand why at a time like this the Government should bring down such a measure. Certainly up to date I have not heard sufficient justification for it. If effect is given to the amendments in the Bill they will simply result in harassing sheep owners. Most of the amendments really provide for the amplification of what is already in the Act. To my way of thinking they are not required. I took an opportunity recently to discuss this matter with some sheep owners in my province, and I carefully inquired as to whether they had heard any complaints from shearers. One man, who is a fairly large flock owner, was astonished that I should ask if there were any complaints. He said that the shearers he had had for a number of years had always expressed satisfaction at the treatment they received and at the accommodation provided for them.

The Honorary Minister: It is not going to affect those people.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Who then is it going to affect? It certainly will affect them, and it is calling upon them to provide amenities that are in some cases almost impossible to provide at present. It is calling upon them to erect certain buildings, but provides that that need not be done until 12 months after the cessation of hostilities. No one knows how long the war will last. Some military experts recently told us that it will go on for at least another two years, while others have prophesied four years.

Hon. L. Craig: How do we know what materials will be available 12 months after the war? They may be scarcer than now.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That is so. If the war lasts for two more years, as we are told by men who base their assumptions on extensive knowledge, then we have no right to pass legislation for so long a period ahead. And, as Mr. Craig has pointed out, no one knows what the conditions will be at the expiration of that time. The country has been promised housing facilities and re-building here and re-building there. I can see a tremendous shortage of building materials for all the centres that are close to the sources of supply, and much worse conditions confronting sheep owners who are far distant from those sources of supply.

I do not think we would do anyone an injustice or any harm if we refused to pass this Bill. I think there are many other ways in which the Government could extend its activities without bringing down such an unnecessary Bill as this is. Certain of its provisions are almost humorous. One is the question of the distance that the latrines shall be from a building where food and other such things are provided. The parent Act provides that the latrines must be 75ft., or 25 yards away. The Bill asks that they be 100ft. away, or an extra 8⅓ yards. I contend that 75ft. is too close, and so is 100ft. This is only a pettifogging sort of alteration. If the Bill suggested 150ft. there would be some sense in it.

The Honorary Minister: You can alter that.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The Honorary Minister's remark proves to me that the Government has not gone into detail at all in regard to this matter, but has simply accepted what some busybody has suggested, and it has done so in order to appease some of its supporters.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That ought not to be in the Bill at all, but left to the judgment of the people.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I commend the Act to members for perusal. I was surprised to see that such a comprehensive and excellently drafted Act, going as far back as 1912, is on the statute-book. I did not realise that the law covering shearers and shed hands was so old, or so well framed. In the face of the fact that there has been no outcry that one has heard and, as I have pointed out, even investigation has failed to find someone who is disgruntled, we should not support the Bill. We have to realise that in every walk of life there are people who will find fault, no matter what are the conditions. One can understand that at odd times a complaint or two might be made. Shearers, taken by and large, are not backward in voicing any complaints they have. The little knowledge I have of them is that if anything goes wrong they pretty soon make it known. They are not inclined to put up with disabilities without protest, and vigorous protest, too.

The Honorary Minister: It will not affect any farmer in your district.

Hon. W. J. MANN: If the Honorary Minister would read the Bill carefully he would not make a statement of that description. Excellent and all as the Act may be, I know that many farms and stations provide accommodation, food and conditions which are even now well in advance of what is laid down in the Bill. After all, the average man who takes on shearing wants, principally, two things. He wants good food and reasonable accommodation. I have been told on excellent authority that in the North, where the big shearing contractors operate, no matter what accommodation is provided, the shearers insist upon taking their mattresses out in the open to sleep in preference to sleeping in hot buildings. Those men are wise.

I want to make only one other point and that is in connection with the proposal in the Bill to increase the penalty for any breach of the law. The Bill proposes to repeal the penalty of £5 and substitute £10, and for every day during default it provides a penalty of £2. That is rather a savage provision, bearing in mind that the people concerned are in many cases in the far distant portions of the State. Because of that, even if on occasions they so desired, they would not be able to effect the improvements or carry out the wishes of the inspector who, after all, in these cases may be an ordinary policeman and may or may not be biassed. I do not think this House should stand for the provision of a fine of £10 plus £2 for every day in default. For the reasons I have given I intend to vote against the second reading.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East): I find some difficulty in understanding just what has impelled the Government to introduce this piece of legislation. There seems to be no known reason for any marked dissatisfaction being shown by the industrial organisation concerned. The conditions under the 1912 Act, I have been informed, have operated with reasonable satisfaction, and I am wondering whether this Bill is the product of somebody who found time hanging heavily on his hands and in this direction discovered an outlet for some of his energies. The present time is hardly suitable for the introduction of legislation of this sort. One objection I have to the Bill is that if it is passed in its present form it would have a very wide application to producers of wool in the agricultural areas, many of whom have not yet reached the stage of being able to provide accommodation and living conditions as good as what they are expected to provide under this amendment to the Act.

Various Governments have had an opportunity to free these people from a measure of their debt, and that would have enabled them to reach a reasonable standard of living and conditions. It is certainly not their fault that they are not enjoying those conditions. The average farmer, as I know him, is just as anxious to give his wife and family decent living conditions as is anyone else in the community, and it is only the financial position that has prevented him from providing them. It will be adding a greater financial burden to those already being borne by the agricultural woolgrowers if they are called upon to make the provisions stipulated in this Bill. There is one portion of the measure I find rather interesting and that relates to the provision of bedsteads. It is stipulated that bedsteads must be 6ft. 6in. in length.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The draftsman must have been thinking of your length.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: That length would suit me. Recently I have had occasion to do a certain amount of buying and I will

give my experience. An ordinary cyclone bed measures 6ft. 6in. whereas the ordinary type of wire mattress—I do not know the trade term for it, but I understand it is the standard type—is 6ft. 3in. long; yet the only mattress one can purchase for a bed at present is 6ft. long.

