

that point had been reached would not be able to run any stock on his property. In regard to poisoning by gas with motor car exhausts, if the gas ejected from car exhausts is so poisonous, one would expect it to have some effect on the people in the streets of the city. Speaking for the department, I say they feel that the majority of the vermin boards did good work last season, but that, with few exceptions, the boards show a tendency to relax their efforts as soon as they get the rabbits thinned down. If they would take active measures in the slack period, they would destroy early in the season small numbers of rabbits which will increase a hundredfold later on.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 9.19 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 11th November, 1919.

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

HOSPITAL FOR INSANE, SELECT COMMITTEE.

Report presented.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN brought up the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the conditions existing in, and the management of the Hospital for the Insane.

Report read.

Ordered, that the report and evidence be printed.

QUESTION—MINING CONDITIONS AT WESTONIA.

Mr. HARRISON (without notice) asked the Minister for Mines: Does he intend to take immediate action to alleviate the serious position of the mines at Westonia.

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: The amendment of the Mining Act, of which I have

given notice to pass through all its stages to-morrow, subject to the approval of the House of the suspension of the Standing Orders, is evidence that I have taken definite action to meet the difficulties at Westonia in the hope that if the position cannot be entirely saved, it will at least be improved. The situation is extremely serious.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. Licensing Act Amendment Continuance.
2. Inebriates Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Resumed from 6th November.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5-4]: The Bill provides for compulsory enrolment. While practically all hon. members are in accord with compulsory enrolment, at the same time I think there should be in the Bill a provision to enable the Government by regulation to make use of the Commonwealth rolls. If the Bill becomes law without any such provision the cost of the State Electoral Department will be considerably increased. The Commonwealth machinery of administration would not be available to the State department. In the Commonwealth department the divisional officer who looks after enrolments has a staff of assistants, in addition to which a large number of men connected with the post office render valuable service. As far as I can gather the system is this: They have a list showing the whole of the electors, together with their places of residence. Periodically the postman notifies the Electoral Department of all changes of address on his postal round. From that information the divisional officer makes a list, and when a certain time has elapsed without claims being made for alteration in addresses, he sends a notice to the elector concerned, pointing out that he has not notified the change made. With this notification is sent also a form to be filled in by the elector. That form is returned, and the elector has then to appear before the divisional officer, who fines him some small amount of about 2s. 6d. to cover the cost to which the department has been put. If the elector fails to appear before the departmental officer he is taken to court and fined. The whole machinery is perfect for the administration of the Act. But the State department has no such machinery. To provide such machinery the staff will have to be increased. Only to-day a friend pointed out to me that there is no difficulty whatever in seeing to the registration and licensing of various animals such as dogs. Nor is there. In my own electorate we have no fewer than four officers with a staff to see that these licenses are applied for and the requirements of the Act complied with. But in the Electoral Department there is not one officer to see to the registration of changes of address. Therefore, to pass the Bill as printed, without making any provision for taking advantage of the machinery of the Commonwealth department, will be to in-

crease the cost to the State. I hope the Minister will draft a clause enabling him by regulation to make use of the Commonwealth rolls. I believe provision has already been made in the Commonwealth Parliament for the States and Commonwealth to work in together. Complaint has been made of the cost of running duplicate electoral departments, and I am convinced that under the Bill the cost to the State will be considerably increased. It has been suggested that as we have some 2,000 honorary electoral officers, those officers will see to it that electors are compulsorily enrolled. I do not think the Minister will expect an officer holding an honorary position to take action and prosecute offenders.

The Attorney General: The possibility of such action being taken ought to have some effect.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But there is no such possibility. The only system one can adopt is to endeavour as far as possible to work in conjunction with the Commonwealth department.

Mr. Foley: There is an arrangement now.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But there is no such provision in the Bill. The Minister raised the objection that the boundaries of the subdivisions are different from those of the State electoral districts. That matter can easily be got over. It has been done before. The State officers know the districts very well and they can easily ascertain the few electors affected by the difference in boundaries and make a roll transferring those electors from the subdivision to the electoral district under the State Act. I am in favour of compulsory enrolment, but I do not wish to see the State put to any increased cost in providing additional machinery when such machinery is already in existence. Another point of special interest to members representing country districts: The existing Act provides that all ballot boxes shall have an inner and an outer cover. Frequently ballot boxes have to be carried considerable distances to the returning officer. In the inner cover is a slot for receiving the voting paper. The outer cover closes down over this slot when the ballot box is to be removed from one booth to another.

The Attorney General: Is not that amended in the schedule?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Bill provides that the words "inner and outer cover" shall be struck out. If the schedule is passed as printed the ballot boxes will have only one cover which, of course, will contain a slot. Before the ballot papers are placed in the box the inner cover is sealed and is not again opened until the returning officer counts the votes. Similarly if the ballot box is to be transferred from one booth to another, the outer cover is closed down over the slot and sealed, so that no person can tamper with the votes. But if the provision is passed the slot will be exposed all the time, and there will be no protection against tampering with the votes while the box is in transit. It is easy, for anyone who desires, to withdraw papers from a ballot box when no one is in charge of it, or a person who wishes to be dishonest can readily put other papers in. There is a possibility, also, not only of a person withdrawing ballot papers from the box but of his dropping a match in and burning the whole lot, and thus upsetting the election. This is a matter which more particularly affects the country districts. It

does not so much concern the metropolitan area. I hope the Attorney General will put a clause in to bring this into conformity with the Federal laws, and give power if necessary, to work in conjunction with the Federal Department in regard to the compilation of rolls.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [5:15]: I regret that the Government should bring in this principle of compulsory enrolment. It appears to me we are going to provide another set of offences of a small nature, and that a lot of people moving about the country are going to be harassed and fined in the way that they are being harassed and fined in the Federal arena, through the principle of compulsory enrolment being put on the statute-book. I believe in every adult having the right to vote, but if people do not bother to enrol themselves they should not be punished. I do not believe in compulsory enrolment any more than I believe in compulsory voting. From time to time, when the Federal authorities sue people, they are fined a few shillings because they have failed to put their names on the roll. The electoral basis is in need of reform, particularly as regards the relations between the Commonwealth and the State. It would have been better for the Government to have left the control, so far as the ballot box is concerned, in the hands of the people who are public-spirited enough to perform the bounden duty of seeing that their names are put on the roll. They are the people who take an interest in the Government of the country, and deserve their full say when the elections are held. It would have been better if the activities of the Government had been directed to an amalgamation with the Federal and State Electoral departments. I am quite prepared to let the State Department go. I do not see that we want a State as well as a Federal department, and why the Federal department should not do the whole work as long as the taxpayers of the country are saved the immense double expense they have to bear to-day. I feel that this expense will be increased very much under the principle of compulsory enrolment.

The Attorney General: Why?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Because it will be necessary to have inspectors to go round and see that the people are enrolled, and to conduct prosecutions, and this must mean a considerable expenditure of money, unless it is the desire of the Government—and I am sure it is not that of the Attorney General—that the new expenditure should be met by the fines that are imposed upon offenders against the principle of compulsory enrolment. We can well hand over this matter to the Federal Electoral Department. Under the principle of adult suffrage, which is common to the Federal House and the State Legislative Assembly, one roll should be sufficient for the two purposes. I am aware that a second electoral roll must be kept for the Legislative Council so long as the present somewhat out-of-date franchise for the Council exists. The present expense of printing two sets of rolls containing the names of the same electors on the adult franchise for the Federal Parliament and for the Lower House of this State is a ridiculous expenditure.

The Attorney General: The boundaries are not the same.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Let us fall into line with the Federal boundaries, just as our boundaries were for many years coterminous with theirs.

Hon. T. Walker: The Commonwealth will not alter their boundaries.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I think that when they alter their boundaries they will make them coterminous with many of the present State boundaries. If not, let us alter our own boundaries. This is a matter which should be capable of arrangement. If the Attorney General will make an effort to bring about an economy in this direction he will be deserving of the thanks of the community. I believe the Attorney General is in sympathy with the idea that the electors who hand their claims to the electoral registrar should get a receipt. At present the Federal Government always gives a receipt. I believe there is a provision in the Federal Electoral Act whereby if a man's name is not on the roll a receipt for his claim card qualifies him for a vote. If we are going to fine people because their names are not on the roll, it is only right that they should be given a receipt for that claim when they hand it in at the electoral office. To-day such a receipt is obtainable for every Federal claim lodged, but it is not obtainable, even on application, for any State electoral claim. I hope the Attorney General will permit the amendment that I have on the Notice Paper to be incorporated in the Bill.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is too expensive for us. We use the Federal rolls now.

Mr. JOHNSTON: A receipt costs very little money.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It costs 1½d. for postage, in each case.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The receipts could be handed to the elector when his claim was tendered. Even if it did cost 1½d. in postage, and prevented a man who had lodged a claim card from being fined because his name was not on the roll, one would not raise any objection. A man has no protection against being fined if such a receipt is not available to him when he wants it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Federal authorities pay no postage.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The point raised by the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) regarding the ballot boxes is an important one, and I compliment him upon his vigilance upon the matter. I was not aware that it was the desire of the Government to render it possible to remove the outer cover of the ballot boxes.

The Attorney General: There has been a misunderstanding there.

Mr. JOHNSTON: To-day the Electoral Department own all the boxes necessary for elections in Western Australia, and all these boxes have the two covers prescribed by the existing law. It would be unsafe, where ballot boxes have to travel 40 miles or even 100 miles on unprotected goods trains for the outer cover to be removed. At present the outer cover is sealed by the presiding officer for the district concerned. It is essential for the protection of the suffrages of the people that these outer covers should be retained. If there is any intention on the part of the Government to do away with it I ask the Attorney General not to carry such intention into effect.

The Attorney General: It is not the intention.

Mr. FOLEY (Leonora) [5-25]: I compliment the Attorney General upon having brought this measure forward. Statements have been made against compulsory enrolment but very little argument has been adduced against it. Even the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) did not bring forward any argument to show why compulsory enrolment should not be applied. Just at election time there are persons who are always grumbling because their names are not on the roll. These are the people we are going to save from themselves by adopting the system of compulsory enrolment. To these people the Government can say "You have had your opportunity and have missed it." If a person like that has missed his opportunity then he deserves to have some penalty imposed upon him for doing so. The clause concerning compulsory enrolment will permit of his being taught a lesson. Apart from compulsory enrolment I believe we will get a better reflex of the opinion of the people by adopting this principle. This has been exemplified on many occasions in connection with Federal elections. I do not think it is going to be an extra expense to the country. There is an arrangement at present between the Commonwealth and State Governments whereby they can work in one with the other. The Commonwealth Government can use the State electoral papers to bring their rolls, which are under the principle of compulsory enrolment, up to date, and surely there could be some reciprocity which would be of advantage to the State.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We must have legal provision to do that.

Mr. FOLEY: I contend that under Clause 2 of the Bill there is provision that the Governor may make regulations either generally or applicable to any particular roll, specify the method of preparation and prescribe the rules to be observed in regard thereto. If that can be done, I contend there is very little else wanted.

The Attorney General: It was not intended for that.

Mr. FOLEY: I contend that it does cover that. It is not the opinion of the member for North-East Fremantle, and even the Attorney General is not sure. We are making an amendment to the Electoral Act, and we want to be certain before we pass it. If we make sure of what we are doing we shall be conferring a greater benefit upon the elector than we could in any other way. I should like the Attorney General to go into the question, study the legal phraseology, and the legal aspect of it, and see whether we are on safe ground or not. Once he is satisfied that we are on sound ground, then the differences of opinion between hon. members will not carry much weight. The point raised by the member for North-East Fremantle in regard to the covering of the ballot boxes is an important one. I should like to be absolutely certain as to what is intended.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is certain enough.

Mr. FOLEY: No individual can do very much with the box except to destroy the papers. There is no man who is connected with an election who is not a partisan. There are men who are honest and impartial in charge of our electoral business, but if a man would tamper with an

electoral ballot box he would be partial and would be doing something of a criminal nature. The position to my mind, is that he would not be able to do much except by taking the papers out.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Or setting fire to them.

Mr. FOLEY: Yes, but he might destroy his own papers as well as the others.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And he might not.

Mr. FOLEY: In my own electorate I know where opponents of mine would like to do a little bit of harm.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You will find them in every electorate.

Mr. FOLEY: But while there are very few who would do anything of that nature, it is just as well to keep temptation out of their way. I am glad the Attorney General brought the measure forward. It is a step in the right direction. I believe it is the initial course to take in the direction of bringing about the amalgamation of the two departments. I believe that the boundaries of the electorates could be rearranged and we would thus save a considerable amount of money and we would not only have a more efficient roll but a better Parliament as well.

Mr. CHESSON (Cue) [5-33]: I am pleased that this measure has been brought forward, although I am sorry to find that provision has not been made to bring about an amalgamation between the State and the Federal Electoral Departments. A considerable saving would be effected by this amalgamation and we would certainly have a better roll. The Commonwealth method of enrolment is much preferable to ours. We should provide every possible facility to get electoral claims filled. In the country districts a lot of trouble has been experienced, especially where there have not been police officers available. On the other hand, the Commonwealth Department has very little difficulty in getting claims witnessed. Their method of enrolment is in the right direction. I would like the measure to go further and to insist on compulsory voting as well as compulsory enrolment because one is the natural corollary of the other. When the State department goes to the trouble of printing rolls and ballot papers, and makes every provision to give people opportunities to record their votes, the people should be compelled to do their part. In that way then we could get a true reflex of the opinions of the electors. Until such time as that is done, we will only get the views of a percentage of the electors—those who will take the trouble to go to the poll to record their votes. I would also like to see the measure brought into conformity with the Federal law in regard to compulsory enrolment. Then again we have two sets of rolls, Federal and State. Look at the big expense the duplication of these rolls means, whereas one set would be quite sufficient. With regard to the alteration of the boundaries, that is a matter which could easily be arranged.

The Attorney General: Not so easy as it seems.

Mr. CHESSON: Let the Commonwealth deal with that matter and then we can bring about reforms in that direction. With regard to receipts for registration, I think the issue of those

by the department is a good idea. Then in the event of a man's name not appearing on the roll, he could produce his receipt to show that he had done his share, and he would then be entitled to vote. In connection with Commonwealth voting, if an elector's name does not appear on the roll, and he produces a receipt to show that he has done his part, the presiding officer permits him to exercise his vote. When an elector goes to all that trouble, he should be permitted to vote on the production of a receipt. I am pleased the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) has made reference to the ballot boxes. We all know that ballot boxes contain an inner cupboard which is sealed, that after the voting is concluded it is locked up and taken to the principal polling centre, and that it cannot be tampered with. I hope provision will be made to preclude the possibility of anyone tampering with ballot boxes in any shape or form.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [5-36]: I much regret that, in introducing this reform in connection with our present electoral system, it has not been thought wise on the part of the Government, or possible, or practicable, to go further and to complete the work. The object of the Bill, as it seems to me now, is to save the Electoral Department some of its hitherto very arduous duties.

The Attorney General: And to get a good roll.

Hon. T. WALKER: I am not always sure that the party represented by the Attorney General are desirous of having a good roll. I remember very vividly while the Scaddan Government were in office—

Mr. Troy: You mean the Labour Government.

