

plained in moving the second reading, an agreement was arrived at, and it was decided that details should be discussed at a further meeting between the Attorney General and representatives of the Civil Service Association and the Teachers' Union. At that meeting—not at a conference with the Government—the Bill originally drafted was agreed to, and that Bill provided for appointment by the Civil Service Association and the Teachers' Union.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That was at a conference with the Attorney General?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Well, the Attorney General represented the Government.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: In the circumstances I am quite free to take up the position that the House is perfectly at liberty to decide the case on its merits, because there is a difference of opinion between the Government and the Civil Service Association as to what is the agreement arrived at.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The main point is, why should certain words be struck out? Dr. Saw's amendment represents the understanding arrived at on the 23rd August by the Attorney General and representatives of the Civil Service Association; that is to say, if the words proposed to be struck out are struck out, and certain other words are inserted in lieu. There will be no trouble in getting hon. members to amend this clause so that it will accord with the agreement reached at the conference held on the 23rd August. I shall vote for the amendment.

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

Ayes	10
Noes	7

Majority for .. 3

AYES.

Hon. F. A. Baglin	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. A. Lovekin	Hon. J. W. Hickey
	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. C. McKinnon
Hon. J. Mills	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

The CHAIRMAN: The question now is that the words proposed to be inserted ("appointed by the Civil Service Association of Western Australia") be inserted.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment on the amendment—

That after "by" in the proposed amendment "a ballot of the members of" be inserted.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think that after the suggestion I made to Dr. Saw I should give the Committee a chance to carry that suggestion to its conclusion. My suggestion was that the issue should be decided on this point, and that if it were carried an opportunity should be afforded to place the proposed amendment on the Notice Paper so that members could see exactly what was being done.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 9.5 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 4th November, 1920.

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

QUESTION—RAILWAY FARES, CONCESSION TO JUNIOR WORKERS.

Mr. DAVIES asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Seeing that concession fares on the railways of two-thirds of the ordinary rate have been granted to apprentices, will he see that the same concession is granted to junior workers receiving no higher remuneration than apprentices? 2, If not, why?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, I propose to further confer with the Commissioner of Railways with a view to ascertaining what can be done. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—INCOME TAX, DEDUCTIONS FOR BUILDING COSTS.

Mr. DUFF asked the Premier: 1, Is it correct that, under the State Income Tax Act, those who invest their capital in erecting business premises on leasehold land are

not allowed the per annum proportion of the cost of the buildings, on the basis of the term of the lease, as a deduction from the taxable income derived from such business premises, thereby doing a grave injustice to such investors, the ground landlord who receives the value of the buildings in lieu of rent not being taxed on same? 2, Is he aware that under the Commonwealth Income Tax Act such deduction is allowed? 3, Will he bring in an amending Bill at an early date to make the taxation in such cases fall on the proper persons and, in the meantime, authorise the State Commissioner of Taxation to allow such deductions?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes. 3, No.

QUESTION—PUBLIC SERVANTS' STRIKE.

Exemptions from pay deductions.

Mr. SMITH asked the Premier: 1, Is it a fact that lists have been prepared exempting certain public servants from the deductions from salaries that are now being made to repay the amounts advanced for the period of the strike? 2, If so, is it his intention to place a copy of these lists on the Table of the House?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. Definite instructions have been issued for the guidance of departments authorising payment of salaries to—(a) officers on leave; (b) officers who actually attended their offices each day, and so far as possible carried out their ordinary duties. 2, No.

BILL—LUNACY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 19th October.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. T. P. Draper—West Perth) [437]: I gathered from the speeches that have been made regarding this measure that there are complaints that the Bill does not carry out the recommendations of the select committee. The recommendations made by that committee are capable of a much wider interpretation than either this House or the select committee, I think, intended. Some remarks have been made in this Chamber based upon the widest interpretation of the committee's report. It is suggested that the control of the Hospital for the Insane should be handed over entirely to the board. To carry that out literally, means abolishing ministerial control altogether.