Hon. J. Cornell: It gives you a bit of a hangover.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: It does. Thus, under the measure, one has to find a bedstead 6ft. 6in. long, whereas under the War Organisation of Industry regulations one can obtain only a 6ft. mattress. So I wonder what the object of that provision is. If the Government is really concerned with this matter of bedsteads for out-size people, it could pay attention to the average hotel. In recent times I have stayed in quite a number of hotels, and at a guess I should say that 50 per cent. of the bedsteads are only 6ft. 3in. long.

Hon. J. Cornell: With a bend in the middle.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I am not concerned about the bend in the middle. I will vote for the second reading because there may be something in the Bill worth having. In the main it seems to me to be another example of the Government's fiddling with industrial legislation while the country is crying out for legislation to deal with the reconstruction period, which we all believe is nearly upon us. Before the Government concerns itself unduly with a matter of this sort, it might set out to deal with perhaps the worst employer in the State as regards housing conditions, namely, the Railway Department, and investigate the conditions under which some of its employees are expected to live. I did not wish the Bill to go to the second reading without explaining my attitude. I see very little virtue in the measure, and it is possible there may be a considerable amount of bias behind it.

HON. C. R. CORNISH (North): I think more opposition to the Bill has been heard in this House than one would find from either the squatters or the farmers. I cannot see any very radical proposals in the Bill, though this might be an unfortunate time to introduce it. However, it cannot become law until 12 months after the war ends and consideration can be obtained from the Minister if there is any case of distress. I believe it is the desire of the pastoralists and the farmers to make conditions for shearers as comfortable as possible. It may be that the idea behind this Bill is to bring conditions here into line with those in the Eastern States. We have a number of shearers coming here from the Eastern States, and I believe that when they find different conditions prevailing here, they create a certain amount of dissatisfaction.

Amongst the shearers are a fine lot of men. Many sons of pastoralists are working in the sheds today, and they are accustomed to having decent conditions. I am satisfied that the pastoralists and farmers desire to provide them with decent conditions. The Bill does not contemplate any elaborate provision. Anyone almost anywhere would expect to be provided with a room and a bed. Mr. Cornell said that in his shearing days there were perhaps 40 men in a room, but I venture to say he would not like to go back to the days of the push-bike when a man had to carry his swag on his back and sleep under a tree. This is a step in the right direction. When there are two men in a room, there is a good chance of their agreeing, but not so if there are three or four men occupying the one room. After all, to provide the extra room is only a matter of putting in a partition. I have had experience as a hotelkeeper when two men would not occupy the one room.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Not members of the Labour Party.

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: Yes, members of the Labour Party. Shearers are men who work very hard indeed. True, they make good money, but I think we would get the shearing done more cheaply if the shearers were given reasonably good conditions. The little things asked for in this Bill are only fair. We do not want to find shearers' accommodation alongside a pig-sty or a stable. In these days we know enough to try to keep away from flies, which carry all sorts of disease, and the proposal to keep shearers' accommodation away from stables and pig-styes is commendable. I do not know whether any member of this House has ever shorn sheep. Mr. Cornell says he has. In my opinion, if there is any man who earns his wages it is the shearer. It is one of the hardest tasks I know of, and I say that after having worked in the stokehold of a steamer and in a ballast pit.

I certainly would not like to take on shearing. I think the pastoralists wish to work in harmony with the shearers. A very friendly feeling exists between employers and employees, so much so that after the shearing is completed, a pastoralist generally turns on a case and so a very good feeling exists. I think the Bill is really only a small matter designed to bring the Act up to date, and I support the second reading.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West): At first glance I felt antagonistic to the Bill. I think a few amendments might be made to the Act and I shall vote for the second reading so that we can discuss the Bill in Committee clause by clause, and find out just what amendments are necessary. Mr. Cornish remarked that the pastoralists do endeavour to work in harmony with the shearers. I have had some experience of shearers, and it has taught me that if one does not work in harmony with them, especially since the war has been on, one does not get one's sheep shorn. Nowadays, the shearers tell the woolgrower what to do, and if he does not comply, he does not get his sheep shorn. The conditions laid down in the award are rarely observed in the farming areas, because the employer is expected to give more than the wages stipulated. Most shearers expect nowadays to get their board and lodging free. Not only has the woolgrower to pay a fabulous price to get his sheep shorn, but it is a more or less unwritten rule in most districts that accommodation and food shall be provided free to the shearers.

Hon. H. L. Roche: It is the same thing in every district.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes. I understand so.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is, since the war.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It is because the demand is greater than the shearers available.

Hon. J. Cornell: You would want a few shearers!

Hon. L. CRAIG: The shearers are in greater demand when sheep are plentiful. We had some unfortunate experiences with shearers years ago. I have engaged teams myself and, as Mr. Cornish said, there were some first-class men in them. I will give members an experience that has always stuck in my mind. There was a man who was the gun shearer of the North-West district—the fastest man. When shearing was over he came to Perth and had a taxi on the rank. In those days taxis stood in a row and the car at the head went out first and the others moved up. The front car always had first claim. On more than one occasion as I was walking down the Terrace—perhaps it was because I am lame or the heat was oppressive and he thought I was tired—I have seen this man slide his car along the street and say to me, "I am going down your way, Mr. Craig. Would you like a lift?"