Hon. T. WALKER: The Scaddan Labour Government, I occupied the position now held by the present Attorney General. I had charge of the Electoral Department and the elections were coming on, and there was no time to make a thorough canvas of the State. It was an expensive matter also, and with the desire to avoid delay and expense, I recommended that the electoral officers should have recourse to the electoral rolls of the Commonwealth, and I remember the storm that was raised in consequence. It was a stuffing of the rolls, it was an outrage, and names might get on which seemed to frighten those who sat on the opposite side of the House. Those then in opposition did not want too many on the roll, especially too many of those who were not of the same creed as they were politically.

Mr. Johnston: You got us a good roll at that time.

Hon. T. WALKER: It was one of the best rolls and it had very few defects. I do not care how anxious hon. members may be to have a perfect roll, however careful we are, we are bound to find imperfections.

The Attorney General: You may lessen them.

Hon. T. WALKER: That is true. I am not complaining of the desire to put a burden and responsibility upon the citizens to make them do their duty as citizens. I think that is a good principle. But it does not end it all. We must put some responsibility too, on the shoulders of the department. I know of a number of

instances where men and women have had their names on the roll for years, have never changed their residence, and have suddenly found their names omitted from the roll. Some busybodies, some imperfect canvassing, or the non-delivery of a letter, caused the department to arrive at the conclusion that the elector had forfeited his or her claim to vote. The name, therefore, was taken off the roll.

The Attorney General: You can never find out how these names have been left out.

Hon. T. WALKER: In some instances it has been possible. I made inquiries once. Sometimes it is purely a printer's error in making the reprint by not adding the new names, and not taking out the lines, or too many names have been taken out and not put back again. There are, besides printers' errors, errors in the Postal Department and errors in the Electoral Department itself. We make it an offence and drag people from their peaceful duties to attend to the court, but we do nothing to compensate them for loss of time when the fault is purely and simply that of the Electoral Department. There should be compensation. Whilst we are about it we should have endeavoured to amalgamate the two rolls. For years this has been in contemplation. It has been discussed again and again in this Assembly and moreover negotiations have taken place between the Federal Government and our Government. We reached such a point as to send our Chief Electoral Officer to the Eastern States to confer with the Federal officers and the State electoral officers there, and we have had extensive reports prepared which my friend the Attorney General will find in his department. Those reports show the possibility, the feasibility and the ease with which necessary alterations can be made in the direction of having one electoral office in the State, and in fact one electoral roll. The advantage is obvious. There will be a saving in printing and a saving in staff. Hon. members know that the Federal constituencies consist of a number of the constituencies of the State. The State electorates are neither more nor less than divisions of the Federal constituencies. Our electorates would simply be divisions of the Commonwealth constituencies. I know there is a fear on the part of the electoral authorities that no sooner would we get an adjustment of the divisions of the Commonwealth to State electorates than there might be a re-distribution of seats, which would alter the whole arrangement, but that still is a matter easy of adjustment by proper legislation.

The Attorney General: You must have joint action between the two Parliaments.

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly, and the Commonwealth have agreed to do it. It is the State which has been lagging behind all the time. When I was Attorney General, I had a distinct promise from the Minister controlling electoral matters in the Commonwealth that this would be done as soon as we came to the necessary agreement.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I think they have introduced legislation.

Hon. T. WALKER: Yes, but any alteration, of course, must be made with our approval and authority. The Commonwealth went so far as to arrange the details of office. Mr. Stenberg was sent to Melbourne especially to confer as to

how the matter could be made workable without friction, and his reports are in the Attorney General's Department. In the circumstances, I do not know why we should stop here or why the Attorney General is introducing this legislation piece meal. I do not wish to vote against the second reading because it does not go far enough. I am anxious to get every little accession to smooth working and shall vote for the second reading, but I object to the want of comprehensiveness and a sense of the needs of the situation. While the Attorney General was at it, why did not he introduce compulsory voting? What is the value of citizenship if it consists of no more than having names printed on a roll. That is not the exercise of citizenship. The full value is the electoral act, the act of the voter. Merely to record that so many men are entitled to be put on the roll counts for nothing; it is not part of the vitality of the State. Citizens must exercise the right or it is of no value whatever. The hon. member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) has shown me the latest Commonwealth Electoral Act, No. 27 of 1918, which sets forth that the Governor General may arrange with the Governor of the State for the preparation, alteration, and revision of the rolls in any manner consistent with the provisions of this Act conjointly by the Commonwealth and the State to the intent that the rolls may be used for State elections as well as for Commonwealth elections. Thus machinery has been provided by the Commonwealth, and it is we who are lagging behind. If the Attorney General is anxious to go further, he might still make provision for complying with the Commonwealth Act of 1918. He might go still further; he might set the Commonwealth the example of making the act of voting compulsory. What is the good of a man being fined for not having his name on the roll when, if he gets his name on the roll, he does not care a hang whether he exercises his right or not?

Mr. Pickering: You are going to make it compulsory voting.

Hon. T. WALKER: Undoubtedly.

Mr. Roeko: But you cannot compel a man to vote.

Hon. T. WALKER: Why not?

Mr. Roeko: You cannot prevent him from destroying his voting paper or making it informal.

Mr. Pickering: A man would not be likely to do that deliberately.

Hon. T. WALKER: If a person, without good reason neglects or refuses to comply with the Act of the Commonwealth or with this Bill after it becomes law, that is, neglects to send in a claim, he may be dragged from his work for ever so great a distance in some parts of the country and taken before a magistrate. There he may be compelled to go through a form of trial and have a fine inflicted upon him. That is for merely not sending in his name to be printed on a dead piece of paper, but we take no action against persons for neglecting to perform the duties of citizenship which include going to the ballot box or taking other means to record their votes. So long as we have filled up the roll, that is to be the end of citizenship. That to me is nothing; it implies no duty of citizenship. The object of an electoral Act is to get electoral machinery so that we can be sure we

have the views of the people, not a section of the people, but the whole of the people, for everyone should have to vote as is the case with members during a division in this House. When any important question is put to the House we have a division, and every member in the Chamber must sit on one side of the House or the other. So it should be with the people. When an important election takes place and great principles involving the future of the State are intimately concerned, the people should vote, all of them, and there should be no excuse for not voting. If I may use the expression, we should have our division in the nation.

Mr. Johnston: Why make a labour supporter vote when there are only two Country party candidates?

Hon. T. WALKER: If only two country party men are nominated, one must be better than the other, and the electors should choose the better one. Some of our elections are farces. It is not a case of the people appointing members, but it is a question of who offers. When we had the terrible droughts in this country and required to buy feed for our cattle and horses, we had to buy rotten, miserable stuff, and we had to pay heavy prices for it. So, in a country district, where there is only a country party nominee, we have to take him, but if there are two of these country bumpkins standing, we should select the better one. We should not allow them to walk in just because they like to nominate themselves; the worst of them could be taught a lesson. If people were compelled to vote, they would see more to the selection of better candidates. They would show a general interest and there would not be these upstarts coming along to catch a temporary lull in the political excitement and obtain a walk-over, as it were, when no one was looking.

Mr. Pickering: You are not confining your remarks to the Country party, I hope?

Hon. T. WALKER: No, the Country party were introduced and I take it that is where such a thing is likely to happen.

Mr. Johnston: Your party would not allow two men to nominate.

Hon. T. WALKER: They might; it is quite possible. If the whole of the people were compelled, not only to have their names put on the rolls, but to make a choice of candidates, they would have to think and reason and examine and take an interest and participate in the views and the knowledge afloat with regard to the election. Thus they would be able to make a wiser choice, the better men would be selected. I am sorry the Government have not seen fit to go so far as that. Regarding the point raised by the member for North-East Fremantle, why in the name of goodness has the Attorney General made the alterations in the schedule dealing with the ballot box? I cannot understand the motive for it. Is the ballot box too cumbersome? Section 110 of the law as it stands states—

Each polling place or section of a polling place shall be provided with a ballot box having an inner and an outer cover, with a lock and key to each, and

with a cleft in the inner cover for receiving the ballot papers.

It is proposed to alter this by omitting certain words mentioned in the schedule so that we shall have an ordinary box with a lock and key and a cleft.

Mr. Troy: Why alter the present conditions?

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not know; we have not had any explanation.

Mr Johnston: We have the double box now.

Hon. T. WALKER: Exactly; it will mean the construction of new boxes.

The Attorney General: I am not surprised at the hon. member raising the point. I shall put it right. The view of the hon. member is not accord with the position as it was represented to me.

Hon. T. WALKER: I hope the Minister will be able to put it right. Subclause 1 of Section 116 of the Act states—

Before any vote is taken, the presiding officer shall exhibit the ballot box empty, and shall then securely fasten and seal its inner cover so that nothing can be removed without breaking the seal.

The proposal is to omit "its inner cover." That, to me, is an extraordinary change, more particularly because, as was pointed out by interjection, we have all the machinery now for conducting elections in this form. We are not at a loss to go on with these things to-morrow. In some country districts the boxes may be too heavy, owing to having been built on too ponderous a scale; though I have never heard any complaints in that respect. It is essential that we should have security in regard to these ballot boxes. I do not wish to throw any doubt whatever upon election officers or electioneering agents, but we do know that certain things are possible. Human nature is very strange at times, and particularly at election times, when people do things they would not think of doing under ordinary circumstances, through there being a great stress upon them in times of political crisis. The boxes, if altered as suggested by this Bill, would become easy of access to whoever desired to tamper with the contents. If the amendment is carried, we should have no sense of security that a vote put into the ballot box would be counted and reach its destination and have its value in the decision of the election. Every precaution should be taken to make the ballot box if possible even more secure. We have provided for inner and outer covers.

The Attorney General: That is where the trouble has arisen.

Hon. T. WALKER: I think there is some confusion. The existing law provides that—

Each polling place or section of a polling place shall be provided with a ballot box having both an inner and an outer cover, with a lock and key to each.

The Attorney General: That means an inner box and an outer box.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I have never yet seen a double box.

Hon. T. WALKER: If we make the alterations suggested in the schedule, we shall render it possible to have a box with a cleft at the top, and no more. There is no provision for a cover to the cleft, so that there will be access to the box for anybody who likes to tamper with the box or with the papers in it. We have had no explanation of the reason for this suggested alteration. We want to learn from the Attorney General what has prompted this change. I cannot see that it is a mere matter of interpretation. The appearance is almost as though the Attorney General or his electoral officers simply wanted to make the box more accessible. Having drawn attention to that point, I only want to deal with one other phase of the Bill. I observe that all the fines and penalties and duties are upon those who vote for members of this Assembly. No fine or penalty is imposed for being off the Council rolls—none whatever. And yet I think it is the duty of the Legislative Councilors particularly to see to their own electoral business. Is it presumed that every man who has a right to be on the Council roll will take care to see that he gets there? Why not fine that man for neglecting to have his name upon the roll? As things go, the Council is a very important branch of our legislature; and yet we can have a meagre, paltry roll, with half the people entitled to be on the roll omitted from it. If we are to have two Houses of Parliament, if another place is of any value, then it is incumbent upon the electors to have their names upon the Council roll. Those electors have a right to do their duty, as well as the electors for the Legislative Assembly. Why not put both sets of electors on the same footing? More particularly would I desire that, since the whole controversy is about being on the Council roll. We shall have the strange phenomenon, if this Bill becomes law, that we shall be able to drag to the courts people who are not upon the Assembly roll, and other people who are upon the Council roll. That is an inconsistency which this Bill is liable to create. We have seen innumerable prosecutions against people whose names have got upon the Council roll. They have been fined, and sometimes heavily fined, apart from the loss of time and the worry and annoyance involved in the legal proceedings, for having their names upon the Council roll. What an anomaly that is! Let us have the same penalty for one class of electors as for the other. If Assembly electors are to be fined for not being upon the roll, let us also fine electors qualified for the Legislative Council if they are not upon the roll.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. P. Draper—West Perth—in reply) [6.9]: This Bill is, of course, a non-party measure, although it is introduced by the Government. When I introduced it I said that I would welcome, and was quite willing to accept,

suggestions from hon. members. I feel sure that it is the desire of all of us to obtain as good a roll as possible. A great deal has been said about amalgamating our electoral rolls with the Federal roll. I have not spent in the office of Attorney General as long a period as was spent there by the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker), and I can only speak from my own experience. As far as I can judge and am advised, I do not think any complete amalgamation of the Federal and State rolls can be effected unless we have the electorates coterminous; which would mean four or five State electorates inside one Commonwealth electorate. The difficulty would be to obtain complete satisfaction in making the electorates coterminous. Personally, I think this impossible, unless we are willing, no matter what the Federal divisions may be, always to alter our electorates for the Assembly to suit the divisions for the House of Representatives. That is how the matter strikes me from a practical point of view.

Hon. T. Walker: It is hardly that.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I should be very glad to find it was not so, because I quite realise that if we could have one Electoral Department instead of two it would be a great advantage to everybody.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Could you not arrange to make use of the Federal roll?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) has pointed out that in the Federal Electoral Act passed last year there is power for the Governor General to arrange with the Governors of the States to make rules so far as they would be consistent with the provisions of the Federal Act. That means being guided to some extent by the divisions laid down in that Act. However, there is machinery which certainly contains a useful suggestion for a corresponding clause to be inserted in the present Bill during the Committee stage. I do not propose to go into Committee to-night. We could no doubt obtain some assistance from the Federal roll. Personally I can see no harm in permitting the Chief Electoral Officer to use, amongst the materials for making up his own roll, the evidence which has already been obtained for and tabulated in the Federal rolls. I will endeavour to have a clause drafted which will meet the wishes of hon. members upon this point. An amendment was suggested by the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston). As far as that goes, it is a very simple matter to provide that if a man lodges a claim card himself he shall get a receipt; but if a receipt is to be sent to every man who lodges an electoral claim, then, as pointed out by the member for North-East Fremantle, the State will be put to considerable expense.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Half-a-dozen receipts might have to be sent to the same man in the course of a year.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If a real injustice resulted from the present system, the expense would not be worth consideration; but I am not at all sure that the

amendment suggested by the member for Williams-Narrogin is necessary. The member for Kanowna has suggested that we should go in for a system of compulsory voting. I candidly admit that my Parliamentary education so far does not induce me to support a system of compulsory voting. It may be that I am wrong, but at present I certainly would not advocate such a system. I think it would lead to a great deal of hardship, and certainly to a great deal of ill-feeling. After all said and done, if a man or a woman does not want to vote, there does not seem to be any use in compelling him or her to vote.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker) raised the objection that the Bill does not apply the compulsory system of registration to the rolls of the Legislative Council. The obvious answer to that is that, whereas we have a very simple franchise for the Assembly, the franchise for the Council is of a compound nature and it would be hardly fair to compel the electors to register their qualifications for the Council at the present time. In reference to the schedule, which I informed the House contained certain amendments, a difficulty has been pointed out by the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin). I was under the impression that the ballot boxes which were made originally to comply with the Act were really two boxes, one inside the other; but after communicating with the Chief Electoral Officer, I find I was wrong. We use to some extent the Federal boxes, and the Federal people also use ours. We desire to be in a position to continue that practice. The present ballot boxes have a slot in the top. The Federal box, I understand, instead of an outer lid to shut down over that slot, has a clasp or fastening which covers the slot. I admit that the words in the amendment in the schedule are not quite appropriate. That is really my fault in not having understood precisely what was required. However, that can easily be put right in Committee. I will see to it. I do not think any hon. member would like to see a ballot box with an exposed slot in the lid sent by train or other conveyance to the office where the poll is being counted. When in Committee I will see that the necessary amendment is inserted to meet the objection taken by the hon. member.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—CARNARVON ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER.