Mr. O'Loughlen: How much ministerial control is there now?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No one, I am sure, desires that ministerial control should be abolished at the present time. If we retain ministerial control, this is a very easy matter. It is quite simple to make

slight adjustments in the Bill which I think will meet every requirement. It is a mistake to suppose that the Inspector General of the Insane, by reason of the Lunacy Act, has any duties imposed upon him in connection with the management of the institution.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He does scarcely anything else at present.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It does not require an Act to alter the management of the institution. The duties of the Inspector General of the Insane are set out in the various sections of the Act. Speaking from memory, I think they are all sections which deal with his duty on the professional side. It follows, therefore, that if we desire to make any alteration in the management it is not necessary to have statutory provisions. An alteration has been made regarding the board of visitors. In addition to altering the constitution of the board, many of the powers now given by the Act to the Inspector General are vested in the board. The board will visit the Hospital for the Insane at short periods, and the Bill prescribes what the board may do. The powers given to the board can certainly be left alone. It may be that in the Committee stage it will be found desirable to make certain additions. Without in any way committing the Minister who is in charge of this Bill, but merely by way of example, I would point out to members that it would be very easy to provide that, subject to the control of the Minister which will always be necessary, at any rate for the expenditure of moneys involved, the board can give instructions, not on the professional side but as regards the management of the hospital. If power of that kind were given, it would, at any rate, give the board greater interest, and more control over the management of the institution than they have at the present time. I think that directions given by the board regarding the management would remove possibly a great many of the troubles which crop up from time to time. In fairness to the Inspector General it is absurd to expect him to carry out the duties of a high professional nature and at the same time throw upon his shoulders the whole of the business management of an institution like the Hospital for the Insane. That is not a matter for an Act or the board, but of re-organising the institution..

Mr. O'Loughlen: We may get a good doctor but a poor manager.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is not by any means uncommon. It has been suggested that the power of the board to grant releases from this institution is insufficient, and exception is taken to the fact that upon the board there are two medical men. I would point out that that appears to be essentially a Committee matter, but for my own part I would certainly pay more attention to the opinion of two medical men on the question as to whether a person was insane or not,

than I should do to the opinions of the other three members of the board. Laymen are not the best judges as to whether a person is insane or not, and I feel sure members will know instances where the release of people who have had the misfortune to be inmates of an institution of this character and have then been let out, has resulted in calamity not only to themselves but to others. It appears absolutely necessary that in judging whether a person is to be released or not, one of the medical members of the board should be included in the majority who grant the release. There seems to be an impression that there is no power of a satisfactory nature for the court to determine whether a person is insane or not. Under Section 107 a judge of the Supreme Court has power, upon information placed before him, to decide the question in the ordinary way, and under a later section which appears in another part of the Act, there is power also for the judge, if he so desires, to have a jury empanelled to decide the question. It is certainly desirable that the judge should have the discretion to say whether a jury should be empanelled. Again, this is a matter for the Committee to decide. Under the Act as it stands Section 115, which gives power to empanel a jury, appears in another part of the Act which does not deal with the release of inmates and which may not apply to this question of the sanity of an inmate who desires to be released and, therefore, the only court of law to decide the question may be the judge. To remove any doubt of this nature a short clause could easily be inserted in that part of the Act which deals with the release of inmates, giving express power to the judge if he so desires to refer the issue to a jury to be empanelled for the purpose. If the House considers, not the actual wording of the select committee's report, but the spirit of the report, and also the undoubted fact that no one desires to abolish Ministerial control, it will be realised that the Bill with a few slight amendments can be made to meet, for the present at any rate, the requirements of the institution. I trust, therefore, that the Bill will pass the second reading.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.48]: I do not think it was the intention of the select committee that ministerial control should be altogether abolished, but members were of opinion that the Minister was not in a position to exercise any control at all. In the administration of his various sub-departments the Minister has so many other duties to carry out that for several years, the whole control of the Hospital for the Insane has been in the hands of the Inspector General. The Inspector General found that the duties were too onerous for him, and this necessitated the appointment of a superintendent to assist him in the management of the institution. We were up against the position that very little attention was being given to the patients by the In-

spector General, who is a highly paid medical officer, and who was appointed to look after the patients. Most of his time was occupied in administrative work and in going from one institution to another. The superintendent also had to take on his shoulders a great part of the management, and again the patients had to go short of medical attention. The position of the institution today is that, while we have three medical officers, or one more than institutions of a similar size in England, two of them are devoting most of their time to the management of the institution. I cannot see why any objection should be raised to a board of management under the control of the Minister.

The Colonial Secretary: It would not be under the control of the Minister.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Minister would not for one moment think that the select committee contemplated the appointment of a board which could make calls upon the Treasury in any manner it desired.