What a marvellous thing for such a man to do! He left his place in the rank and pretended that he was going towards my house so that he could give me a lift. There are some very fine shearers. But we have had some unfortunate experiences. One team had nearly cut out a rather big shed of 20,000 sheep. Their accommodation and food were first class. They had 1,500 sheep left to shear, which would take them 1½ days. The station ran out of potatoes and the shearers struck. My brother, who was drafting the sheep, had to leave his work, get into his car and drive 75 miles in order to get a stone of potatoes.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is the stupid type of shearer.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It was the spirit that pervaded the team.

Hon. C. B. Williams: They lost money as well.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It was very hard on the pastoralists, who in times past have had some bitter experiences with shearers, probably owing to the actions of one man in the team. It is desirable that men working hard—and no-one works harder than does the shearer—should have reasonable accommodation, good food, an ample water supply and so on, because they are not at a station for only a week or two but are on the job for six months. I have gone carefully through the Bill since tea and cannot find very much wrong with it. Some members fear that it will adversely affect the farming community. If that be so, we must amend the measure in Committee with a view to exempting the farming community from its provisions. There are some people with three or four stand plants, with perhaps only 1,200 or 1,500 sheep. It does not seem reasonable that they should be put to the expense of providing the accommodation set out in the Bill, because they will

only have six shearers employed for about two days. We should limit the number of men to be provided for to eight, the number now specified in the Act. I shall support the second reading of the Bill and hope that we shall be able to make a decent measure of it in Committee.

HON. G. W. MILES (North): I support the second reading, although I think that in Committee we can make one or two desirable amendments. Mr. Cornish has indicated to the House the feelings of most pastoralists towards their shearers. They desire that the shearers shall have decent living quarters.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (in reply): Members representing the farming community have spoken against the Bill and I shall reply to their contentions. I cannot find words strong enough to condemn Mr. Baxter's exaggerated criticism of this measure. He not only spoilt his own case, but painted such a doleful picture of the dreadful calamity that would befall the pastoralists if the Bill were passed that he unintentionally impugned the reputation of the pastoralists themselves, so that I feel it my duty to defend them and try to dispel the cloud of misrepresentation that the hon. member has cast over the members of the executive of the Pastoralists' Association. Truly an unusual course for a Labour representative to be compelled, for honour's sake, to adopt!

The pastoralists can well say, "May Heaven protect us from our alleged friends"! I can well imagine the big men of the North-West seething with resentment at the reactionary and archaic sentiments expressed by Mr. Baxter in his clumsy and unbalanced attempt to kill this measure. I am personally responsible for the preparatory work in determining the main principles of the Bill. Before the measure was drafted, conferences were held with both the executive of the Pastoralists' Association and the A.W.U. The conference with the representatives of the Pastoralists' Association was held in my office and was conducted in a most friendly atmosphere. I have been associated with work of this character for some 40 years, and I have never met a more decent body of men than the members of the executive of the Pastoralists' Association, who are always anxious to do the right thing.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Why did you not approach the members of the Primary Producers' Association?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I will explain that later.

Hon. C. B. Williams: They are too mean.

The HONORARY MINISTER: At no stage in the discussion was it stated, or even hinted, by the employers that the time was inopportune, nor did they mention drought conditions as a reason for not proceeding with the Bill. Actually, the clauses of the Bill were discussed seriatim. Certain suggestions were made by the executive of the Pastoralists' Association, some of which were included in the Bill. One or two minor amendments were discarded. It will be my duty, if the Bill reaches the Committee stage, to explain the various clauses and the reason why the Pastoralists' Association desires the principal Act to be amended.

As soon as the measure was brought before another place copies were forwarded to both parties. As this conference, as I have stated before, was conducted on a very high plane of cordial relationship, I am justified in my assumption that the main principles of the Bill met with the approval of the executive of the Pastoralists' Association, as I have received no objection from that body, either orally or in writing. I wish to explain Mr. President, that I took particular pains, in view of my long experience as a member of this Chamber, to make a plain straightforward statement when moving the second reading. I took every precaution to do so and I expected that the Bill would go through without amendment after having been cordially supported by all members.

Naturally, no employer can be expected to embrace with enthusiasm any innovation which may slightly increase costs. This task is the job of the employees' representatives, but the point is that the employers did not object to the inclusion of the main amendments in the Bill and to me they appeared anxious to do the right thing by the shearers and to maintain the good relationship that has existed and still exists between the Pastoralists' Association and the A.W.U. I want to make the objects of this measure perfectly plain. This is a Bill which makes a modest move

upward by improving the living conditions on the job for shearers after the war. It will not take effect until 12 months after hostilities have ceased, this period being requested by the pastoralists themselves.

If drought conditions prevail in any part of the State and if inspectors, who will be police officers with intimate knowledge of local conditions, do try to impose the provisions of this measure under drought or other conditions—a circumstance which I strongly doubt—then the Minister has the power under Clause 5 to step in and stop such action. To suggest that action would be taken against a drought-stricken stationowner or manager is baseless and foolish, having regard to the sympathetic administration of the Government and the wide knowledge of the industry by the Minister, the Hon. F. J. S. Wise. Every safeguard against such a contingency is at present in the measure before the House.

The Bill is based largely on South Australian legislation which was passed with general accord in 1942 by both Houses of the South Australian Parliament. The South Australian Government is not a Labour Government. The South Australian Legislative Council is a very conservative body and it considered that by passing this legislation it was making a reasonable contribution to the betterment of the industry. In that State the Act comes into operation six months after the war and not 12 months, as provided for in this Bill. This State is far below every other State in amenities for shearers and shedhands. In Tasmania, for example, the employer has to provide sheets, towels, soap and other requisites for shearers.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Under rationing?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. Queensland and New South Wales have far better conditions enforced by legislation than has this State. This measure will assist rather than hinder the pastoralists of this country, because it will attract and keep the better class of shearer in the industry. Mr. Cornish said that the objective of the pastoralists was to make conditions better for the decent shearers, so as to keep them in the industry. This will be good for the industry, the employer and the shearer.