Second Reading.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. P. Draper—West Perth) [7.35] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is of a validating nature. The Carnarvon municipality some time ago purchased a plant for supplying electric current to the residents of

Carnarvon. After carrying on this business for a short time the council found their borrowing powers were insufficient to pay sinking fund on the loan. They met the interest charges out of the ordinary revenue, but so far they have not provided sinking fund.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I warned them of the position before they purchased.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: In 1914 a concession was granted by the mayor and councillors of Carnarvon to the Carnarvon Electric Light and Power Co., Ltd., giving that company an exclusive right to supply electric light and power within the limits of the municipality. The company, in pursuance of that concession, acquired certain land, erected machinery and laid down the necessary mains and pipes for the carrying on of their business. In 1916 the Carnarvon municipality purchased the company's land, machinery, and plant for £3,000, and since that date has carried on the business of the company in supplying electric current. In order to complete that purchase the municipality borrowed £3,000, and levied the maximum rate laid down by the Municipalities Act for the purpose of interest and sinking fund on the loan. They have not established a sinking fund as required by the Municipalities Act. The municipality now asks that their action should be confirmed and validated, and that they should be authorised to charge a special lighting rate in respect of this loan. Those are the facts out of which the Bill arises. The object of the Bill is to give the necessary power to the Carnarvon municipality to continue to carry on the business. It is not uncommon for municipalities to come and ask for additional powers to carry on undertakings which they have engaged in for the benefit of the residents of the municipality. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [7.41]: I am not going to oppose the Bill. Before the municipality entered into this undertaking I, as Minister for Works, pointed out to them that in all probability the scheme would not be a payable proposition. However, they believed that within a month or two after taking over the concern it would prove payable. The position was that the rates they were permitted to strike for the purposes of the loan were not sufficient to enable them to borrow money for the undertaking. If I mistake not, when Mr. Johnson was Minister for Works an Act was passed empowering municipalities, with the permission of the Governor in Council, to enter into undertakings. Permission was given to the Carnarvon municipality under the provisions of that Act. The Bill is to provide them with extra rating powers to make up interest and sinking fund. The local authorities of Carnarvon did not go into this undertaking blindfolded. Mr. Hancock, one of the department's officers, went into the question thoroughly, and advised them of the position. Still, the municipality thought it was

in the best interests of the district that they should take up the scheme. A considerable amount of money had been expended in installing the plant. If the Carnarvon municipality had not taken over this scheme, which they got at considerably less than the cost of the installation, the town would have been in darkness. The plant, some of which was not paid for by the company, would have been removed, and it would have been of serious consequence to the town if the plant had been removed as threatened. In the interests of the district there is no doubt the municipality acted wisely in taking over the electric lighting plant. In all probability some of those who promised the municipality that they would use the electric light have not carried out their promises. The result is the scheme is not paying as well as it was hoped it would, necessitating the charge of a special rate to pay the sinking fund. In the circumstances I have no objection to this Bill being passed.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [7.45]: The member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) is well posted in this matter, and I do not intend to take up the time of the House in going over the ground again. The acquiring of the electric light plant from a private company has proved of considerable benefit to Carnarvon. Previous to that we had several different kinds of installations for street lighting and for the various other public buildings, and they all proved to be failures. Kerosene lighting was used, and we tried gas and also the acetylene gas plant. Since the electric light has been installed, however, Carnarvon has become one of the most enlightened towns in the State. I think that was proved at the last election. It has been of benefit even to those who are not subscribers, in that they participate in the street lighting, and the town has been enabled to have a picture theatre and other benefits of this kind. We have not had the number of subscribers to the installation that the municipality thought at the time would have been forthcoming, but it is only a matter of a little time when this difficulty will be overcome. With the advent of the meat works we hope for a much larger population. There is a number of important buildings now being erected, and I think the council will shortly be in a better financial position than it is in at present. I ask the House to pass the second reading of this Bill, which is only to validate what appears to have been an oversight in the past, and to enable the council to strike a lighting rate, which they cannot do at present because already their rating is up to 1s 6d., the maximum rate allowed by the Municipalities Act. I support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [7.48]: More information than has yet been given upon this measure might well be afforded to hon. members. While it is necessary to validate this irregular action on the part of

the Carnarvon council, the House ought to hesitate before giving them, in view of their indiscretion in the past, the authority to strike an electric lighting rate of 1s. 6d. in the pound. It may be all very well for the business centres which will derive most of the benefit from the electric light scheme, but for the dwellers in other than the main streets, however, not nearly the same amount of benefit will be forthcoming. It will be hard for them if they are called upon to pay the special rate for this purpose, in addition to the ordinary rate of 1s. 6d. in the pound. The House will be well advised in Committee to have that clause struck out. I should like further information on the point as to whether it is advisable or not to allow the Carnarvon council to strike this special rate. This is not the only municipal council that is bankrupt, or semi-bankrupt, in the State, which requires special lighting facilities, and which may desire to buy out some wild cat scheme, such as is the case apparently with the Carnarvon council. I do not know the value of the assets that this Carnarvon council are getting for their £3,000, but I know that if their business acumen and their business direction of affairs are in keeping with those of many other municipalities of the State, possibly they have not got half the value for their money. The indebtedness of most of the municipalities in the State is due to the absolutely stupid bungling of the councillors in buying electric light schemes.

Mr. Johnston: What about the Kalgoorlie scheme? That is very successful.

Mr. LAMBERT: Let the hon. member speak for his own electorate. I speak with more authority on the subject than the hon. member because I was interested in the scheme myself.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I can understand the bungling now.

Mr. LAMBERT: Most of the small municipalities, in their desire to have a semi-flash electric light station of their own, have committed the ratepayers to considerable expense. I could go to the outback country of Kookyaie, or to Kanowna, or Boulder—

Mr. Foley: Where is there any electric light in the back country of Kookyaie?

Mr. LAMBERT: There was one there.

Mr. Foley: Not at all. You cannot tell me of any electric light scheme in the back country of Kookyaie.

Mr. LAMBERT: I have been there and seen it working.

The Minister for Works: There was a loss of £1,600 on it.

Mr. LAMBERT: Here is a glaring example of the incapacity of town councillors to direct electric light affairs of that description.

Mr. Foley: They did not direct it there.

Mr. LAMBERT: Take Kalgoorlie, Boulder, or Coolgardie! There is a considerable amount of bungling in these small munici-

palities, though I do not hold them altogether blamable, in that they have been allowed indiscriminately to buy these electric light plants about which they know nothing. I take it for granted that this patriotic body at Carnarvon allowed a private company to come in and gain a concession. When the concession was useless to these booblers they went cap in hand to the Carnarvon council and said, "If you do not buy it we will allow your town to remain in darkness." That is what has happened in every municipality where these booblers have been allowed to come in and usurp the functions of the town council by virtue of being granted concessions to light the municipality. They come along afterwards, as is the case of Carnarvon, and say that if the council do not buy their plant, they will leave the town in darkness. In Coolgardie a private company, after having had the cream of Coolgardie, said the same thing to the Coolgardie council. The local authority, however, did not buy the plant and then ask Parliament to ratify some irregular acts of theirs, but said they had not the money, and even if they had the money would not feel justified in paying that amount for the plant. Can the member for Carnarvon give us any idea of the value of the plant, whether the people of Carnarvon have been consulted by referendum, and whether they desire to be saddled with the rate of 1s. 6d. in the pound. It is an extraordinary thing to ask Parliament to give this power to the council to strike a special rate to cover the sinking fund, for which provision is made in the Municipalities Act. Unless some information is forthcoming upon that point, the House would be justified in preventing the council from giving these extraordinary powers under this validating measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Purchase of electric light and power works ratified:

Mr. JOHNSTON: There is nothing to show the rate of interest on the debentures; the whole thing seems to have been submitted to us by way of a blank cheque.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I regret I cannot give the hon. member the information he asks for. The rate of interest on municipal debentures is not high and may vary from 4 to 6 per cent. Whatever the rate is, I ask the Committee if that is any reason why the clause should not be passed? This Bill has been asked for by the municipal council, which took over the undertaking of the company which had been formed to supply the town with electric light. All that is required is power to enable the muni-

cipal council to pay the sinking fund in connection with the loan.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Amount not to be taken into account in estimating limit of borrowing powers.

Mr. LAMBERT: Should not this be considered in connection with the limitation of borrowing under the Municipalities Act; is there a precedent for it?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is rather surprising that opposition should come from the member for Coolgardie on this subject because, after all said and done, the Carnarvon municipality is really only trying to carry out municipal enterprise.

Mr. Lambert: As a matter of fact, they have killed it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member may have information that is not in my possession. I should say that it was a laudable object that the Carnarvon municipality had in view. Hon. members are aware that the powers of a municipality to borrow for ordinary purposes are limited to ten times the amount of the revenue. The Carnarvon municipality proposes to expend moneys on something which is outside the ordinary purposes of the municipality and the undertaking is one which will prove revenue producing, and there is no reason why the additional power sought should not be given to the municipality.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is done frequently.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Special rate:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not like this system of rating. If money is borrowed to carry on these undertakings it is necessary to have a special Bill to provide interest and sinking fund, otherwise a lighting rate will have to be struck. A lighting rate, however, is rarely struck. This will not be a lighting rate; it will be a loan rate.

The Attorney General: It is a misnomer.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In other instances municipalities have been compelled to strike a rate to provide interest and sinking fund.

Mr. LAMBERT: As the member for Gascoyne has told us this enterprise will afford the people in that town an opportunity of having a picture palace and it will enable the publicans and others interested to do away with other methods of lighting, such as kerosene, gasolene, and all other "eens," and provision is made to secure the W.A. Trustee, Executor, and Agency Company, Ltd., over the whole of the rateable property of the municipality for the repayment of this loan. It is not within the province of Parliament to sanction anything of that description. What about the people living in the residential portions of the town? Are they going to benefit by this money-lending concern being given a first mortgage over the property in the town? The proceeding is irregular and the Committee would be wrong in sanctioning anything of the kind proposed. Until we know whether the wishes

of the ratepayers of that particular municipality have been consulted it would be wrong on our part to sanction the proposal. The rates in this country are heavy enough. I can give the Attorney General instances of what bungling bumbles have done right throughout this country in connection with undertakings of a similar kind. Only a few years ago the Kalgoorlie municipality conceived the splendid idea of putting in accumulators. Notwithstanding that Mr. Crocker, now engineer in charge of the electric lighting scheme in Perth, advised against such a course, the councillors held a special meeting and hurriedly sanctioned the expenditure of £7,000 for accumulators. And in three or four years' time those accumulators were worn out and had to be thrown out. At Boulder an exactly similar thing has taken place.

The CHAIRMAN: There is nothing in the clause about accumulators. The hon. member must confine himself to the point.

Mr. LAMBERT: I am only trying to illustrate the danger of giving indiscriminate license to municipalities by permitting them to buy plants and then asking Parliament to ratify what has been done. This may be only to enable the few publicans there and others to discard their present method of lighting—

Mr. Robinson: You have told us that before.

Mr. LAMBERT: The member for Caning often repeats himself.

Mr. Robinson: I have not spoken for six weeks.

Mr. LAMBERT: Owing to the fact that he has not been here.

Mr. Robinson: I have been here constantly.

Mr. LAMBERT: We should hesitate before allowing this indebtedness to be made a first charge on the freehold property of Carnarvon. If the people had agreed to this—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They agreed to buy the plant.

Mr. LAMBERT: But did they agree to the rate?

Mr. Brown: There was no opposition to it.

Mr. LAMBERT: I hope a way will be found to safeguard the interests of the ratepayers.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 the word "may" be struck out and the word "shall" inserted in lieu.

Members will recollect the trouble we had with some of those same ratepayers in regard to the Gascoyne Vermin Bill; they refused to impose a rate, and we should be wanting in our duty if we left it to their discretion to strike the necessary rate in this case. Therefore the striking of the rate should be made mandatory.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I hope the amendment will be withdrawn. The Government have not advanced the money in this instance and that makes all the difference. The

Municipal Corporations Act provides clearly what line of action shall be taken before a lighting rate shall be charged. There is nothing to hinder the municipality bluffing the people that they are compelled to pay a one and sixpenny rate, and then supplying electricity at a lower rate than that at which they can generate it.

Mr. Hudson: I take it they are supplying private consumers.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes. I believe a vote of ratepayers was taken before the council applied for permission to purchase. They got the undertaking for a couple of thousand pounds less than it cost to instal, but the Government engineer reported that it would be impossible to make it a paying proposition. However, other people guaranteed to take current if the municipality made the purchase. This is not a lighting rate as contemplated by the Municipal Corporations Act.

The Attorney General: Perhaps it would be as well to strike out the word "lighting."

Mr. ANGELO: I agree with the member for North-East Fremantle. This is not really a lighting rate, but an increase in the loan rate. However, the clause points out that the special rate is required to provide interest and sinking fund for this one undertaking. If the Act gave power to increase the loan rate, it might be used for some other purpose.

Mr. Lambert: You could get authority to strike a loan rate.

Mr. ANGELO: The municipality has already reached the limit. Most municipalities in this State have been bolstered up with Government assistance but Carnarvon has not. There was a loan of £2,000 to assist the Government to carry out foreshore repairs. No other municipality in the State has had to face a loan of that description. There is no stone within 40 or 50 miles of Carnarvon and thus the cost of road construction and maintenance is particularly heavy.

The Minister for Mines interjected.

Mr. ANGELO: Metropolitan members do not seem to care a scrap about the Northern districts.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is not fair.

Mr. ANGELO: I do not include the member for North-East Fremantle.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. Foley: On a point of order, there is such a buzz of conversation going on that I cannot hear what is being said.

The CHAIRMAN: I have already called for order.

Mr. ANGELO: The municipality want the right to impose this special rate which is in addition to the loan rate, but wish it to be kept separate and used for this purpose and this only.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. LAMBERT: Will the Attorney General agree to a provision for a referendum of the ratepayers before this rate is struck?

The Minister for Mines: They might turn it down.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They have had one.

Mr. LAMBERT: That was when they purchased the plant.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They sanctioned the purchase and must pay for it.

Mr. LAMBERT: There should be some safeguard for the ratepayers.

Mr. Foley: This shows the brains of the municipality.

Mr. LAMBERT: When the municipality are up to their eyes in debt and have reached the limit of their borrowing powers, we are justified in taking steps to safeguard the interests of the ratepayers. How many people are using this current; fifty?

Mr. Angelo: About 500.

Mr. LAMBERT: Current might be supplied for less than cost. The Attorney General should see that the interests of the ratepayers are conserved. I ask him to consider the question of taking a referendum of the ratepayers on the same lines as if this money were being borrowed.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I ask that progress be reported.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

BILL—POSTPONED DEBTS.