Hon. T. Walker: It is absurd to imagine so.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No one would imagine that for a moment. Under the select committee's proposal it would be impossible for the board to authorise anything involving the expenditure of money, outside the usual routine of food and medicines which is provided for in the Estimates, unless with the Minister's approval. The Minister would have to be consulted in every case.

Mr. O'Loughlin: If the board's case was strong the Minister would invariably agree.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In Great Britain the whole of the institutions are managed by boards which have full control. The county asylums in England are under the direct control of the county councils, and they appoint a board from their numbers which is termed a visiting committee as is the case under this Bill. The visiting committee manage the institution, and appoint smaller committees to check expenditure and see that it is justified. There is a direct examination of everything requisitioned for and every penny of expenditure is checked, just as it would be in a private business, in order to keep the cost of maintenance down to the lowest possible fraction.

The Colonial Secretary: The funds for the administration are raised by the county council.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The county councils do not raise the funds. The board of guardians raise the funds for patients who cannot pay for themselves, so that if the cost of administration increases, all they have to do is to make a charge on another party who have to raise the funds. In connection with our institutions, there has been only one man to decide what should be done, and the Treasury was open to him to get it done. That has been the position here. During my stay in England I took an opportunity to visit the asylum in Cornwall, an institution which has approximately 100 more inmates than has the

Claremont Hospital for the Insane. The population of Cornwall is rather more than that of Western Australia. During the year ended the 31st January, 1918, and members should bear in mind that this was a year of war, this institution, having 100 patients more than ours, was run at approximately half the cost of ours. I am not going to say that there is extravagance at our institution.

Mr. Teesdale: Perhaps the patients there do not get butter.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No doubt it is due to the scrutiny and supervision of the committee and to the extra care taken that their costs are so low in comparison with ours. The member for Roebourne said that perhaps the patients in the Cornish institution did not receive butter. I cannot say whether they did or not, but I know that there was a farm for the purpose of producing the butter.

Mr. Teesdale: It would be pretty expensive to supply butter which cost 2s. 8d. a pound twice a day.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I cannot say. In that institution everything possible is done for the patients, who are under the close scrutiny not only of the visitors of the various boards of guardians, but of the Commissioner who has to visit each institution at least twice a year to see that the patients are well cared for and attended to. During the year 1917-18 there was a great scarcity of commodities in England and very heavy prices had to be paid for the requirements of the institution. I suppose that the year 1917 was one of the worst years from the point of view of obtaining food supplies, which England has ever experienced and we know that the cost of commodities was excessive. Yet, in face of that, the cost of running the institution was only £41,000. I take it that the supervision exercised by the committee of management accounted for the low cost of administration there as compared with our cost.

The Colonial Secretary: What was the cost per head?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: For pauper patients the institution received 10s. 9d. and 11s. 1d. per head per week.

The Colonial Secretary: Is that the cost?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Those were the amounts received for their upkeep. From the guardians of other parishes, the institution received 14s. This would be from those districts outside the rateable area.

The Colonial Secretary: That is not the cost.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The whole of the cost has to be met out of that amount. If the patients cannot pay, the cost is charged up to the board of guardians. The amount of subscriptions received is very small indeed.

The Colonial Secretary: Is the cost per head given in the report which you have?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I cannot put my hand on it at present. The total cost for the year was £41,565 and the number of inmates at the beginning of the year was 1,258 and at the end of the year 1,215. The advantage of administration by the committee

is that the medical superintendent does not waste any of his time in the management of the institution or in attending to matters outside of his medical duties. His work is entirely to look after the patients. The secretary, or steward as he is termed there, is appointed by the committee and he is responsible for running the institution. Everything has to pass through him. Even if a doctor requires medicines he has to put in his requisition through the secretary or steward, just as is necessary when any other article is required. And these requisitions are checked by the committee at their various meetings. The committee meet monthly, but a smaller or a sub-committee meet oftener. The position is that at the end of three months they present to the county council a report on the institution dealing with the patients. Then, of course, the annual report includes the report of the committees and also that of the medical superintendent. Some criticism has been made during the second reading debate on this Bill in regard to the persons who should be appointed to the committee of management. When the select committee were dealing with this question they realised that, so far as Western Australia was concerned, it would be impossible to carry out the English system. In the first place there was no necessity to appoint a board of commissioners by reason of the fact that here we have only one institution. Then it was not considered necessary to pay high salaries, as is done in England, and neither was there any necessity to appoint such a big committee to manage the institution. In England there are 11 commissioners. The chairman receives £1,800 a year and the salary of each of the others must not exceed £1,500, while the lay members of the committee hold their positions in an honorary capacity. The personnel of the commission in England is made up of medical men, legal practitioners, and three or four lay persons, one of whom is a woman. The salaries paid in England may be regarded as high, but we must remember that the commissioners who receive those salaries are professional men and they are continually engaged in their work. They go throughout Great Britain inspecting these institutions. Of the 11 commissioners four are medical men and four are legal practitioners.