For several years now the living conditions for shearers at some stations have been the cause for bitter complaint. Mr. Welsh made an error in his speech which is easily understandable. The hon. member is held in high respect by workers for his fairness and justness as an employer when he was in the North-West. There has never been any cause for complaint against him or his station, but this does not dispel the fact that every year complaints have been made to the Pastoralists' Association about bad conditions on some stations.

Hon. F. R. Welsh: They had their remedy under the Act.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. The executive of the Pastoralists' Association has always expressed concern for the shearers and a desire to assist them in bringing up defaulting employers to a reasonable standard because of the danger of losing good shearers, particularly those men who come over from the Eastern States to shear in the North-West. Unless these careless and thoughtless sheep men are brought up to the standard set by the progressive big men of the industry, there will be a real difficulty in obtaining competent labour. Shearers, like all other members of society, are justly entitled to decent living conditions.

I am indebted to Mr. Wood for his contribution to the second reading of the Bill, as it gives me an opportunity to deal with his remarks regarding the application of the measure to the farming industry. This Bill will have no appreciable effect on the sheep farmers in the agricultural industry, as the comparatively few farmers who own large flocks in the agricultural areas already have accommodation far superior to that provided for in the Bill. I am emphatic about this and challenge anyone to name any large flockmaster in the agricultural areas who does not now provide accommodation for shearers and shedhands superior to that provided for in the Bill.

Hon. H. L. Roche: This will apply to flocks of under 1,500.

The HONORARY MINISTER: We can deal with that point in Committee. With some knowledge of the farming industry, I have no hesitation in saying that the majority of farmers make their own arrangements for labour by either doing the shed work themselves, by their families, or by borrowing labour from their neighbours, thus having to make arrangements only for shearers. In the majority of cases the stands would be from 2 to 4. I shall give members particulars regarding the number of properties with flocks in different categories throughout the agricul-

tural areas. The number of flock owners totals 9,395. Their properties, with the number of sheep on each, are as follows:—

374	properties	with	under	50	sheep	on each.
315	,,	,,	,,	99	,,	,,
1,191	,,	,,	,,	100 to	249	sheep
2,061	,,	,,	,,	250 ,,	499	,,
3,131	,,	,,	,,	500 ,,	999	,,
1,321	,,	,,	,,	1,000 ,,	1,999	,,
376	,,	,,	,,	2,000 ,,	4,999	,,
51	,,	,,	,,	5,000 ,,	9,999	,,
4	,,	,,	,,	10,000 ,,	19,999	,,
1	property	,,	,,	20,000 ,,	49,999	,,

The particulars have been secured from the Manpower Directorate who have the latest statistics available. Of the 9,395 properties, approximately 8,500 are shorn by 2- or 3-stand portable plants—and those properties will not be brought within the scope of the Bill.

Members: Why not?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Because they would not have the number.

Hon. G. B. Wood: But they do.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am not talking about war-time conditions but what obtains in times of peace. The ordinary practice then is for shearers to live, sleep and eat in the flockmaster's house. That applies in hundreds of cases. Of the balance of 895 properties, 600 operate 4-stand plants, and the flocks on the remainder are either shorn at depot sheds using fixed plants of from 4- to 7-stands, or are shorn by 4-, 5- or 6-stand electric portable plants, or by means of the owners' fixed plants of more than 4-stands. Thus it will be seen that the proportion of big plants is very small and a large proportion of the farms will not be brought within the scope of the Bill at all.

At least 500 plants are owned by farmers themselves. There are 406 2- and 3-stand portable plants owned by shearing contractors who travel the agricultural areas. Many hundreds of plants are owned by farmers who are not contractors, and it is reliably estimated that there are in existence in working order in Western Australia somewhere between 2,500 and 3,000 shearing plants in the agricultural areas. Some 630 shearers are registered with the Manpower Directorate.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Who told you about the accommodation in the agricultural areas?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I know the position from my own experience and from the statements of people who live in the agricultural areas.

Hon. J. Cornell: How long ago was your experience gained?

The HONORARY MINISTER: As Mr. Craig knows, I have been through the South-West and Great Southern; I have not been asleep all the years I have been in Parliament. I think it fair to mention the conditions that are affected by the shortage of labour at present. In times of peace the Bill will not affect 5 per cent. of the farmers, and those that it will affect have at present far better accommodation than is stipulated in the Bill. I had that assurance only this morning from a man who is a farmer and is an expert in his line. He says that the Bill will not affect them at all.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Can you tell us the name of that man?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I hardly think that would be fair. I am not using the arguments that are advanced by the A.W.U. for they could rightly be regarded as biassed. I am quoting the views of a man who has a knowledge of the industry, is an expert and is a farmer himself. As I say, he asserts the Bill will not affect many because the accommodation on the big properties in the agricultural areas is superior to that stipulated in the Bill.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Tell us why you are altering the conditions so that they will apply to properties employing six men instead of eight as at present.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is the provision that is in the South Australian Act and will probably bring in the North-West. It is fair to say that that part was not considered by the pastoralists as it does not affect them at all.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Yet they were the only ones consulted!

The HONORARY MINISTER: I made some inquiries about this matter and found that was the number provided for in the South Australian Act. The chief amendments in the notice paper standing in the name of Mr. Baxter would, if agreed to, relegate the position in the main back to that which obtained under the provisions of the 1912 Act. That is a back-door method of defeating the measure, and the amendments proposed are certainly not acceptable to the Government.