Second Reading.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. P. Draper—West Perth) [8.32] in moving the second reading said: This short Bill is necessary owing to the operation during the war of the Postponement of Debts Act and of the moratorium regulations under the Federal War Precautions Act. Under the Postponement of Debts Act—that is the local Act—certain debts have been postponed by proclamation; and under the Federal moratorium regulations creditors have been prevented from suing, or taking proceedings against, debtors during the operation of those regulations. As we all know, the war went on for a lengthy period; and the Postponement of Debts Act has been in operation for several years, as likewise have the moratorium regulations. Hon. members are aware that one cannot take proceedings to recover a debt after the lapse of a certain number of years. There are various statutes, called Statutes of Limitations, which impose a limit upon the time during which proceedings may be taken to recover debts. The principal one with which we are concerned is the Act which prescribes that one cannot take proceedings to recover a simple contract debt after six years. It will be obvious to hon. members that some portion of this period of six years may have run during the period that these debts have been postponed under our Act; and not only may they have been postponed, but they may have expired during that period. It is only fair to the creditors, therefore, that the debtors who had the advantage of their debts being postponed for certain purposes, should not now be able to escape payment of debts justly

owing merely on account of the period having elapsed, portion of that period being one during which no proceedings could have been taken. This Bill is really an obvious result of the Postponement of Debts Act, and one which I trust hon. members will carry without hesitation. The Bill consists practically of one clause, which hon. members have before them. Subclause (2) of Clause 2 deals with the validation of certain proclamations which have been made under the Postponement of Debts Act. From time to time hon. members may have observed by the newspapers that disputes have arisen in the law courts as to some of the proclamations which were made being ultra vires of the Act; and there has also been correspondence in the Press on the subject. For the purpose of considering whether the time during which debtors were protected should be excluded from the period reckoned by the Statute of Limitations, those proclamations are to be deemed to have been validly made. It is really only a necessary machinery provision to give effect to the Bill without dispute. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1919-20.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 6th November; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Department of Mines, Woods and Forests, and Police (Hon. J. Scaddan, Minister).

Vote—Mines, £59,992:

Mr. ROBINSON (Canning) [8.40]: I want to say a word or two on the subject of Collie coal. I have always thought that Western Australia has not paid sufficient attention to the valuable asset that it has in Collie coal. We have had Royal Commissions to inquire and report, and we have had reports from experts; but still in many parts of Western Australia we can find Newcastle coal being used where Collie coal should be used exclusively. Moreover, we find uses to which Collie coal might be put not exploited. I referred to these matters in speaking on the Address-in-reply, but I would like again to impress them on the Minister for Mines. The first portion of my remarks will refer to the use of Collie coal for lighting and heating. The late Mr. Simms had tests made in Melbourne for the purpose of ascertaining what gas could be produced from Collie coal.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Western Australia lost a good citizen in Mr. Simms.

Mr. ROBINSON: We did indeed. Mr. Simms, when I was Minister, saw me just before he went to Melbourne, and we discussed the making of some experiments in Western Australia. He went to Melbourne to complete his arrangements there, and unfortunately died. I am wondering what has been done since, and I wish to urge upon the Minister for Mines the necessity for further inquiry into the matter. Mr. Simms, in Melbourne, found that 8,000 cubic feet of gas were produced from a ton of Collie coal, and he estimated that with proper retorts 10,000 feet could be got. Newcastle coal yields 12,000 cubic feet of gas per ton. We are told that the Collie coal gas product is not good for lighting, but is quite good for heating. The experiments Mr. Simms and I were anxious to set going were to see how far small proportions of Newcastle coal added to the Collie would so improve the quality of the gas that it could be used both for lighting and heating, or at all events for some commercial purposes. The Perth City Council probably would not undertake the whole cost of such experiments, nor would the Collie mines. My suggestion was that the City Council should bear one-third, as the city would benefit largely; that one-third should be borne by the Collie mines, and the remaining third by the Government. Next as to the use of Collie coal on our railways. Our railway authorities deprecate the use of Collie coal at certain seasons of the year, the main objection being that the sparks fly. My experience of railway engineers is that if anybody brings them an idea or a pattern for a spark arrester, they object to it. At all events, they do not always give the idea or pattern those tests which might be given. I know that on the wood lines the engines use various kinds of spark arresters, which might be very well applied to Collie coal and tried on the Government railways. One does not hear of fires on the wood lines, simply because these are run by business people. If our Railway Department have not a proper spark arrester for Collie coal, we should search the world until we find one. Surely the inventive genius of our engineers should be able to overcome that difficulty; and when it has been overcome, Collie coal can be used throughout the year on our railways from one end of the country to the other. Again, I do not think that the private people of this State use Collie coal as much as they should. There are many who, when they can get it, burn Newcastle coal in their grates. If Collie coal came from Sumatra or Mauritius, people would want to import it and use it. I want to say to the people of Western Australia that there is no better fuel for household consumption than our own Collie coal. It should be used wherever possible. Next, I want to impress upon the Minister the necessity for further exploration of the coal deposit at Irwin. There were some

schemes on hand there for boring. Seams were found, and investigations were being made. Some of those investigations showed that we had there a coal superior to that of the south. If so, then by all means let us work it. Good cheap coal is one of the best things a country can have, because it lies at the foundation of all its industries.

Mr. Smith: There is said to be coal at Claremont.

Mr. ROBINSON: If so, no doubt we shall hear of it from the member for Claremont.

Mr. Duff: Oh that fell out of a cart!

Mr. ROBINSON: I do not care where the coal comes from so long as it is Western Australian and so long as we use it to the utmost capacity. I am of opinion that we might use Collie coal twice as much as we do and so make Collie twice as prosperous as it is.

Mr. MONEY (Bunbury) [8.45]: It is certain that Western Australia is not getting from Collie coal the economic benefit that it should. I know of no country where a port comparatively close to the coal mines is not used for bunkering purposes. The system we are following to-day is that of bringing our coal 140 miles by rail to Fremantle, although we have an excellent port close to the coalfield. The point has been stressed over and over again. We are extremely short of shipping tonnage and our railways are suffering through the want of shipping. All interested in the timber industry are calling out for ships to take the timber away. If we could use Bunbury as a bunkering port we could then get rid of a considerable quantity of our timber as well. No country with an unused port close to its coal mines can be prosperous.

The Minister for Mines: Then why don't you use the port?

Mr. MONEY: Vested interests have prevented the use of the port.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Vested interests have the Government in their grip everywhere.

Mr. MONEY: Months ago boats were returning empty to the East, giving as their reason that they had to get back quickly in order to bring more coal to Western Australia. The mines at Collie can supply the whole of the coal requirements of the State, and instead of those ships returning empty to the East they should be calling at the timber port and loading up with timber to the benefit of the State generally. If the Minister can do anything to remedy the state of affairs of which I speak, and which still exists to-day, he will be deserving of our gratitude. Fancy railing coal 140 miles to Fremantle when it can be railed 40 miles to its natural port! It is a loss of economy, loss of labour to our employees, and a loss of money to the State.

Mr. Smith: Perhaps the harbour dues exceed the freight on the railway.

Mr. MONEY: Nonsense! To use the natural port would be a saving to all concerned.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [8.50]: It is not my intention—

The Minister for Mines: A new member for the mining industry!

Mr. PICKERING: It may be that, in the future, I will be the principal member representing mining in Western Australia. The aspect of mining I am here to advocate is of vital importance to Australia and the British Empire. I can congratulate the Minister for Mines on having gone further than any of his predecessors in showing that he has some sympathy with and knowledge of this subject. It is necessary that I should read one or two extracts to give force to the points I wish to make. There is no doubt about the urgent necessity for oil, and we find one of the reasons is the astonishing development of the internal combustion engine. Let me read from the "Graphic" as follows:—

All the latest and most powerful warships call for the liquid fuel. The whole future of road-borne transport depends upon oil. So does the entire scheme of civilian flying, and its universal possibilities. Then we have the motor plough and the farm tractor.

It is evident that the future motive power of the world lies in oil. What is the attitude of the Government towards this important industry? Take the mining report. The only reference therein to oil is very brief; it is as follows:—

Full details relating to this investigation will be found in the report of the Government Geologist which is appended.

There is no such report appended. The difficulties in the way of obtaining oil are very considerable. The Government Geologist says—

So far as geological observation has gone, there are none of those conditions which govern the occurrence of oil elsewhere which have been noticed in Western Australia.

Turning to an American work on the subject we find that of Australia it is said—

Indications of petroleum are found in south-eastern Australia, at several places in New Zealand, and in West Central New Guinea.

Another phase is the high cost of working this business. The "Graphic" says—

Our petroleum committee, under Sir Boverton Redwood, and later under Sir John Cadman, considered all sources of supply of the material, including distillation from the Scottish and Dorset shales, and also from cannel coal. But most interesting of all were the Government's approaches to Lord Cowdray, and in August, 1917, a Bill to provide for drilling in this country was introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. Walter Long, with a fund of £1,000,000 for prospecting. High geological authority holds that at least 100 million gallons of oil a year can be obtained from our domestic sources.

That shows that it is a very expensive business. In connection with the supply in England we find this stated—

The United States Bureau of Mines lent its ablest men for this work, headed by Mr. Victor Conaghan, who brought with him a staff of fifty drillers. Technically, the task has been one of great difficulty, with tools breaking and mud and gas pressure blowing in the casings. Moreover, the terrain is honeycombed with coal mines. Yet mineral oil was found at last, and it rose 50 feet in the bore.

But this all happened after more than three years, with a reserve fund of £900,000 set aside and the services of the ablest geologists. This shows it is a very difficult matter to find oil. We have had in this country anything but favourable reports in regard to the discovery of oil. It requires specially skilled people to deal with it, and geologists with a perfect knowledge of the business. I have no desire to reflect on the Government Geologist, yet we must remember that other geologists have visited this State and reported adversely to the Government Geologist.

Mr. O'Loghlen: But there have been no results.

Mr. PICKERING: No, because it involves so much cost and so much preliminary work. The greater part of Western Australia has been gone over by the Government Geologist and there is only a small part near the Fitzgerald River yet to be tested for oil. In spite of what has been said about the uncertainty of finding oil in this country, I should like to read a short passage which shows that the State does contain possibilities of oil. It is as follows:—

Without going into details, it may be said that to have a commercial deposit of oil three things are essential: First, an adequate source of supply in the form of organic sediments, such as shales or limestones; second, a suitable reservoir in the shape of porous beds or zones covered by or inclosed in impervious formations; and third, the occurrence of the reservoir near enough to the surface to permit of the recovery of the oil on a paying basis. In nature it is not at all unusual to have two of the conditions fulfilled, such, for instance, as the presence of organic shales near the surface—this is common throughout practically all of the areas of sedimentary rocks—but to find reservoir conditions in proper association with an adequate supply near the surface is a rare coincidence.

We have one of these essentials, namely, the lime basis, and also the possibilities of the reservoir conditions. The world's supply is becoming exhausted. The biggest supply has been found in the northern parts of America. Up to date 60 per cent. of the oil has come from America and 30 per cent. from Russia. The oil supply in America has reached its maximum and it is stated in this American work that in 20 years that supply from America must cease, but that the supplies from other parts known to contain oil, such as South America and Roumania, may take the lead from America and reduce the out-

put from that country. It must be borne in mind that in recent abnormal circumstances the resources of the world have been strained to the uttermost point. The consequence is that the quantity of oil which would have otherwise lasted over an extensive period has been greatly reduced. The Empire has very few known places from which it can obtain oil. It has some claims over the Persian field, and there are small supplies obtainable in India and Canada. In other respects we have very little oil to look forward to. The vital importance that oil is to the Empire has been very greatly marked during the war. It is one of the most important factors in the development of any country. It is necessary that some efforts should be made by the Government to see if it is not possible to discover oil in Western Australia.

The Minister for Mines: Where do you suggest it should be searched for?

Mr. PICKERING: There are certain areas in Western Australia in which it is quite possible oil will be found. Although the Government Geologist has shown what difficulties there are in the way he has not yet arrived at the stage when he can say positively that oil will not be found in Western Australia. The Government propose to give a bonus of from £6,000 to £8,000 for the discovery and the obtaining of 50,000 gallons of crude oil under strict conditions. On the 7th January, 1917, Senator Pearce authorised Mr. J. J. East to inform the Minister for Mines, Mr. Robinson, that the Federal Government were prepared to assist by contributing pound for pound to that given by the State Government to enable them to make a search for oil. Mr. East was engaged by the Government at the time to make certain investigations in regard to copper and oil. It was whilst he was thus engaged that these instructions were given to him by Senator Pearce. I am informed that on Saturday last Senator Pearce renewed that offer, and said that the Federal Government were prepared to contribute £10,000 if the State would contribute a like sum. Instead of offering assistance on the pound for pound basis, which the State Government are entitled to do, for the assistance of any companies which may make an effort to find oil in Western Australia, we find that they are offering a paltry bonus or reward of £6,000 or £8,000.

Mr. O'Loughlin: What would a paltry bonus of £10,000 be to the Federal Government? They are squandering it every 24 hours.

Mr. PICKERING: Instead of the Government assisting in that direction, they are offering a reward if oil is found. I am prepared to accept the statement of the Commonwealth Government that they are willing to find this pound for pound subsidy if the State will put up a similar amount. What is the use of a reward when we know the huge expenditure that is involved in the search for oil? I know that the Government have advice from the Imperial au-

thorities to the effect that every step should be taken in the interests of the nation to make an early discovery of oil. The Government show their realisation of the importance of the matter by offering this reward of a few thousand pounds.

The Minister for Mines: How do you know that about the Imperial Government?

Mr. PICKERING: I have had it on good authority.

The Minister for Mines: It is not correct.

Mr. PICKERING: I know, and every man knows, that one of the things most required by the British Empire is oil. If we can find it in Australia so much the better for Australia and the Empire.

The Minister for Mines: Where should boring be started?

Mr. PICKERING: That will be decided by the companies interested, after they have arrived at a conclusion as to the best position whereat to start operations. That also could first be reported on by the Government Geologist, who would give his advice before the venture was entered upon. Another matter of vital importance in connection with oil is the necessity for amending the Mining Act. The Minister for Mines said that such a measure would not be a long one. The Act only needs an amendment to the interpretation clause in regard to mining leases. This clause says, "Gold mining or mineral leases granted under this Act or repealing Act." If the word "oil" were included everything that is required could be done.

The Minister for Mines: Not while I am here. You will not get oil in on the same conditions as is the case with other minerals.

Mr. PICKERING: The Minister said that only a short amendment was required. He knows that anything else required to be done can be done by regulation. All that is required is to give a title. At present the only title that people dealing in oil would have would be the annual lease. No one could go on the market with a title of that sort. It is absolutely necessary that it should be given to enable men interested in oil to develop the industry. I hope the Government will wake up to the fact that we must find oil in Western Australia. The oil fields in the United States are well known and need not be discussed here. The proved area over which oil is found in the United States includes 4,100 square miles and a further prospective oil area covers an area of 1,000 square miles. The production of oil there for 1915 was 280 million barrels, and the probable reserve supply was about 5,500 million barrels. The quality ranges from the asphalt-base oils of California and Texas to the lighter paraffin-base oils of the eastern part of the United States. On the present rate of consumption it is estimated that the supply will last for only 20 years. In England the authorities were so vitally concerned in the search for oil

that a vote was passed for one million pounds to be spent in that direction. Five hundred thousand pounds was set aside to find oil in England and though we know that the oil found there does not come up to expectations it was necessary that some steps should be taken to obtain oil; and they succeeded in finding it. There is a prospect of finding oil in Western Australia. If we can do so it will relieve the position regarding our national debt, and get us out of our troubles. I ask the Minister to consider a proposal for giving, not a reward bonus, but a pound for pound subsidy in support of the search for oil in this State. If the Minister will promise an amendment to the Mining Act so as to enable those interested in oil to get to work as speedily as possible, he will confer a great benefit upon the State. I wish now to deal with the question of ochre, mentioned by the Minister when dealing with the Estimates. We have a very good class of ochre in this State. From the analyses I have of the Government Geologist it is evident that we have an ochre of considerable value. He has examined a sample of ochre which came from two miles east of Carbarup in the south-west division. He says that it is an excellent sample, and that the ferric oxide is 23.14 per cent. He also states that it is an excellent pigment and that the colour is excellent, too. He refers to it in fact as being of brilliant colour and of great body. There is also a yellow ochre, which is of excellent quality. I am interested in a small company myself, and am glad to say that although we have had no Government assistance we have already had a trial order of 20 tons. I now wish to deal with Collie coal. During the absence of the member for Collie it was my privilege, in conjunction with the member for Forrest, to take a practical interest in the industry. I am glad to say that our efforts did much to relieve the position at Collie. I join with those members who have spoken so ardently in support of Collie coal. I was anxious to know why we could not burn our coal here in the same way as the New Zealand coal is burned in that dominion. I wrote to the Minister for Railways of New Zealand, and I have had a letter from him dated 12th July and have waited for an opportunity to read it. The letter reads—

Dear Sir,—In reply to your letter of 19th May last, in regard to the use of New Zealand coal on locomotives, I have to inform you that the Department's engines are not specially designed to burn New Zealand coal in particular.