The Colonial Secretary: How many institutions do they control?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not know, but I am pointing out that it would be impossible to carry out a similar system in Western Australia because we have only one institution. The other institutions are merely branches. The select committee also took into consideration the fact that the committees of management in England were voluntary committees and that they worked under the supervision or control of the paid commissioners to whom I have referred. That being so, we asked ourselves which system would be the best for us to follow, and we decided to re-

commend a system of management on a basis somewhat similar to that in force in England, with, of course, a reduced committee, and with the one committee to have control. That is why we recommended, in accordance with the English Act, the appointment of two medical men, a barrister and two lay persons, one of whom should be a woman. The English people find it an advantage to have a barrister on the board of commissioners. The Attorney General remarked the other day that a barrister or solicitor would have no more idea of lunacy matters than would an ordinary person. Whether that be so or not I cannot say, but I do contend that a barrister or solicitor, by reason of his training, is better fitted than a layman to conduct investigations which a board of commissioners would very often find it necessary to do. That is one of the reasons why the British Government consider it essential to have legal practitioners on the board of commissioners. The select committee also thought it advisable to have a committee of experts for the purpose of managing the institution and that that committee should also have the power to discharge patients. The Bill before the House gives that power to the board, provided that one medical officer agrees that the discharge of a patient shall take place. While in England I made particular inquiries in regard to the method of discharging patients, and I came away impressed with the views that they do not stick closely to the policy of insisting that a patient shall have completely recovered from his mental trouble before granting him his discharge.

The Attorney General: It would depend on the nature of the trouble.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: They consider important the fact whether a person who is applying for the release of a patient is in a position to look after that patient and whether he is in such circumstances that no danger will arise to the public from the handing over of the patient to his care. In every case of an application for the release of a patient, the person making the application is summoned to appear before the committee and is examined by the committee who desire to be convinced that the applicant will be able to take every care of the patient. Under the English law, one commissioner has the power to discharge a patient. Many patients have been discharged from institutions and having been well looked after have recovered from their mental troubles. There are of course cases where the application for the release of a patient is refused. It may be realised that the person who applies for the discharge of a patient is not suitable to have the care of that patient, or that he is not in the position to properly look after the patient. But even in those cases the relatives or friends go away satisfied that they have had a fair deal. The difficulty we in Western Australia experience is that the relatives and friends are not satisfied that they are being

dealt with fairly in regard to the applications they make for the release of patients. In my opinion, and I think it was the opinion of the select committee, there appears to be a certain fear on the part of the medical men which prevents them from releasing patients. A case was instanced to us where a patient was permitted to go out with his wife for some time and afterwards he got into an outhouse in Perth and shot himself.

Mr. Teesdale: You know what a scare there is amongst women when a patient gets away.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Of course there is a certain responsibility on the medical men.

The Attorney General: It is a big responsibility for one man.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: And therefore he has a certain amount of fear in regard to carrying that responsibility. At the same time, if there are persons who are able to look after their afflicted relatives or friends, the sooner those unfortunate people are released from the institution the better. I am afraid that, owing to the time which is taken up by the medical officers at Claremont in the management of the institution, they are not in the position to say whether a patient should or should not be released. It was stated in evidence before the select committee that patients were released week after week with no one to look after them but their wives.

Hon. T. Walker: And sometimes not even their wives.

The Colonial Secretary: That is done in every institution in the world.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not complaining about that but what I am complaining about is that those people who are allowed out so frequently are not able to get their discharge.