Hon. J. Cornell: You are anticipating their defeat.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, but they came to me as a surprise. I thought

I was laying the foundation of a measure that would not be opposed to any extent.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The proper time to consider amendments is when the Bill is dealt with at the Committee stage.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There is an error in Clause 7 which was not noticed when the Bill was dealt with in another place. The word "fourteen" should be substituted by the word "thirteen," the latter being the original penalty section in the Act. When the Bill is in Committee I will explain in detail the reason for the various amendments, and any objection the Pastoralists' Association may have to them. I am hopeful that the Bill will be passed without any major amendment, because the provisions are reasonable and acceptable to progressive employers and afford bare justice to the workers concerned in the industry. I trust members will take the long view and regard the Bill as a small contribution towards post-war reconstruction in the interests of a decent body of men who are anxious to do their job and of employers who are out to give their men a square deal.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 2:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: With all due respect to the Honorary Minister, I propose to ask the Committee to strike out Clause 2. The fact that the South Australian Act applies to properties where six men are employed, does not influence me. We are not concerned about South Australia but Western Australia. I think the present conditions should prevail and the legislation should apply only to those properties where not less than eight shearers are employed. I know the agricultural districts and I know that the enforcement of many of the provisions of the Bill will be very awkward. The Honorary Minister said that they would not be operative until 12 months after the war, but that condition applies only to the amendments regarding the construction of additional accommodation.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The provisions dealing with the alterations respecting accommodation constitute the main ones in the Bill.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The other provisions will operate immediately.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It must be recognised that shearing is an Australia-wide industry. The Pastoralists' Association here is linked up with pastoralists' associations in the other States, and the shearers here through the A.W.U. are linked up with the shearers in the other States through other branches of that organisation. For the convenience of all concerned there should be uniform legislation. The amendment embodied in Clause 2 will bring the part of the Act affected into line with legislation already adopted in the Eastern States and will certainly bring in some who were not previously governed by the Act.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The Honorary Minister says we must bring our legislation into conformity with that of the Eastern States, but this provision does not affect the pastoralists. On the other hand, it will seriously affect the farming industry. Many farmers now employ six shearers including wool pressers and shed hands. To say that the clause would not affect farmers because they have the necessary accommodation already is quite a mistake. Really, the proposal has been brought forward with the idea of bringing in farm hands.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Hang the Eastern States! We are Western Australians. The passing of this clause would severely affect the farmers. Pastoralists are already dealt with in the principal Act. In truth the measure will injuriously affect every farmer who carries a few sheep. The expense of building the accommodation demanded might amount to as much as £1,000. The burden is one that the farmer cannot bear, and it will be useless for him to run to his bank for financial accommodation. If this provision is not to be brought into effect until after cessation of hostilities, why bring it forward now?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The clause would come into force immediately.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Of course it would!

Hon. F. R. WELSH: While not affecting the pastoralist, this provision would affect nearly every farmer. Any farmer with two or three stands must necessarily have three or four shed hands, and that will bring him under the Bill.

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

Ayes	7
Noes	15
Majority against ..	8

AYES.

Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. E. M. Heenan	*(Teller.)*

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. C. R. Cornish
Hon. G. W. Miles	*(Teller.)*

PAIR.

AYE.	NO.
Hon. T. Moore	Hon. H. Tuckey

Clause thus negatived.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 5:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

> That at the end of the clause the following words be added:—"such authority to be produced by him in pursuance of this Act."

It is necessary that a policeman visiting a station or farm should have his authority and be in a position to produce it if required. Otherwise police will be roaming about without authority.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Since the 24th May, 1914, constables have worked under the old Act, without this additional requirement.

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

Clause 4—Repeal of Section 6 and new section inserted:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

> That in line 4 of paragraph (ii) of Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 6, after the word "passing" the words "or erected thereafter" be inserted.

If this amendment is accepted, I shall move a further amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

> That in paragraph (ii) of Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 6, the words "and any such building, the erection of which is commenced after the said passing, shall be divided into compartments to accommodate not more than two shearers in each compartment" be struck out.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This is a highly important amendment, which I must oppose strongly. It means that provision shall be made for three persons instead of two. The argument used here is based on the ground of expense, but the pastoralists say—

> Considered not unreasonable. There was no real objection to three shearers being accommodated together, but it was felt, as most of the accommodation was already erected and such a small proportion would need completely renovating or re-building, it might create a little discontent when the shearers came along and found two in one hut and three in the next. It would be easier for the pastoralists to provide accommodation for three men instead of two.

The men are the best judges of what they want.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: As the Minister said, the men are the judges. The point is that it is possible to go from one shed where there are two in a compartment to another shed where there are three, and that is where the trouble comes in.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What does your amendment provide?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It provides that there shall be three in a compartment.

Hon. G. W. MILES: If the paragraph is passed as printed, it will mean that on the one station some men would be two in a room and others would be three in a room, which would cause dissatisfaction. If Mr. Baxter's amendment is carried it will mean that instead of four in a room, as in the original Act, the number will be reduced to three.

Hon. L. CRAIG: We are committed to this further amendment because we have said already that when a building is in course of erection it shall be built to accommodate three. We have also agreed that buildings to be erected hereafter shall be made to accommodate three.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

> That in lines 1 and 2 of paragraph (iii) of Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 6, after the word "bedstead" the word "stretcher" be inserted.

I take it this is merely an oversight.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I think it is best to leave the paragraph as it is.

Hon. G. W. MILES: It is absolutely necessary to insert the word "stretcher." It is not possible to put bedsteads all over a run. In some cases a Coolgardie stretcher

would not be too bad to sleep on during the period in which a few sheep are being shorn.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

> That in line 16 of paragraph (iii) of Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 6, after the word "suspended" the following words be added:—"Provided that the cost of any necessary kerosene, oil or other illuminant supplied shall be a charge against the shearing mess account."