This is the point I wish to emphasise—

Large boilers with wide fire boxes and combustion chambers with ample air space in the ash pan enable the Department to use coal more economically or of poorer quality than could otherwise be done. Superheating is also a move in the same direction. The bituminous coals of New Zealand have a calorific value of about

14,500 B.T.U., and the brown coals and lignites vary from 11,000 downwards. These coals are used either alone or mixed as circumstances warrant. The sparking question is a difficulty to be contended with, but has been practically combated by using the well-known balloon chimney when lignites are burnt entirely, and by using perforated plates for bituminous coals.—Yours faithfully, Minister for Railways.

There is a spark arrester which is used in conjunction with wide fire boxes and which has proved very effective. If that spark arrester were used on our own locomotives it would, to a large extent, overcome the objection to Collie coal.

The Minister for Mines: They have copied our scheme.

Mr. PICKERING: The Minister has made an assertion that they have copied our scheme. That is not the case. They sent to America and got a special design for their engines. They have now to a very great extent overcome the difficulties of the sparks. I believe if the same principle were followed in this State there would be no objection to the use of Collie coal on our State railways at any season of the year. I trust that the Minister will take this matter seriously to heart, as well as the question of prospecting for oil, and also the suggestion that assistance on the basis of pound for pound should be given rather than a bonus. I am sure there will then be a prospect of genuine efforts being made to discover oil in the South-West. I hope also he will bring about an amendment of the Mines Regulation Act on the lines already indicated. There will then be a revival in the search for oil, and the State will benefit.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [9.20]: I am very sorry to have to state that while we have been discussing the Estimates of the Mines Department a serious position has arisen at one of our mining centres, that which is in my electorate. I refer to the inflow of water which has occurred at the mines at Westonia, and where quite recently three men lost their lives. The seriousness of the position was recognised by the Government inasmuch as the Minister for Mines took prompt action and despatched a man to the field. I desire to emphasise the fact that if we are to lose the wealth that has been won from that particular centre it will mean a good deal to the State's finances. It will mean more to that particular centre where a great deal of Government money has been expended on the development of the field generally. Good values have been won at Westonia for some years past, but in recent months the work has been carried on there under most adverse conditions. Not only has the cost of production advanced considerably, but in many other respects, the mines operating in that centre have suffered. The position is such that I am glad to know that the Minister states he intends to bring in at the earliest possible moment a Bill to amend

the Mining Act so that something may be done. I would not be doing my duty to that portion of my constituency were I not to bring a few facts and figures under notice to show what has been done at Westonia. From the five mines operating there, and during the year 1917 an aggregate of 52,111 fine ounces of gold valued at £208,476 was produced. In 1918 the production was slightly less, the quantity of gold won being 44,495 ozs., valued at £177,833. There was a slight advance in two mines last year but the production from the parent mine dropped from 30,845 ozs. to 20,021 ozs. As a set-off against that, however, two other mines, the Edna May Consolidated yielded 2,322 ozs. in 1917, and 6,277 ozs. in 1918, while the Edna May Deep Levels produced 6,894 ozs. in 1917 and 7,928 ozs. in 1918. Now it is contended that this gold body goes directly from the parent mine into the Deep Levels Mine. The Edna May Mine has suspended operations and consequently has ceased to work its pumping plant. The inflow of water has therefore accumulated in the Central and Consolidated Mines and it is endangering the Deep Levels, so I am told, although the last named mine has been using every effort to cement back the water.

Mr. Duff: And they have succeeded, too.

Mr. HARRISON: They have up to date, but there is still a danger of that mine too being flooded. I am glad that the Minister is realising the urgency of the position and the necessity to do something at once to prevent the men who are employed there from migrating to other centres. If they are allowed to leave Westonia the State will lose the value of all the money which has been spent there. I trust that by the few remarks I have made, I have been able to impress hon. members with the seriousness of the position as it exists to-day at Westonia. Immediately it was known that danger threatened Westonia an inspector of the department was sent up, but what his report is has not yet been disclosed. The matter, however, I am sure will be treated urgently by the Minister. The district must be saved if it is at all possible to do so, and I trust that will be done. With regard to gold production, a great deal has been said, but one phase may be worthy of some comment. I learn that at the South African mines they have been experimenting with some degree of success in the direction of overcoming the dust trouble. They have been using there the residues from sugar manufacture. These residues are in the form of refuse molasses and the faces have been sprayed with this liquid which is of a sticky substance, and it has had the effect of keeping the dust back. The matter is well worthy of some investigation at the hands of the department, and if it has proved successful in South Africa it might well be given a trial in this State.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [9.25]: I do not intend to occupy the attention of the Committee for more than a few minutes on

these Estimates. They do not concern me very much, but the absence of the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) compels me to devote some attention to them. I desire to contrast the attitude of the last two speakers towards the subject of Collie coal. It is the first I have heard of the proposition put forward by the member for Avon, but seeing that he derives a good deal of mental pabulum from "Sparks" we can attribute it to that origin.

Mr. Harrison: Do molasses come from sparks?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The member for Sussex and the leader of the Country party have just spoken, and the former dealt with the possibilities of the discovery of oil in this State. There is not a member in this House who will not admit that if oil deposits could be located, those deposits would be the salvation of the State. It is the fervid wish of everyone that prospecting in this direction will be successful, and we should all be desirous of assisting the project. The member for Sussex made a few remarks about Collie coal which I appreciate, as I believe he is perfectly sincere and honest in the attitude he adopts, but I expected a pronouncement from the leader of the Country party because that party are parading their desire to develop the primary industries of the State. The Country party point out, with want of knowledge—not that that matters to them—that they have supported the fostering of such industries as Collie coal. I say emphatically, so far as the Government are concerned, that Collie coal would be used exclusively on the railways were it not for the pressure applied from the cross benches.

Mr. Harrison: What about fires in crops?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We have set one against the other just as the member for Sussex supposes there is only one political faith to follow—that of free trade, until the other day he became an advocate for protection for the potato industry of the South-West. We should have a degree of consistency. Hon. members have declared that crops have been burnt by sparks from Collie coal, but there has been a prejudice against the coal in the past—a prejudice which has existed without warrant. In New South Wales, where Newcastle coal is used exclusively, it has been proved that fires have occurred in many localities through sparks from locomotives. Does that not serve to indicate that in the past we have condemned Collie coal when it has not been proved that that coal has been the cause of fires in crops?

Mr. Harrison: Miles upon miles of crops have been destroyed.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: If the other coals caused these fires there would be no trouble at all. Now we are facing a shipping difficulty which is a serious one for the State, though I do not intend to deal with it because I might be told that I am getting off the trail. It is however deplorable, in a country where we should foster primary production, where we should be using exclusively our own fuel, that owing to the attitude of a

few people who perhaps may have suffered, are obliged to import coal from the other side of the Continent.

Mr. Harrison: Why not compensate the farmers for their losses?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: If we are going to compensate them we shall have to compensate a lot more.

Mr. Harrison: The farmer loses his year's effort.

The Minister for Mines: He is covered by insurance.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Even supposing a dozen settlers suffered a loss—

The Minister for Mines: Away from the railway lines there is a greater acreage burnt than near to them.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Even if a dozen farmers adjacent to the railways suffered a loss—and I would be the first to deplore that loss—the fact remains that the whole community is suffering to-day as the result of the embargo on Collie coal. Surely we ought to have our eyes opened to the fact that if we can develop an industry within the State we should do it.

Mr. Harrison: The Country party are not against that.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: A promise was given by the late Premier, and has been repeated by the present Premier and endorsed by the Commissioner of Railways, that Collie coal would be used exclusively on our railways the whole year round.

The Minister for Mines: So it is.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No. Coal has been imported recently.

The Minister for Mines: That was for gas.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The point I was going to make about the Country party is that in my opinion they have applied pressure to the Government.

Mr. Harrison: I know nothing about that.

The Minister for Mines: They have never approached me, nor has the Premier.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Then may we take it for granted that there is no objection in the rural districts to the consumption of Collie coal during the summer months?

The Minister for Mines: I have not had any objection.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Then I have the assurance of the Minister that 100 per cent. of Collie coal will be used on the railways during the summer. I want to know what the future of the industry is to be for the next six months.

Mr. Harrison: Quite as good as that of agriculture.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No, it is not. A severe test is being put on the Collie coal industry.

The Minister for Mines: They think nothing of the test they put on us. We were practically their only customers, yet they held us up without warning.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I think the Minister should wait until the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson) returns. That hon. member will have an answer to that assertion. It is not the first time the Minister has said

that the coal miners, in conjunction with the employers, have put a pistol to the head of the Government. Because coal is an essential commodity, the agreement covering the use of coal during the war was fixed up at midnight by Mr. Hughes, the Prime Minister, while the second agreement was fixed up by Mr. Watt, the Acting Prime Minister. Just because it is an essential industry the Prime Minister and a couple of other Ministers, sitting round the table, can give an agreement, while other industries of Australia are obliged to go to the Arbitration Court, wait years for an award, and have their case decided on the evidence. Because of what was accomplished by the Prime Minister and the Acting Prime Minister in fixing up the agreements covering the coal industry in New South Wales, it followed that the coal industry here should get the same benefit.

The Minister for Mines: But we cannot store any great quantity of Collie coal, and so, unless we get notice of a hold-up of the industry, we are bound to suffer loss.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It has not occasioned the Government much loss or much harm on this occasion. In the last dispute the Railway Department went panicky. They went a bit panicky to-day, although not so much as on the last occasion. The last time, the Premier had my assurance that I was on the road to Collie with a modified offer on which a settlement could be arranged. But what happened? Immediately practically all the train service was cancelled, the trams were stopped, and a charity concert arranged at Nedlands, which might have brought in £1,500—was spoilt for one afternoon. They were not so bad on this occasion, and fortunately the dispute is now over. The coal-mining community of Collie has never embarrassed the Government. The whole community cannot be blamed if a few men hold up the Government.

The Minister for Mines: But a few men did hold it up, and might hold it up for some time.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: A few years ago the hon. member would have been as eager as any other worker to participate in a hold-up.

Mr. Harrison: I thought you were out for the consumer.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The indictment I make against the leader of the Country party is that he has not made a pronouncement to-night in regard to Collie coal. The hon. member, with that owl-like wisdom which graces him, thinks that once he has spoken no one else need speak. I should like to know if all the members of the Country party hold similar views to those of the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering). If so, I will be content. If they would give us their opinions as to the effect the consumption of Collie coal will have on the rural industry it would go far towards inducing the Government to give the coal industry a better deal.

Mr. Harrison: Use your Collie coal with safety.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I accept the assurance of the leader of the Country party that Collic coal can with absolute safety be used during the summer months in the wheat-growing areas. The leader of the Country party has spoken. That will do me.

Mr. Griffiths: You have nothing to say about the member for York on this question.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I expect to hear his views later. No other member in the House has made more exhaustive inquiries to ascertain the efficiency of different spark arresters.

Mr. Troy: And everything else under the sun.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I only wish there were a few more members as studious as the hon. member. I will listen with rapt attention to the member for York if he is able to throw any additional light on the subject. But, having the assurance of the leader of the Country party that there will be no protest against the use of Collic coal in the agricultural areas during the summer, I feel convinced that the Government will use Collic coal exclusively and so foster a primary industry of great value to the State.

[Mr. Foley took the Chair.]

Mr. GREEN (Kalgoorlie) [9.40]: I note with pleasure the revival of the mining industry. After the pessimism manifested in the metropolitan area in regard to the mining industry, when one has heard on every hand that the industry is as good as dead, it is satisfactory indeed to have a demonstration from the goldfields in these new hopeful discoveries. There have been in this country advocates, notably a past Minister for Mines, of leaseholds being in fee simple. The position of Block 50 on the Hampton Plains shows that mining in Western Australia would have been in a precarious condition had the leases of the past been sold in freehold. It is regrettable that the Hampton Plains Company have the right to take every alternate block close to a new discovery, which means the retarding of progress. Whilst we are not anxious for a premature boom, it is regrettable that when discoveries are made a company that will do very little itself is to reap a large part of the reward of other people's industry. The Minister has indicated that he has put up a minute to the department in favour of deep boring. I think his ideas are considerably strengthened when we are told, by several mining men who should know, that the ore channel of the Celebration lease is a continuation of the ore channel of the Great Boulder and the Horseshoe mines. If so, the argument in favour of deep boring is immensely strengthened. We can by those means more readily find where the ore channels between the two districts, and further north, can be discovered. Some years ago, when Dr. McLearen was here, I interviewed him for his opinion in regard to deep boring. Several mining men assured me it would be worth while to deep bore were put down at the north end of the Kalgoorlie field. If it is

held to-day that the ore channel south of Boulder is identical with the Great Boulder and the Horseshoe channels it seems possible that at the north end there would be a continuation of the same ore channel, and that the comparatively poor zone existing there would be found, as the result of deep boring, to be a continuation of the lode. Dr. McLearen expressed the opinion that deep boring was essential in modern mining when arriving at the value of a new field in proximity to a well known field. I regret that of the £50,000 set aside last year for mining development only £8,000 was spent. It seems to me that the departmental heads might well be able to suggest to the Minister where the money allocated under this vote could be profitably spent. Some alteration should be made with regard to the tribute system on the Golden Mile. With the exception of half a dozen mines on the Golden Mile, the position is such that the work is being left largely to tributers, and the relations between them and the managers of the companies are entirely unsatisfactory from the tributer's point of view. Under some of the agreements, 40 per cent. of the gross proceeds of gold won by the tributers is exacted by the different mining companies. If a large amount of gold is to be won by tributers from the Golden Mile, and everything points in that direction, it stands to reason there must be some more equitable system whereby the tributer may be encouraged to exploit and test the different mines. If the tributer has to give over 40 per cent. of the gross proceeds he wins to the mining companies and the pig-rooting methods now so evident in some of the mines on the Golden Mile are continued, no proper examination of the country can be made by the tributers. This is a matter which should engage the attention of the Minister at the earliest moment. A mining board on the goldfields is essential. It should consist of men with local knowledge, say one selected by the tributers' association or the miners' union, one by the Chamber of Mines, and a man of approved knowledge appointed by the Government. Three such men should form the nucleus of a board to indicate to the Government and those in charge of the Mines Department in Perth, lines on which the industry should be assisted. This system is in vogue in Victoria and has been found beneficial, particularly in the Bendigo district. Regarding the Geological Department, a specimen which I submitted has been in the hands of the department for three months awaiting assay and, judging from present appearances, I am not likely to receive the information during the term of my natural life unless I shake the department up. I do not blame the department for this. I believe the officials are overworked.