The Colonial Secretary: Because they are not fit to go out.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If there is any danger, the doctors cannot guarantee that that danger is not going to arise between Saturday and Monday when the patients have their freedom. I honestly believe that the Bill, even as it is, empowering the committee to discharge patients, will give satisfaction. Evidence was given before the select committee in regard to a patient who had got away from the institution and had gone home to his farm, put in 100 acres of crops and had carried out other work on the farm satisfactorily. A warrant was taken out for the man's arrest, and he was on his farm for some time without the authorities knowing anything about his being there. Eventually that man was discharged. There was no fear whatever with regard to him. The only fear that does exist is on the part of the medical officer, who for that reason will not sign a discharge. If the management of the institution were placed under the control of a committee, the number of recoveries there

might possibly increase. In this respect Western Australia compares very badly with the Eastern States and with the old country. In 1918 the percentage of recoveries to admissions was 36.83 in New South Wales, 20.34 in Victoria, 46.38 in Queensland, 44.3 in South Australia, and 15.96 in Western Australia. These figures do not show Western Australia in an advantageous light. The institution in Cornwall to which I have referred had a recovery percentage of 38.16. As regards our institution at Claremont, we were told that there was no reason whatever for the small percentage of recoveries. Then the medical officers were asked whether they thought the war might have something to do with it. The reply was, "No doubt it had." Yet at the institution in Cornwall, where the effects of the war were being keenly felt, the percentage of recoveries was double that at Claremont. If the war had anything to do with the matter, one would think that the percentage of recoveries would fall off considerably in a place subject to attack by aeroplanes and zeppelins and torpedoes day after day.

The Minister for Mines: Had that Cornwall institution a committee of management?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes. Another advantage of committee management is that it prohibits the punishment of patients. I asked the secretary of the Cornwall institution, "Do you ever punish a patient here if he strikes a doctor or an attendant?" The secretary said, "What do you mean by 'punishing a patient'?" I said "Suppose the doctor is going on his rounds and a patient strikes him, do you impose any punishment on the patient for so doing?" The reply was, "We are under the impression that every inmate of this institution is insane, and not responsible for his actions." I asked, "Do you put such a patient on bread and water for a week?" The secretary replied, "If that were done, the doctor or the attendant responsible would find his position gone after the next meeting of the board."

Hon. P. Collier: It is done here.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Such cases are referred to the committee of management, and the committee deal with them. The secretary added, "We rarely even put a patient into a straight jacket. If we do, it has to be reported; and good reasons have to be given for putting a patient under such restraint." That is another reason why I think a committee of management would be advantageous to the Claremont institution. We have direct evidence that at that institution it is a common practice, if an insane person strikes a doctor or an attendant, to put that insane person on bread and water in a cell for a week or a fortnight. If there was a committee of management at Claremont, such a thing would not be allowed to occur. Again, I

find that the attention of the committee of the Cornwall institution has been given to securing a large measure of freedom to the patients while they are inmates of the institution. In Cornwall they do not put men or women inside four walls, as is done at Claremont. In Cornwall that system has been abolished years ago. In fact, the secretary says that the close confinement system has been abolished in practically every institution in England. He said, "We let our patients out. They go round the country with the attendants. If anything special is going to take place in the town, we let our patients go there, for the express purpose of diverting their minds." I myself saw over 300 patients going out of the gate of that institution, with very few attendants accompanying them. Not a week goes by but every patient who is fit to leave the grounds is given permission to do so under the charge of an attendant. That system is of much greater benefit to the patients than the system of keeping them cooped within four walls, as at Claremont. The secretary said, "Exercise yards are a thing of the past. We have them here in the old portion of the building, but not in the new portion." The system of keeping patients in close confinement is, according to my informant, a thing of the past in England. No doubt a committee of management at Claremont would do something in the direction of giving greater liberty to the patients. As Dr. Birmingham said in his evidence, "The place should be made more of a hospital, and less of a prison." The Attorney General to-day did not say that the Government would appoint a board, but he said that there was power to appoint a board without inserting such a specific power in the Act—that it was only a matter of reorganisation of the administration.