This is in keeping with the award. It is not a very vital item. It is only a small amount to charge against the account but it saves a lot of waste.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This legislation applies in every State. It is in conformity with the present-day provisions made for employees everywhere. In canteens and such places run by private and Government enterprise, the employer pays for the power and other costs of amenities provided in workshops. Today it is considered a fair responsibility of the employer in every industry.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

> That in line 2 of paragraph (vii) of Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 6, the words "one hundred" be struck out and the words "seventy-five" inserted in lieu.

I do not see any reason why the distance should be more than 75 ft.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This provision has been in the South Australian legislation since 1925. In most States, 100 feet is considered a reasonable distance. Septic tank installations would not come under this provision.

Hon. G. W. MILES: Before Perth was sewered workers' homes did not have a distance of 75 or 100 feet separating their sanitary arrangements from the house.

The Honorary Minister: It was 150ft. as a rule.

Hon. G. W. MILES: It is ridiculous to ask for such an alteration. A distance of 150ft., as suggested by the previous speaker would be better.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

> That in lines 3 and 4 of paragraph (xi) of Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 6, the words "proper urns or pots with tight-fitting lids and spouts or taps" be struck out and the words "a suitable pot, tin can or urn with a tight-fitting lid and spout, tap or ladle" inserted in lieu.

It is not possible to buy all these things and will not be for some time after the war is over. The clause referring to the 12 months period after the war does not apply to this matter. Many of the articles mentioned are unprocurable. When the war is over and pots are again available, members will be willing to include this provision.

Hon. G. W. MILES: The Minister should agree to this amendment. The petrol tin or kerosene tin is very useful in the back country. Some of the best meals I have eaten have been cooked in a petrol tin.

The HONORARY MINISTER: When conditions return to normal it will be found that the provision is far better than what has been recommended by the Pastoralists' Association. It is only a matter of time when plenty of pots and other cooking utensils will be made in Western Australia. I am not making a strenuous fight against this, but agreement with the provision in this Bill will be in the interests of the pastoralists themselves. I oppose the amendment.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I hope the Committee will agree to the amendment. It does not seek to strike out the words "kerosene tin or benzine tin." They will always be used in the country and they are jolly good utensils.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The gauge of the tin from which kerosene tins are made is far different from what it was when Mr. Miles lived outback.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think it is necessary to have kerosene tins and benzine tins these days. As a matter of fact, the shearers' cooks just will not have them. We have stoves, water laid on and acetylene gas. A Bill of this sort should not stultify itself by coming down to benzine tins. With eight shearers the farmers are not affected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is nothing before the Chair to strike out kerosene tins.

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

Ayes	9
Noes	12
Majority against ..	3

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. H. S. W. Parker	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. H. Seddon	(*Teller.*)

NOES.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. C. R. Cornish	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. G. Fraser (*Teller.*)

PAIR.

AYE.	NO.
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. T. Moore

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I would like to know what is meant by the phrase "kerosene tin or benzine tin." Is a new tin a kerosene tin?

The CHAIRMAN: Is the hon. member raising a technicality?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: No. We have peculiar clients at times and some will be prosecuted for using kerosene tins. It will be necessary to know just what is a kerosene tin or a benzine tin. Is a tin that has never been used a kerosene tin? I know what is meant, but this is a loose term. What is the position if I provide a new tin, usually used for petrol, for the shearers' cook?

Hon. L. Craig: Such tins are used for honey.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That is so. Does it mean that a tin that has been used for kerosene or benzine must not be used? It might be a new tin.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I move an amendment—

> That in paragraph (xi) of Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 6, the words "No kerosene tin or benzine tin shall be supplied for the preparation or cooking of food" be struck out.

To make such a stipulation is ridiculous. Practically all the honey produced in the State is put into kerosene tins and benzine tins, and so far as I am aware no objection has ever been raised.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am satisfied that nobody with progressive ideas would approve of kerosene or benzine tins being used as cooking utensils.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Such tins, apparently, may not be used for the preparation or cooking of food, but presumably could be used for boiling water.

Hon. G. B. Wood: I have not yet seen tea made in anything but a kerosene tin.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: According to the paragraph, there are only two things that may not be used for cooking purposes, namely, kerosene and benzine tins. Obviously one might use a sanitary tin. Would it not be better to redraft the paragraph to prohibit the use of secondhand tins, or stipulate exactly what utensils may be used?

The Honorary Minister: This provision has been in operation for 20 years.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It is like the licensing law in Kalgoorlie.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:

Ayes	10
Noes	12
Majority against ..	2

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. H. S. W. Parker	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. H. L. Roche	Hon. G. B. Wood (*Teller.*)

NOES.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. C. R. Cornish	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. C. B. Williams (*Teller.*)

PAIR.

AYE.	NO.
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. T. Moore

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, agreed to.

Clause 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Amendment of Section 8:

Hon. A. THOMSON: Why is the Minister proposing to delete the word "tent" from Section 8? That section provides that every room, tent, latrine, or other structure provided for the accommodation of shearers, not being a shearing shed, shall be handed over to the shearers in good order and clean condition, etc. Therefore the word "tent" should be retained.

The Honorary Minister: I have been advised that tents are now no longer used on stations.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If more woolgrowers in the agricultural areas are brought under the Act, tents might be used.

Hon. L. Craig: They would not employ eight shearers.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Possibly they would. Section 7 of the Act provides—"Notwithstanding anything hereinbefore

contained, the requirements of paragraph two of subsection two of section six shall be deemed to have been sufficiently complied with if the shearers are provided with tent accommodation to the satisfaction of the inspector." Thus tents are provided for in Section 7 of the Act and the Minister wishes to delete the reference to them in Section 8 of the Act.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 7—Repeal of Section 14 of principal Act and new section inserted:

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move an amendment—

> That in line 1 the word "fourteen" be struck out and the word "thirteen" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

> That in line 9 of the proposed new section the word "two" be struck out and the word "one" inserted in lieu.