Mr. Pickering: That is so.

Mr. GREEN: There should be some means whereby Dr. Simpson, who is in charge of

the department, on receiving a piece of mineral should be able to indicate its contents without going to the labour of making an assay. In nine cases out of 10, he can tell, without testing, whether the mineral value is nil or otherwise, and thus a good deal of time might be saved to the department. If the department are going to continue to make a complete assay of every specimen submitted and if prospectors have as a result to wait for three, four, or five months before they are able to learn the value of their specimens, it must act as a drag on the industry and on the prospector. The question of the Kalgoorlie School of Mines is closely related to the gold mining industry. That School of Mines is the only one in Australia that devotes itself exclusively to investigation connected with modern mining. The director of the institution, however, spends 360 days of the year in Perth. I do not blame the director for that. There should be two directors, one connected with the technical schools in Perth and other parts of Western Australia, and one residing in Kalgoorlie and devoting his time exclusively to the School of Mines. At the school there are over 200 students, and it is no exaggeration to say that at least 200 others find it impossible to enrol because the school is over-crowded. In a country like Western Australia, which produces one-half of the gold raised in Australia, and which from present appearances will soon produce 75 per cent. of the Australian output, the School of Mines should have ample accommodation for the whole of the students who wish to enrol.

Mr. Pickering: What do you estimate the number?

Mr. GREEN: About 220 are attending and I am told there are at least 200 who find it impossible to enrol because the institution is over-crowded. In a State like Western Australia, where gold mining is the paramount industry and will remain so for some years in spite of the increasing importance of wheat growing, the school should be fully equipped to accommodate all the students who apply for entrance. Some portion of the mining vote might even be devoted to this purpose. It is regrettable that there is now at the Kalgoorlie School of Mines only the same number of teachers as there were 10 years ago, when there were only half the number of students; and the salaries of the teachers are practically the same to-day as they were 10 years ago. It is a matter for regret that, not only in connection with the Mines Department but in all branches of education, men who have devoted their lives to the study of technical and other subjects generally receive a salary which a man running a fifth rate business and probably without education at all would expect to receive. There is not much incentive for these educationists to pursue their studies unless their positions are made more attractive. In a State such as this where we have practically

every known mineral in the world and large number of them capable of being exploited to commercial advantage, select members of the Mines Department and possibly teachers of the schools should be chosen by the Government to go abroad, preferably to America, to see the uses to which various minerals are put in modern commerce and manufacturing chemistry, so that we might be able to bring more of our minerals into full commercial use. At the School of Mines there is not even a model treatment plant available for use. I understand there is one on the grounds, but that it has not been erected because the Minister for Works has not provided sufficient money.

The Minister for Mines: You will find a item on the Estimates.

Mr. GREEN: If there is any way of anticipating that item, the model treatment plant should be erected at once. I trust the Minister will take action in this matter. It has been a subject of comment on the goldfields that students have had to wait for so many months to get this plant enclosed in a suitable building. It is regrettable that while there is industrial unrest on the goldfields, the man in charge of the Mines Department unfortunately holds a position in a department which has sent up 600 rifles and 10,000 rounds of ammunition to awe the working miners of Kalgoorlie into submission.

The Minister for Works: Is that statement correct?

Mr. GREEN: That statement is correct. Last Friday's train conveyed 600 rifles and 10,000 rounds of ammunition to the goldfields, the idea being that, if the necessity arose, men who have been responsible for the welfare of the mining industry, would be shot down.

The Minister for Works: That is a very serious statement to make.

Mr. Jones: Let the Minister deny it if it is not so.

Mr. GREEN: I do not ask the Minister to tell me a lie. His silence, I take it, is proof that munitions were sent up. Even if a denial were given in this House we know that the arms were sent enclosed in boxes addressed to Hampton Plains as portion of a lot of mining machinery. However that is not the point of which I complain. My complaint is that, in a law-abiding community such as the miners of the eastern goldfields have always proved themselves for, in the history of the goldfields, they have never gone out on strike—a system of filibustering should be encouraged among people picked up willy-nilly. When we see this spectacle of men with rifles and bayonets trying to terrorise a portion of the community, the inference is that those people are dangerous and cannot be trusted. Evidently the previous Government got so panicky over what happened at Fremantle that the present Government thought it necessary to continue the trick of trying to overawe the goldfields people. I can quite understand a fracas between two men, and I can under-

stand them cracking each other, but no gun has yet been raised by members of the miners' union.

The Minister for Mines: That is not correct. Was not a shot fired at the Chamber of Mines the other night?

Mr. GREEN: I am assured by several people that is not so. I admit the police on the goldfields, as elsewhere, have a difficult duty to perform. If the Minister's information was such that it scared him for a moment and he thought extra protection was necessary, the police should have been called upon to do the duty. A few extra police could have been sent there to quell any disturbance which might happen. It is regrettable that in such a community as ours, fillisters should have guns placed in their hands. Some of them have never had a gun to their shoulders before and might get nervous and shoot some respectable member of the community. I have found it difficult to sit in my seat this evening with any sort of calm feeling, owing to the knowledge that, in a law-abiding community like this, the Government should have overstepped the mark by sending firearms to the goldfields and so exciting a bitterness which otherwise would never have existed. There was no necessity for it. The Kalgoorlie miners have never even struck and the Government, by their rash and ill-advised action in putting these men in the position of criminals, should receive the condemnation of the law-abiding portion of the community.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany—in reply) [10.0]: As Minister for Mines controlling the department, I feel that the Committee have taken a greater interest in the welfare of the mining industry than has been my experience for a number of years. The criticism has been of an entirely helpful nature. It is very desirable when hon. members are criticising the Estimates of expenditure, although they may disagree in some directions in regard to administration, that they should make their criticism such that it will contain helpful suggestions for future guidance. That is what has happened on the present occasion. I am hopeful that the general discussion on this department will be of use to the officials of the department, as I know it will be interesting to those who have under their care the administration of the department. I do not say that all that has been done in the past has been correct, but we have done all we could to assist the industry, which has been waning for a number of years. We are none of us infallible. I would tell the member for Avon and others who are interested in the Westonia field that we will do our utmost to prevent that field from meeting disaster in the near future. We cannot, however, do the impossible. While it may appear that it is quite wrong to permit even one mine to close down, if there is any possibility of obtaining further gold from it, it may be found that it will be impossible to continue the

expenditure that is necessary in order to keep down the water in an adjoining mine so that the balance of the gold available may be taken out. Having my attention drawn to the serious position on the Westonia field I sent the Assistant State Mining Engineer to make a report. Mr. Blatchford made a very exhaustive inquiry and submitted a very useful report. I take the responsibility of saying that I have exceeded the recommendation made by Mr. Blatchford in that I intend to ask the House to agree to an amendment to the Mining Act. This will provide for powers which are extensive and may be very dangerous, but these powers will be used for the protection and life of a field which may mean so much to this State. I hope the Committee to-morrow night will agree to give these powers on the understanding that I will not make use of them until I have consulted those who are responsible for controlling the industry, as well as members representing the districts concerned. Owing to water difficulties in Westonia, we have reached a stage when one mine has petered out and the other mines have found a great difficulty in coping with the inrush of water in their workings, this being so great as probably to cause disaster there. I hope that when I get these powers it will not be necessary to use them on all occasions. I am circumscribed at present through not having any power to act, and the mine owners themselves will not agree to do what I consider is the right and proper thing.

Mr. Duff: You recognise that the two cases are not parallel.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. The matter is urgent. The Edna May will cease pumping operations on the 16th of the month, and it is practically intended to abandon the mine. We shall have to pass the Bill through this week to enable me to exercise the powers which may be necessary in order to prevent disaster there. With regard to the question of prospecting for oil, the remarks of the member for Sussex were extremely interesting. The difficulty I find is to square the geologists with practical results so far as the discovery of oil is concerned. I have heard quite a number of professional geologists as well as street corner geologists declare that we have already found oil in Western Australia. I can produce pieces of material which will give forth a beautiful oily smell, but they do not mean that oil has been discovered. While I am as keen as the member for Sussex or anyone on finding oil in Western Australia, and on oil being discovered in other parts of the British Empire, because of its absolute necessity for the life of the nation, I am not going to be foolish enough to take everyone's advice as to where it can be discovered. It is only by practical operations that we shall be able to decide whether oil is here or not. Hon. members may have read the weekly edition of the "London Times." In one

of the September issues, the latest papers to come from London, I found an interesting article by Lord Fisher. Lord Fisher declares that although he is not a geologist, there is no part of the world where oil cannot be found if boring is conducted deeply enough. Others who are not geologists have declared that Lord Fisher is a lunatic. I am afraid that is the position we are in at the moment. Some of our greatest inventors and discoverers of minerals, etc., have been termed lunatics. It is not the first time that Lord Fisher has been termed a lunatic. This term was applied to him when he introduced what was called "his mad methods in the Admiralty." I hope he will prove to be a lunatic in regard to oil discoveries in Western Australia, and that by following his advice we shall find that much needed commodity in this State. We have practically reserved the whole of the South-West portion of Western Australia to enable people to prospect there for oil. Under a clause in the Act, which meets the position so far as we have gone, we are not enabled to give anyone the right to take oil if it is discovered. While I happen to be Minister for Mines I am not going to rush into a position by Act of Parliament to provide any conditions which, while our interest in the discovery of oil is great, we may finally regret having given. If we rush into the matter we may find that it will be of great disadvantage to the State. I believe oil is one of the things that should remain a national asset. We should encourage people who have ideas on the subject to prospect for oil. If they do discover it we should reward them well. There should be no foreign capital invested in oil in Western Australia, and no such thing will be done with my concurrence. It must be kept as an asset to the nation and particularly to Western Australia. We have had this area reserved and have permitted people who desired to prospect for oil practically to hold it against being prospected by anyone else. There have been a few individuals who have held up the South-Western portion of the State, where it is believed more particularly that oil will be discovered. One gentleman came from the Eastern States. He has been interested I think in some American oil company. He travelled round the country in a buggy from place to place saying that he smelt oil and that he saw oil nodules. He was talking about it all the time, but nothing of a practical nature has been done. I have told such people that I will not renew the license which enables them to hold up other people.

Mr. Johnston: Should not the Government do the prospecting if they are going to retain the asset?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member may be right there, but prospecting for oil is not merely a matter of putting down a bore. We have to do preliminary prospecting first in order to decide which is the most likely site to start operations upon.

I am not satisfied that geologists are the best judges. I shall, however, have to depend upon the advice that is given by our geologists. We may be doing something in the direction of finding oil, but others who have different grounds to work upon may find a likely spot more speedily than geologists would do. I will do anything that is possible to encourage any genuine endeavour that is made to discover oil in Western Australia. If it is discovered I will then ask the House to treat such people royally and in conformity with the value of the discovery to the State. In regard to Collie coal, the member for Forrest, in the absence of the member for Collie, made some remarks on the subject of Collie coal on our railway system. I would use 100 per cent. of Collie coal to-morrow if I thought it was desirable that we should do so.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Commissioner promised that it should be done.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: And he will do it as far as it is possible for him to do so. We have to keep in mind not only the interest of the Collie coal industry, but the interests of the general community, which is even greater than that of Collie coal. As we cannot carry any great stocks of Collie coal, I am not fulfilling my trust to the great community if I permit them to suffer over an indefinite period because of the actions of a few individuals in holding up supplies which are so essential to our transport service. It is our bounden duty to carry a stock of coal in order to avoid difficulties which may arise, and avoid causing suffering to innocent persons because of the actions of a few. We almost approached that point during the last few days. Without getting panniicky we were able to carry on and the dispute is now happily ended. I am not desirous of putting a single ton of imported coal into the Government departments if it can be avoided.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This applies to the other States.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Not to the same extent. Not a single ton of coal will be imported for our railway services if it can be avoided. The Commissioner of Railways agrees with me in this.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We entered into an agreement with you and you promised to use it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We do use it and every pound of the coal that it is possible to use in every part of the State. With regard to the encouragement of the Collie coal industry outside the use of coal on the railways, so far as it is possible we are anxious to see whether Collie coal is suitable for the manufacture of gas from the commercial point of view. That is a matter which requires careful investigation. We have been in touch with a gentleman who has had some recent experiences in the manufacture of gas for an entirely different purpose during the war period. He left here as a munition worker and was drafted to work on a gas plant worked according to

the latest methods. We can only prove the possibility of using Collie coal commercially by experiments. I think we can better experiment by sending the coal to one of the more modern types of gas producing plants than we can get in Western Australia or any other part of Australia. We are anxious to help, but I think the Collie coal people should also help. So far we have had nothing but requests and little or no help from them. If the industry will not render some assistance of its own part, either by advice or some other means, they have no right to continually prefer requests that we should do something. There must be co-operation in the matter, and people interested in the Collie coal are as much concerned as we. With regard to boring plants, I said when introducing the Mines Estimates that we were desirous of establishing a limited number of such plants in order to bore from time to time in different parts of the State to find out the extensions of any line of reefs of value which might be discovered. I am hopeful before many months are over that the House will agree to the finding of the necessary funds for making available boring plants in the Mines Department for this purpose. Hon. members have introduced the question of proper provision being made in new fields for the protection of men engaged in the industry. That matter will not be overlooked. There is no one in this House who has had a greater experience of mining than I have had myself, though possibly not so much from the point of view of years but from the point of view of the effect that the industry has had upon certain members of my family. I have lost three brothers from what is known as miners' complaint, and I fear that will not be the end of it. With that experience, I shall not be foolish enough to permit a new field such as may possibly result at Hampton Plains to proceed upon the same basis as our mining fields in the early days, causing the death of thousands of our good citizens, whereas that evil could be easily avoided by a comparatively small expenditure in the early stages of development. The member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Green) and other hon. members dealt with the conditions of tributing. Those conditions are certainly not satisfactory, and I have already assured two or three goldfields members who approached me on the matter, that I would discuss the subject with them, and that during the recess I would obtain particulars from other States, securing the opinions of both parties; and next session I hope to introduce a Bill that will get over the difficulty. But we cannot rush into the thing without causing more disaster to the tributer himself. I am desirous of continuing the tributing system, but under conditions fair to all parties. I do not think there is anything else I have to refer to except the question of publicity. The member for Claremont (Mr. Duff) dealt pretty fully with that question. He said the Mines Department ought to be sending cable-

grams to London. Perhaps we should, but they ought to be cablegrams in the direction of setting other messages right. I am not going to send to London messages booming the interests of a few investors. I am concerned with the industry from the aspect of its permanent welfare, and I propose to cable Home only the facts, pointing out that until further prospects develop we cannot say what the future of the new finds will be.

Mr. Duff: I do not suggest booming cables.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I know the hon. member does not suggest anything of the kind, but I also know there are people who hold the view that the Mines Department should cable Home every scrap of street corner conversation for the purpose of inducing investment here. In my opinion what is required in London is not so much cablegrams as an officer attached to the Agent General's office who can fairly represent our mineral industry at Home. Surely if our agricultural industry is entitled to have an officer in London to advise what our lands can produce, and to induce immigrants to settle on our lands, the great gold mining industry is entitled to representation there as well; and I hope that before long a mining representative will be attached to the Agent General's office, one who will be able to give advice of value to those desirous of investing their money in Western Australian mining propositions. Let me add that the remarks of the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) regarding the Kalgoorlie School of Mines are, to my knowledge, correct. We must find additional accommodation for the school. The experimental plant will be provided during the next few months: an amount for that purpose is on the Estimates. I dare say that before very long I shall have to ask the Treasury to provide additional funds for the school. That establishment is of great value to the whole Australian community, and to people beyond the borders of Australia as well. It is becoming very well known, and I feel sure that in future many mining engineers will finish their studies at the Kalgoorlie School of Mines. But to that end additional accommodation will be required, and we must secure the best lecturers available, and also the plant necessary for tests to be made by the students. I realise the position, and the matter will not be overlooked. I again wish to express my appreciation of the helpful remarks made by hon. members during the discussion.

[General debate concluded; votes and items discussed as follow:]

Item, Assistant to State Mining Engineer, £456.

Mr. DUFF: Is the present occupant of this office permanently appointed?

The Minister for Mines: No. He is acting.

Mr. DUFF: Is it the Minister's intention to call for applications for the position in the or-

inary way through the Public Service Commissioner, and to have the position filled on the merits of the applicants?

The Minister for Mines: Yes.

Mr. DUFF: The appointment is a very important one. Seeing that at present we have some very good mining inspectors, the claims of those gentlemen should receive consideration.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The present occupant of the office was appointed under the conditions prevailing during the war—that no permanent appointments would be made until some time after the cessation of hostilities, so that men absent at the front might have the opportunity to apply. The permanent appointment will be made in the usual way.

Item, Government Analyst and Chief Inspector of Explosives, £636.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Is any work now being done by the Government Analyst for the Commonwealth Government?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I will find out and inform the hon. member.

Item, Refund of exemption fees, £100.

Mr. CHESSON: What stand is the Minister taking to compel people who keep leases locked up and do not comply with mining conditions? Many leases are locked up in my district. There is no excuse for that state of affairs since the cessation of hostilities.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member is aware that as regards exemptions there are certain statutory conditions which have to be complied with. When they are complied with, I have no power to interfere. But unless they are complied with, I do not propose to allow any latitude to leaseholders who refuse to work their ground, not even when it is a question of re-trying what are practically abandoned fields. This matter will receive more particular attention.

Mr. TROY: The necessity for attention to the question of granting exemptions needs to be emphasised. Two men in this State are notorious for applying for exemptions and getting them, and then holding up large areas of country to the detriment of the mining industry. I understand Mr. deBernales is a member of the Mining Association, who the Minister has told us advise him in regard to prospecting.

The Minister for Mines: The Mining Association have two representatives on the board, and neither of those representatives is Mr. deBernales.

Mr. TROY: But Mr. deBernales is a member of the Mining Association, who act as advisers to the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. TROY: Mr. deBernales is, notoriously, neither a mining investor nor a bona fide prospector, but merely an exploiter. His practice is to buy up machinery and hold mines up. His actions have become an absolute scandal. Take the case of Lake Way. Lake Way has been one of the most promising mining districts in this country, and those who know the district well are of opinion that if it gets a chance it has magnificent prospects. Mr. deBernales has held up a large area of ground there. The Prospectors' Association have protested time after time, the people of the district have protested, and the Leaseholders' Association have pro-

tested; but all without avail. I do not accuse the Minister of being influenced by Mr. deBernales, but I do hope the Minister will come down with a thud on that gentleman. Mr. Shallcross is another gentleman of the same type as Mr. deBernales. I know that the other day he applied for and obtained a further exemption of the Bullrush mine at Yuin, which mine he has not worked for two or three years. I admit that apparently the last application for exemption was not opposed; but Yuin is some distance from the railway. Mr. Shallcross is going to work the Bullrush mine again when things become normal—that is to say, in the sweet by-and-by. I do not think we shall ever get back to the old condition of affairs, that mining or any other industry will again be carried on as cheaply as before the war. Mr. Shallcross is one of those persons who cannot be put off, and I sympathise with the Minister if he has dealings with him. If the Minister does not keep him outside the door, Mr. Shallcross will have what he wants, once he gets in.

The Minister for Mines: He only came back once at me.

Mr. TROY: Mr. Shallcross is of no value whatever to the mining industry, and it is extremely injurious to the industry that he should obtain the unnecessary exemptions he asks for time after time.

Mr. LAMBERT: There are certain mining speculators in this State who undoubtedly have had a good deal more consideration shown to them by way of exemption than should have been given them. An important departure should be made. I would like to suggest to the Minister that if he introduces an amendment to the Mining Act he should see that when a mining company ceases to actively engage in operations that the lease is not sold with the mining machinery. In every instance we find that when people buy the machinery they acquire possession of the lease as well. Then if they are unable to get tributors to work the property they apply for exemption. This kind of thing has held up a considerable area of auriferous country, and until we can remedy that we shall prevent many leases from being worked. Men like deBernales, Shallcross and Trude come along and purchase a plant and also secure the lease. The result is that operations on the lease are immediately held up, unless of course they can get someone to exploit the property and on whom they can impose an extortionate royalty. Then of course if they are not successful an application is immediately made for exemption.

Item, Government contribution to mine workers' relief fund, £5,000:

Mr. CHESSON: A number of men have been stricken down by illness, and they are compelled to go to the sanatorium before they can get any assistance. Some of these men are practically at the dying stage, and they have contributed to this fund since its inception. These unfortunates have a genuine grievance in that they prefer to spend the closing days of their lives with their own people rather than go to the sanatorium. Could not something be done for these people, seeing that they have only a short time to live. They should not be forced to go to the sanatorium after having contributed for many years to the mine workers'

relief fund. The Government should be able to do something in this direction, seeing that they contribute £5,000, that the men contribute a similar sum, and the companies a like amount.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: This fund was established on the basis of the payment of equal amounts by the companies, the men, and the Government, and the fund is controlled by a board. The men have representation on the board, and if there are grievances they should be brought under the notice of the board, and then, if the persons having grievances are still dissatisfied the matter can be referred to the Government.

Mr. GREEN: There is here a decrease of £1,828 but I suppose that can be accounted for.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is impossible to say what will be the actual expenditure, but we are committed to an expenditure of between £5,000 and £10,000.

Item, Apparatus, books, chemicals for laboratory of Chief Inspector of Explosives, £400:

Mr. LAMBERT: This is another expensive department run more or less separately from the Geological Department. There is here a big increase. We have four or five laboratories, all of which have separate stores and the supplies of chemicals. I hope the Minister will see the wisdom of having one general store for supplying all these laboratories. Indeed, I think the Minister could well arrange for the establishment of one general laboratory. All these laboratories should be under the control of one administrative head. I also think there should be a charge for the inspection of explosives. Men in this State have made magnificent sums out of explosives, and if a small charge were made to cover the cost of inspection it would be a relief to the State.

Mr. TROY: I assume that the Government Analyst is responsible for the analyses of superphosphates. If so, surely this is the place to state that there is a general feeling amongst farmers that the superphosphates supplied during the last year or two were not of the quality that formerly obtained.

The Minister for Mines: Even if the Government Analyst is responsible for the analyses he would not be responsible for taking samples.

Mr. TROY: The whole thing should be controlled by the department of which Mr. Mann is the head. A great many people engaged in primary production are strongly of opinion that the strength of superphosphates supplied has deteriorated. I think this department should be active in seeing that only the best quality is supplied to the farmers. I have heard complaints in practically every agricultural district in the State, and I hope the department will take up this matter.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is a matter not for me, but for the Agricultural Department to take up. Any analyses of samples they desire will be undertaken by the Government Analyst, but it is not his responsibility to go out and look for samples. If the hon. member will make his complaint to the Minister for Agriculture, he will find that the department will take samples before the next superphosphates go out. As for the increase in this item, it is due to the fact that last year's vote was down considerably as the result of the department

taking over certain supplies from the botanical section of the Agricultural Department. That is why the item is larger than that of last year.

[Mr. Stubbs resumed the Chair.]

Mr. LAMBERT: The complaint made by the member for Mt. Magnet certainly does not lie against the Government Analyst. The Department are fully alive to the need for fertilisers being up to the standard. Some people think that because a greater amount of sand is put in the superphosphates they are being cheated, but that is not so. The member for Kalgoorlie was quite wrong in his statement. If manufacturers adhere to the present standard which, I think, provides for 17 per cent. of phosphoric acid, that is all that is required of them.

Mr. GREEN: While I recognise that these matters do not come within the purview of Mr. Mann until samples are handed to him, it is necessary that fertilisers should be examined. The quantity of phosphoric acid required is over 18 per cent. and not under 17 per cent. as stated by the member for Coolgardie.

Vote put and passed.

Department of Woods and Forests, Hon. J. Scaddan, Minister.

Vote—Woods and Forests, £11,888:

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [10-52]: It is only fair that the Minister should tell us something of the activities of this department. The Minister has not lost all control of the department.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [10-53]: The hon. member has a fairly good knowledge of the Forests Act. He knows that under the Act—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Another bloomer.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We have to administer the Act. It is provided that three-fifths of the net revenue shall be under the control of the Conservator for certain definite purposes laid down in the Act, but he is not entitled to spend that money until the approval of both Houses of Parliament has been obtained. The amount on the Estimates represents only the administrative expenditure of the department. The balance, representing the policy of the department, is provided for under working schemes which must be submitted to Parliament. A scheme has been lying on the Table of the House for two or three months and, before the session closes, we must discuss whether it is desirable to approve of it. Therefore, I think it is advisable to discuss those matters on two occasions.

Mr. O'Loghlin: What about the administration.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There has been no change. The Conservator has been pretty busy during the last two months. He paid a visit to the North-West to deal with the question of taking bark from the mangroves and using it for commercial purposes where previously it had been destroyed. The whole trouble was due to jealousy between two sections. We have to put up with this sort of thing in Government departments. Complaints are made and, when expenditure is incurred to investigate them, we often find that the trouble

is due to differences between two sets of individuals and sometimes even between two individuals. The Conservator has found it difficult to get suitable officers to carry out the work which he will have to perform under the Act. They are not easy to obtain and it is absolutely necessary that he should have them.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: What about the Estimates?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There has been no change. The estimated revenue for the year is £47,000 and the estimated expenditure shown here is £11,888, which will leave a net revenue of £35,112 for expenditure under the Forests Act. The scheme for the expenditure of that money is on the Table of the House.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [10-56]: If I were confident that I could discuss items of administration under the proposals of the Government later on, I would be satisfied to wait, but I think this is the only opportunity I shall have. I am reluctant to take the opportunity to-night, but I must refer to one or two matters relative to the administration of the Conservator of Forests. The Minister could well have elaborated some of the conclusions arrived at by the Conservator of Forests in his report. When the Forests Act was passed, I expressed the opinion—and I am now more than satisfied I was right—that we were giving undue power to this officer by placing him in a position equivalent to that of the judge of the Supreme Court.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Minister took no notice of us.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The officer to-day is installed in his position and has only recently returned from the North-West, where he went on what one might call a wild goose chase.

The Minister for Mines: No; he did some essential work there.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It was not essential for this officer to go. A subordinate officer could have submitted a report.

The Minister for Mines: A subordinate officer submitted a report and only bore out the contentions of the others.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We are paying the Conservator of Forests such a high salary that we want the benefit of all the brains he can give us. It is not necessary to send him out on field work.

The Minister for Mines: There was no one else to send.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Surely there was a subordinate officer in the Department who could have undertaken the trip and left Mr. Lane-Poole free to attend to the administration of the department.

The Minister for Mines: I do not agree with you.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There is room for a difference of opinion. Regarding the Conservator's report which has been laid on the Table of the House, while I disagree with some of his conclusions, I must say it is the most informative and comprehensive report which has ever emanated from this department. It has involved a lot of preparation and without doubt the information supplied is highly creditable to the officer concerned. He has touched on some items in the report with which I intend to deal at length. I take exception to that portion of his report dealing with the question of hewing

and hewers' licences. It is a remarkable thing, that after Parliament had debated for three or four days the question of whether the hewers should pursue their calling or not and decided that those who had previously followed that occupation should be allowed to take out a license to enable them to resume work of that description, a public servant, in the person of the Conservator, should by underhand methods have the right to nullify that decision. There are more ways of killing a dog than by choking it with butter. This officer and his staff, presumably acting on instructions from the fountain head, are engaged in harassing the men so that they cannot earn a decent living in the bush. The system to-day is to put up the areas for hewing purposes to public tender, and different people bid what they think is a fair royalty for these particular areas. We find now that there is a more rigid inspection carried out than was ever the case before. Last week at Uraming I had an opportunity of looking at a large quantity of sleepers that had been rejected by the departmental officials. I saw there the result of many days of work on the part of the men which had gone for nought because the sleepers had been rejected.

The Minister for Mines: Did our department reject them?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes.

The Minister for Mines: The Conservator is very keen on reducing the specifications.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes, and that is why I could not understand it. It seemed so inconsistent with his general expression of opinion as shown in his annual report. It seems strange that when the hewers have to labour so hard in the very poorest bush in the State there should be so many rejections from the product of their work. Furthermore, in that particular area there were several men engaged in cutting to the order of the State sawmills department, and were working in bush that had been already cut over two or three times. There was one small area of three or four acres in extent from which it was impossible for the teams to haul any logs. Acting on instructions from the department this small group of hewers went into this particular area of virgin bush in order to fulfil this order. The timber there would not otherwise have been cut. The same thing applies in many other parts of the State, which prompted me to say on a previous occasion that the hewer is the economical factor in the forest. It may be that inexperienced men will sometimes waste timber, but that is not the case in the well equipped forest departments of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. In New South Wales there are 350 hewers employed, in Queensland, 500, and in Victoria thousands would be employed if they were procurable. This hardly squares with the biased attitude of our Conservator towards the axemen. Whether Parliament was right or wrong, in his opinion, he should have accepted the decision of Parliament and have acted upon it. In the course of my conversations with him I have gathered that he looks upon those who comprise Parliament as something in the nature of a pack of fools, who do not know their business and have no regard for posterity. I admit, of course, that there are in the department men trained in these matters, and that we are not so trained, but, nevertheless,