This will make the penalty the same as it now appears in the parent Act.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I draw attention to what seems to me rather curious wording. In the proposed new section we find the words "not exceeding" and a little lower the words "two pounds." If the words "not exceeding" are included then, under the Interpretation Act, the penalty of £10 would be treated as the maximum.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member can argue that point on recommittal.

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

Clauses 8 to 10, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

RESOLUTION—COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS.

As to Extension of Appointment.

Debate resumed from the 5th October on the motion by the Chief Secretary to concur in the following resolution received from the Assembly:—

> That the appointment by His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor of Mr. J. A. Ellis as Commissioner of Railways for five years commencing on the 15th January, 1944, in the terms of Executive Council minute laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on the 12th September, 1944, be approved.

HON. G. W. MILES (North) [9.26]: I desire to say a few words on this resolution, which I support. The resolution is for the reappointment of Mr. Ellis for a further period of five years. Personally, I consider he has done excellent work as Commissioner, although probably he has had too much to do. The main item in the running of our railways is, in my opinion, coal. As was pointed out by Mr. Seddon the other evening, 9 per cent. of the cost of running our railways is represented by the cost of coal. We produce 2½ tons of coal per day per man in this State, as against America which produces 10 tons of coal per day per man. I maintain it is our duty to introduce legislation to bring our coal industry up to date. It is no use our going on in the same old way. We must modernise our methods, and this can be done by sending our experts to America to inquire into the latest methods of mechanisation, which should be adopted here. We should do away with our present methods, by which I understand 40 per cent. of the coal is left standing.

It is criminal for us to go on in this way, as we are losing hundreds of thousands of pounds a year. Nobody seems to care. As I have said before, it is time a Select Committee was appointed to go into this question. An inquiry that was held some years ago resulted in the saving of £1,000,000 in eight years in the cost of coal. If an investigation is made now, I feel confident that we shall save hundreds of thousands of pounds in the running costs of the railways. Then there was the action of the Premier who, a year or two ago, over-rode the Arbitration Court, and under the National Security Regulations, granted an increase in the wages of the men which costs our railways £100,000 a year. The taxpayer pays, and yet nothing is said about it. We are being taxed out of existence. If we are going to get our costs down and make the progress which we expect to do in the development of our industries in the reconstruction period, the Government must take some action. Another matter requiring investigation is the cost-plus system, yet nothing is done. One might just as well talk to a brick wall as to talk to some Ministers of the Crown nowadays. Something must be done and I hope that the Minister will see that it is done. Now is the time to do it.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (in reply): Members have freely exercised their right to speak to this motion and in doing so some

in particular have been very critical of the Railway Department. I am sure it will not be expected that I shall reply to all the points raised in their entirety, but I feel that one or two matters should be referred to. First of all, I believe that in the criticism offered there has been no personal application respecting the Commissioner himself. In fact, I think that every member who spoke expressed the view that the Commissioner is a man of outstanding ability and capacity. Some members referred to the question of finance, and various suggestions were made. It was urged by more than one member that we should write down the capitalisation of the railways in order that the department might make a profit. All I have to say on that point is that by writing down the capital value of the railways we would certainly not get rid of the debt incurred in the past.

It is, therefore, merely a question of the bookkeeping method to be adopted; that is all that is in dispute. After all is said and done, there is the liability respecting the money that has been expended in the building of our railways. It is perfectly true that the Treasurer of today has to shoulder the burden of the debt incurred in the past; so, whether we write down the capitalisation of the railways or not, the liability confronting the Treasurer will not be reduced. There is much in what Mr. Baxter said as to what the result would be of any writing down of the capital cost. Then again, I must emphasise the point that many of the matters referred to by members really concern Government policy.

As a matter of policy, not only the present Government but previous Administrations have been prepared to grant concessions on the railways to the various industries, more particularly to the agricultural industry. In those circumstances, we cannot blame the Commissioner of Railways for any losses incurred in the transport of primary products. As a matter of Government policy, we have not increased fares or freights. Notwithstanding the fact that the Commissioner of Railways desired that fares and freights should be increased, the Government, as a matter of policy, refused to agree to that course. Mr. Miles referred to the increase in the basic wage payable to railwaymen. Certainly that cost the Railway Department a considerable sum of money. On the other hand, I do not agree with Mr. Miles when he says in effect that the railwaymen should have been deprived of the increase in the basic wage.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The Arbitration Court gave a decision on that point.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The decision of the Arbitration Court was communicated to the Government, and the Government——

Hon. G. W. Miles: —— went over the head of the Arbitration Court.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Under authority vested in him by the Commonwealth Government, the Premier decreed that the increase in the cost of living should be reflected in the basic wage payable in this State. I do not think Mr. Miles would willingly deprive the railwaymen of the increase payable to them respecting the cost of living, which is decided by the proper authority.

Hon. L. Craig: Then there is the question of war loading.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That also affects the finances of the railways. In these circumstances, we cannot hold the Commissioner responsible.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I do not hold the Commissioner responsible, but the Premier who dealt with the question as a matter of Government policy.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The finances of the Railway Department have been dealt with by some members in such a way that they seemed to hold the Commissioner responsible for the position.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I certainly do not hold him responsible.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member was not the only one who dealt with that subject. As the Premier stated in another place, so I repeat here: The Government is not unaware of the deficiencies of the railway service.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What are you going to do about the coal business?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I claim that the railways of this State have carried out remarkably fine work during the war period. When the full story is written of what has been done by the service towards the war effort, it will redound greatly to the credit of the department in a way that may surprise members of this House. I shall refer to one or two matters to indicate the disabilities that the Railway Department has

suffered as a result of war conditions. The first point I make is that at the outbreak of war the department had no surplus of manpower or rollingstock. Its staff and rollingstock were equal to the traffic requirements of pre-war years, but both have been sorely taxed in coping with the unprecedented demands of the past five years. It may interest members to know that at the 30th June last, 1,486 railwaymen were serving in the Fighting Forces. The loss of those men, the majority of whom had lengthy experience and specialised training in railway work, has been keenly felt during a period in which the earnings of the department have risen from £3,599,000 in 1938-39, to £4,387,000 in 1943-44.