I believe that those of the present generation are entitled to have an opportunity of obtaining a decent livelihood, and that when we have considered them we must do our best for posterity. We cannot do everything for the one and nothing for the other. In view of the fact that Parliament has decided that these men should be enabled to go back to their calling if they so desired they should not now be harassed in this way. The men that I have just referred to were authorised by a ranger to go into that particular patch of virgin bush, but these instructions were subsequently cancelled by another ranger who compelled the men to stop work. Two of the men were obliged to come to Perth in order to seek an interview with the department on the subject, and as a result were out of work for seven or eight days, no joking matter in those times. It is all very well for our highly-paid officials to be away for a few days from their duties, for they receive their pay just the same, but this is not so with the men I allude to. I counselled them to put in a claim for compensation, but do not know if they have done so. I told them I thought it was a fair proposition that they should do so, and I am still of that opinion. There was another man who was alleged to have infringed the provisions of the Forest Act and regulations. The ranger took him before the Collicourt, but the man won his case. It was then arranged to have the case heard before the Full Court. I pointed out to the Conservator that the man was struggling hard to make a living, that he did not know that he had been breaking the law, and did not think he had done so, and that he asked that the Conservator or a competent inspector should inspect the ground on which he had been operating. The Conservator assured me that in taking the case to the Full Court he had no vindictive desire, but only sought to get a ruling on the point for the guidance of his officers in the future. The case was heard by the Full Court and the department was again defeated. Is the matter going to stop at that, or is this man to be further harassed by the case being taken before a still higher tribunal? I hope that common sense will guide the actions of those concerned in this matter. The list of fines in the Conservator's report shows that the officers may be vigilant, but that at times they do not exercise the common sense they should. I recently pointed out to the Conservator that in the Nannup district there were 35 men, half of whom were returned soldiers who had built residences for themselves before going to the war. The Barrabup company had agreed to employ these men in the bush, but the Conservator had declared that they should not be so employed. I made out a case as well as I could to show that the timber in which these men intended to operate had already been cut over once, that there was a line of six miles of railway into it, and that if it was not cleaned up the rails would be removed and the timber could not be touched at all. I also stated that the timber was not to be completely cut out but merely run over. The Conservator replied, "Let it stop there and a spot mill will get it later. If the men want work, let them go to Millars." Those men have got their homes in the district and are not likely to go away hundreds of miles to work elsewhere. A public

meeting was convened at Nannup in connection with the matter, and I attended it. When discussing the motion that was carried at the meeting I put it to the Conservator that he was a new official in the State, and not yet possessed of a practical knowledge of the difficulties surrounding the industry, and that in order to acquire that knowledge he first had to find his feet. I told him that I desired to co-operate with him and that other people would also be glad to do the same, but that if he did not want people to be antagonistic towards him he would have to refrain from making the drastic changes he had been making in the past. There is no question but that we are harnessed to custom, and that if a custom has been allowed to grow up for a number of years, whatever the effect of that custom may be, he would only be a lunatic who would try to break it down at 24 hours' notice. In a case of this kind it is necessary to move by evolutionary means, demonstrating fully the necessity for any change that is sought to be made, and in that way gradually educate public opinion to a complete understanding of the new policy. I disagree with the Conservator in the attitude he has adopted in regard to axemen. Either they should be allowed to make a decent living in the forest, or they should not be allowed to be there at all. Parliament has decided that these men have as much right to pursue their calling in the bush as have any other men to pursue their calling elsewhere, but in this matter it appears that the decision of Parliament is not to have the necessary weight. That decision should be respected and acted upon. Harassing conditions and new obligations should not be imposed upon these men to effectually cripple them, in the way that the Conservator is doing now. I could quote numerous instances of the activities of the department towards these men since the passing of the Act, to show that the Conservator is prejudiced against them. In order to achieve his purpose he has, I believe, issued instructions to the rangers and classified inspectors under him that will have a drastic effect upon those concerned. Only the day before yesterday I went over a piece of country which the classifiers have returned as carrying 12 loads to the acre. I will not reflect upon the competency of the classifiers, but I do not think that any man who has spent any length of time in the Western Australian bush would say that piece of country carried more than half the quantity of timber estimated by the department. We are either going to get inaccurate reports and Parliament is going to be misled as to the State's timber resources, or, on the other hand, we are going to get true reports. Different classifiers may hold different opinions; no two men will exactly agree in such a matter. However, this question is a burning one in the South-West to-day. I have no desire whatever to put obstacles in the Conservator's way; but if he is going to ride rough-shod over the community and use his practically unlimited powers to the disadvantage of those working in the timber industry, I must make a protest. To judge from his general conversation, and from his replies to deputations during the last week or two, Mr. Lane-Poole is more concerned about selling the State mills to the Frenchmen, who are particular friends of his, than he is about giving to Western Australians born in

this country an opportunity to keep their homes over their heads. I am informed that, in the locality I refer to, Mr. Lane-Poole repeatedly, in replying to a deputation, asked why there was antagonism to the sale of the sawmills? That is not a question affecting Mr. Lane-Poole. I do not know that he as Conservator should be specially desirous that this State asset should be sold. He has not been asked for his opinion on the point. By his public conduct he has shown partiality towards people who are not Western Australians, and has adopted rather a critical attitude towards those who are trying to make a living in this country. Dealing with the ravages of the fire fiend during the past summer, he points out that by reason of two heavy winters the fires have not been so disastrous. I fully realise that forest fires do an immense amount of damage, but I do not know that any powers which Parliament could confer on the Conservator would avail to prevent fires. His report states that in an area of tuart country a fire was deliberately started. If that is so, someone should have paid the penalty. But there is no reference in the report to a prosecution. The officer who reported that the fire had been deliberately started, must have had some evidence in support of his statement. But no evidence is adduced in the report. Fires start in the bush from all manner of means—a piece of glass with the sun shining on it may start a fire; a locomotive engine or a human being may be miles away from the scene of the fire. But if this fire, which we are told destroyed 200 acres of tuart, was started deliberately, the Conservator might have been a little more communicative and inserted in his report a sentence apprising us what action, if any, was taken. His reports deal with the different varieties of timber in this country, and he seems to find it impossible to get out of his head the idea that Parliament made a fearful mistake in allowing hewing to be carried on in our forests. The other day, I believe, a proposal was put up for re-starting the No. 1 Dwellingup Mill, the first sawmill established by a Labour Government in Western Australia. I know it is late, but I could talk for two hours on this subject. If a member knows the disabilities under which an industry represented by him is labouring, he should bring the matter under the attention of Parliament.

The Minister for Mines: You will have an opportunity of dealing with that matter when we are discussing the working plans.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Having received that assurance, I am prepared to curtail my remarks; but I cannot close without once more entering my protests against the methods adopted by the Conservator, which methods I sincerely regret. I realise that the Conservator is a trained officer with years of experience gained in West Africa and in France—an experience which may prove absolutely wasted here for years to come, which for many years the Conservator may find it impossible to apply effectively in this State. While he is acquiring a knowledge of local conditions he appears, at any rate to my mind, to be becoming absolutely antagonistic to the bulk of the people engaged in the Western Australian timber industry. Anyone who does not see eye to eye with him is out to destroy the forests. I have been condemned because it is said that I was responsible

for wrecking the Forests Bill. The member for Canning, who was Minister for Woods and Forests at the time that measure went through Parliament, will, I think, be honest enough to admit that I gave him all the help that my limited abilities enabled me to afford. I regret that Parliament did not reserve to itself the right to review the operations of the Forestry Department year by year. But it was urged that unless we appointed the Conservator permanently, and made him sacrosanct with a big salary, we could not retain his services.

The Minister for Mines: But the working plans have to be submitted to Parliament every year.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Although we have an officer who is out of step with public opinion, and one whose policy in the opinion of members may not be in the best interests of the country, Parliament cannot deal with him except by the drastic step of removing him from his office. I can only trust that the result of a friendly discussion in Parliament may be to cause him to mend his ways. I object to his methods and to his conduct. The general run of the community, I quite recognise, do not give a dump about the forests. But everyone will agree that a forestry policy should not be such as to deprive many persons of their opportunity of making a living. There is a way of getting the backing of the community for a policy initiated by the Government. In view of the lateness of the hour I shall say no more now; but at another stage I shall have a good deal to say.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [11-17]: I want to lodge an objection to a statement made by the Conservator of Forests in his annual report regarding shipbuilding in Western Australia.

Mr. O'Loghlen: I have not got through half of that report yet.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Conservator of Forests has a special paragraph dealing with that subject—

Unfortunately industrial troubles arose, and while these were not very serious they sufficiently alarmed the directors and those who had invested their money in the concern, and it was decided to wind up the company. A golden opportunity was thus lost for initiating a most important timber-using industry.

As a fact, I heard the chairman of directors of the shipbuilding company say definitely that he was prepared to accept the conditions which those who were engaged in shipbuilding required. In my mind there is no doubt that it was the Commonwealth Government, and the Commonwealth Government alone, who prevented the starting of the shipbuilding industry in Western Australia. The Commonwealth Government wanted to impose certain conditions which the directors of the company themselves admitted were not fair to the workers. The statement which I have quoted from the Conservator's report is not true. The Conservator should have condemned only the Commonwealth Government in regard to the failure to establish the shipbuilding industry in Western Australia. The member for Forrest has dealt with the hewing question. I contend that that question was decided by Parliament, and that neither Mr. Lane-Poole, the Conservator, nor any other person, even if appointed to a position which

Parliament cannot touch under the terms of the engagement, has any right or authority to set aside the decision of Parliament. Government officials should endeavour as far as possible to carry out the wishes of Parliament. If Parliament in a legislative enactment lays it down that the hewers returning from the front shall be permitted to follow their original calling, the Conservator has no right to do anything that will tend to nullify that legislation. The hon. member for Forrest stated that the Conservator seemed to be annoyed because an objection was lodged in regard to some of the State sawmills. A paragraph in his report is one of the strongest arguments that could be advanced against the selling of the State Sawmills and I am surprised to see it. He states—

State acquiescence in the destruction of good timber only because the export trade demands it is a crime against coming generations; and any attempts to increase the export in the interest of foreign companies, or with the object of inducing more men to join in timber getting at the expense of posterity, need wise resistance.

The Conservator has advised us in a very few words to be careful against handing over our forests to foreign companies for exploitation. His own words are the greatest argument that we can use against selling the State Sawmills. When the Forests Bill was before us, I thought Parliament was acting wrongly in appointing an officer over whom Parliament would have no control. I think now that a mistake has been made in that direction.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [11.22]: I endorse the attitude of the members for Forrest and North-East Fremantle with regard to the hewing question and the proposed sale of the State Sawmills to the French syndicate. There is every indication of an increased demand for our hard woods, not only from France, but Belgium as well, while there is also a greater increased demand in Australasia. There is no doubt that we should push the business of the State Sawmills.

Mr. Foley: They are robbing us hand-over-fist in this State.

Mr. PICKERING: We should do our utmost to secure the French and Belgium markets. With regard to the burning I was one of those who was strongly opposed to that portion of the measure. I was opposed to that portion of the measure which seeks to throw the onus of protection on the settlers. If it is sought to be remedied the position of responsibility so far as I am concerned will have to rest on the department, and a portion of the money earned by the department will have to be devoted to the care of the forests.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scandlan—Albany, in reply) [11.25]: I realise that the member for Forrest is deeply interested in the welfare of those engaged in the timber industry, and he is also interested in the forest policy. I am not in a position to review the statement he has made with regard to the Conservator except to say that he is in a very delicate position at the present time, because whatever may be our opinion in regard to Mr. Lane-

Poole and his methods, Parliament has to take the responsibilities of having made a drastic change in the forest policy of the State. What the hon. member must realise is that this severe change only applies to those who have more recently come into our timber areas, and we have actually by that action, imposed tremendous restrictions to the advantage of those who were in earlier. While Mr. Lane-Poole may not be adopting the best methods to convert public opinion to the new policy, at the same time, the member for Forrest will appreciate the fact that Mr. Lane-Poole is seeking to do something better from the point of view of the interests of the State.

Mr. O'Loughlin: I have told him that I desire to help him but he does not want help. He is going at it bull-headed.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not think the hon. member is entitled to say that. At any rate, he will not be prevented from discussing the matter when another occasion arises. Although we have removed the Conservator from the control of the Minister to some extent and through the Minister the Government and Parliament, at the same time we have not removed the operations of the department from Government control. The Conservator cannot carry on operations in the department without the Government and Parliament having the responsibility. We deliberately provided that the expenditure of money had to be subject to the approval of Parliament. So far as my experience of Mr. Lane-Poole is concerned, he has ideas and he sticks to them pretty hard. After all, I do not blame a man so much if, being satisfied that he is right, he sticks to his ideas. The only difficulty is the manner in which one may proceed to put those ideas into force. As the member for Forrest points out Mr. Lane-Poole is a technical man who has had a thorough training and he does not seem to realise—that is how it appears to me—that he has to educate the public of Western Australia to the desirability of the change.

Mr. O'Loughlin: He has to educate practically everyone.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I agree with that and we might get the Conservator to realise that while his ideas may be good, they must be brought about step by step and not violently, in which way he would bring about public hostility when he should get public support. I am hopeful from the discussion that will arise on the scheme that will be submitted before Parliament that we will be able to adopt a policy that will be more than permanent, giving to the State the best and not permitting those engaged in the industry to rob us as they are doing to-day because of the price they are demanding for this commodity which we give them a right to take. I am getting tired of permitting those people to slaughter our forests and then demand from the State exorbitant prices for the commodity which we require. We should put the screw on to the extent that our own requirements shall first be met at a rate which must not be a profiteering one.

Vote put and passed.

(The Speaker resumed the Chair).

Progress reported.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills.

- 1, Slaughter of Calves Restriction.
- 2, Pearling Act Amendment.

House adjourned at 11-30 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 12th November, 1919.

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

MOTION—WHEAT BELOW MILLING QUALITY.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.33]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the existing agreement between the Wheat Marketing Scheme and Messrs. Dalgety & Co., Ltd., giving the latter the exclusive right for disposal of wheat below milling quality, and which expires on the 31st December next, should not be renewed, and that all such wheat should be disposed of by the Scheme or their agents at a price not exceeding 3s. 6d. per bushel while the price of milling quality wheat remains at the present figure.

It has been frequently stated that this Chamber is a non-party House. It has also been referred to as a House of review, and as a House of second thoughts. It was the consideration of these statements which led me to move the motion. I propose to deal with the subject in two sections; first that portion which relates to Dalgety Ltd., and secondly that which relates to the price for wheat below f.a.q. quality. Let it be distinctly understood that my remarks are not directed against Messrs. Dalgety Ltd. A few days ago, on the Wheat Marketing Bill, it was stated that an arrangement had been made between a representative of Dalgety's and the manager of the Wheat Marketing Scheme for fixing a price for the disposal of inferior

wheat. I contend that such an arrangement must prejudicially affect those people engaged in the raising of poultry and pigs. This is exemplified by the fact that to-day we are paying for poultry, eggs, bacon and pork prices very much in excess of what might be considered reasonable. As I stated last week, it is not a healthy sign when we have to pay 1s. 8d. per lb. for rashers of bacon. Owing to the present high price of feed, bacon curers in this State cannot produce bacon under 1s. 4½d. per lb. When it is realised in other portions of the Commonwealth what it costs in Western Australia to produce bacon, the manufacturers of the Eastern States take advantage of the high prices ruling here. By the "Dimboola" last week a shipment of bacon was landed at Fremantle at 1s. 3½d. per lb. So long as the firms of the Eastern States can get just under the local price, they secure an advantage over the local producers. For a considerable time past we have been endeavouring to encourage production in this direction. In consequence large establishments have sprung up in various parts of the State and, more recently, in the metropolitan-suburban area. I refer particularly to the establishment of Messrs. Foggitt, Jones, Ltd. The existing state of affairs in respect of Dalgety's, who have the contract for the disposal of inferior wheat, acting in conjunction with the manager of the Wheat Marketing Scheme, is responsible for the prices we have to pay. It is deplorable. I have before me the report of the Royal Commission on the Wheat Marketing Scheme. I find on page 47 evidence which was tendered by William Henry Lockhard as follows:—

By the Chairman: You desire to make a statement regarding the management of the present wheat pool?—Yes, in connection with the inferior or second-grade wheats. I consider the poultry farmers are being garrotted. When we were allowed to deal with the acquiring agents individually, we always got a fair amount of satisfaction. To bear that out, I have here certain accounts which I can show you (documents handed in). However, since the business has been passed to the sole control of Dalgety's, we are simply told, "Take it or leave it. Once you buy it, that's the end of you."

I understand they have the sole control of the disposal of all wheat below milling quality.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Subject to Mr. Keys' approval of the price.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The evidence continues—

In one case, I remember, in response to a protest they made us an allowance of £2 5s., but since then they will not entertain any protest of any sort. During last month we bought a truck of wheat from them at 4s. 1d. per bushel, and we had to sell some of it at from 5s. to 8s. per bag, stuff that cost us from 11s. 6d. to 12s. per bag. That is under Dalgety's management; they have a monopoly, and they use it, I can assure you.