Hon. L. Craig: And the department still shows a loss!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Those increased earnings, it must be remembered, were derived from business handled, not from increased railway charges, for those charges have not been disturbed. During that period it is also interesting to note that working expenses rose from £2,912,000 in 1938-39 to £3,796,000 in 1943-44, but at the same time costs have been by no means static. For instance, the cost of sleepers now is just double the pre-war price of 75s. per load. Then again, superannuation, sick leave and war loading constitute additional costs that have been borne by the department since the commencement of hostilities and, in fact, every commodity which the department uses has gone up in price and has been difficult to obtain. Another interesting point is that country passenger traffic has increased by about 140 per cent. in the five years, which means, in simple figures, that the department is asked to accommodate 14½ persons where previously only six persons travelled. No-one could be expected to foresee or anticipate such an increase. Then again, manpower and material shortages have made it impossible to add to the coaching stock nor, because of the demands made upon them, has it been practicable to give the necessary attention to rollingstock. Such repairs as are necessary to keep the rollingstock in working conditions have had to be carried out in lieu of the general overhaul. Even those repairs have had to be effected under rush conditions so that the rollingstock could return to traffic in a minimum of time.

The question is often asked, as some members have asked in this House: Why does not the department put on more coaches seeing that the trains are so over-crowded? They also ask when a Diesel car is overloaded why an additional train is not run. The simple answer to these questions is that the department has neither the coaches nor the coal enabling it to do so. Some members have complained about trains running late. The explanation is to be found in the extra work the train crews have to do en route. It must be appreciated that extra passengers mean extra time in entraining and detraining and involve the engines in heavier loads for hauling. Some members have made a comparison between the conditions applying to the Midland railway and those applying to the Government railways.

I can conceive of no useful comparison between the Midland railway, with its 277 miles of line running through some of the best country in the State with the Government railway system comprising 4,381 miles of line covering the whole of the South-West corner of the State and running in all directions. Then again, the Midland railway has few, if any, operating difficulties with no unpayable branch lines, whereas the Government railway system has branch lines to various parts of the State, some of which branches do not even pay working expenses. Then again the Midland Railway Company has been in a most favourable strategic position seeing that for the last few years it has enjoyed a heavy and concentrated defence traffic that has enabled it to show its present favourable financial results. I do not know that the Midland line can be used as an example of what the State railway service ought to be; and so it is that while there may be room for complaint, I do feel that many members have not given sufficient consideration to the circumstances created by the war. On more than one occasion I have said that we have been handicapped by the fact that we provided locomotives and rollingstock for the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Yes; a great lot, too.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes; and they were taken right out of this State and have been used elsewhere in Australia where they were urgently required for war purposes. The money paid to the State Government by the Commonwealth Govern-

ment for those locomotives and the rolling-stock has been put on one side in order that it may be used for providing additional rollingstock and locomotives when the opportunity offers. There are many things which are not generally known but which could be quoted in refutation of some of the criticism indulged in by various members who spoke on the motion.

I realise that members do not intend to vote against the motion, and that they have merely utilised this opportunity to vent their dissatisfaction regarding one item or another connected with the administration of the railways. We allowed the Commissioner of Railways and our Chief Mechanical Engineer to be seconded to the Commonwealth for war work at a time when they were very urgently required here; and I believe that they have done very good work indeed for the Commonwealth Government in that regard. The State Government has been so seized of the necessity for proper attention and supervision being given to the working of our railways that we have decided that both the Commissioner and the Chief Mechanical Engineer shall remain in Western Australian to do the work for which they have been appointed, the war situation having improved to such an extent that it is possible for them to be retained in their positions here rather than be allowed to remain in the Eastern States for indefinite periods.

If I am to believe all that they have said, I am afraid that some members are just a little complacent with regard to the present position. I am not one of those who believe that, the war being now a few hundred miles away, there is no necessity to be as keen on the war effort as we have been in the past. I think the time is coming, and coming very quickly, when it will be necessary for us to take our full share in the common war effort of Australia. So far as our railways are concerned, while possibly the peak period in regard to their service is past, nevertheless there are many ways in which we shall be requiring the most efficient service possible from them; and I believe that with the staff we have at our disposal we are getting the best return that we can expect in the circumstances. So, having referred to just a few matters mentioned by members, I express the hope that the motion will be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the resolution agreed to, and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

House adjourned at 9.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 10th October, 1911.

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

QUESTIONS (5).

ALBANY HARBOUR.

As to Greater Use for Shipping Produce.

Mr. HILL asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Has any effort been made to ascertain if the British Ministry of War Transport desires or is willing to make greater use of the Port of Albany?

(2) If so, with what result?

(3) If not, will he make such an effort?

(4) Does the Railway Department desire to encourage the railage of wheat and flour to Albany?

(5) If not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) It is not considered to be a matter coming within the jurisdiction of the Railway Department.

(4) Yes, but the Commissioner of Railways is aware that this matter is one controlled by the wheat and flour owners and shippers and can convey traffic to the port only as consigned.

(5) Answered by No. (4).