The Colonial Secretary: I think you misunderstood the Attorney General.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Those may not be the exact words of the Attorney General, but they represent the effect of them. He said that the Act as it stands to-day does not invest the Inspector General of the Insane with powers of management, but deals with his duties as a medical officer. The Attorney General further declared that with some slight amendments of the Act the recommendations of the select committee could be carried out. I think members will be perfectly satisfied if Ministers will tell them that a committee of management is to be appointed. Apart from one of the provisions of this Bill, we might as well not have the measure at all, since under it the management will continue as it is to-day. We are wasting money year after year by paying highly qualified men to perform duties which they are not fitted to carry out. Let us keep them at their own work, and we may find them qualified. The work they are doing is not that for which they are paid. It may be of benefit to some of us to give attention to the improvement

of the institution at Claremont, because we do not know how soon some of us may find ourselves there. We hope we shall not find ourselves there, but we do not know. The Bill should make provision for power to receive at the Claremont institution—I do not say in the same building, but in some annex—patients of recent origin and specific type. We all know that occasionally persons through weakness, or through being upset, become temporarily deranged. The consequence now is that they must be put into the Claremont institution, and before they can go there they must be declared insane. Such a thing affects every member of the patient's family; one of the first things that one is asked when proposing to take out a policy of life insurance is whether there has been insanity in the family. The Bill should provide that a doctor who thoroughly understands the case may send a temporarily deranged person into the Claremont institution for a month or two, without having the patient declared insane. That system obtains in England and other parts of the world at the present time.

Mr. Davies: You mean a sort of detention ward?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: A ward to which a doctor could order such a patient to be sent without having him declared insane.

Mr. Davies: There is a detention ward at the Perth Public Hospital.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: But patients are kept there only for a day or two, and when they are found to have something wrong with them they are transferred to the asylum. Again, it would be desirable to provide that persons could enter the Claremont institution voluntarily. Take the case of a patient who has been discharged, and after being out for a few months, or, say, 12 months, feels himself unwell. Such a patient should have the opportunity of voluntarily entering the Claremont institution for a week or two, and then coming out again. But, as things are to-day, once a person gets into that institution, heaven only knows when he will get out again. The result is that patients remain outside until they become so ill mentally that probably there is no chance of cure. They remain outside until it is too late. Therefore provision should be made whereby persons could avail themselves of the Claremont institution temporarily, with a certain degree of safety to themselves and with advantage to their friends. Further, I think the board should have power to inspect private institutions. An institution licensed to care for mental patients privately should be subject to examination by the board, and the medical men on that board should also examine the patients themselves, to see that everything is in order. If we remain as at present, the whole of this will continue to devolve upon one man. It is desirable that there should be more than one man with the power to say

whether a patient shall be discharged from an institution. The only objection I have to the Bill is that it does not provide for a board of management under the Minister. If the Minister will assure us that a board can be appointed by regulation, and that it is intended to reorganise the management down there, I will offer no opposition to the Bill; but unless a board is appointed and something different provided for the management of the institution the Bill might as well never have been introduced.

Hon. T. Walker: Far better, in fact.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It will be used in the future merely as a back-up for the Inspector General of Insane. The only chance I see of fair play for the patients in the institution is the appointment of a board controlled by the Minister.

Mr. JONES (Fremantle) [5.32]: I should like to make an appeal to the Minister that he favourably consider a number of amendments when in Committee. If the Minister will agree to that, I see no reason why the second reading should not go through, in spite of the widespread disappointment the Bill has created. On the conclusion of the work of the select committee the Government gave us an assurance in this Chamber that the recommendations of that committee would be put into effect. We did not expect that everything we asked would be done, but we hoped that much more would be done than is attempted in the Bill. We never realised at the time that the Bill would give palpable evidence of having been drafted by the Inspector General himself.

The Colonial Secretary: You are not correct in saying that. It is wrong.

Mr. JONES: If that is so, it would almost appear that whoever drafted the Bill was familiar with the mind of the Inspector General.

Hon. T. Walker: That he was hypnotised by him.

Mr. JONES: The committee asked for the appointment of a board of control, not merely the glorification of the present visiting board, not merely a board which would make it still more difficult for patients to get out, by hedging them around with three medical men instead of one. There is no closer trades union in the world than that of the medical profession. If one doctor says that a thing is black, all others say the same. That being so, the difficulty a patient has in getting out will be greatly increased through his having to pass three doctors instead of one. If the two medical men sitting on the board constitute a court of appeal through which patients can earn their release, it seems to me there is no longer any need for the office of Inspector General. One of the recommendations of the committee was that legislation be introduced to place all mental defectives under a board of control, and abolish the office of Inspector General. The committee arrived at the conclusion that what was most needed at the Hospital for the Insane was more medical

attention, to make the place more of a hospital and less of a prison. We require down there capable alienists, men able to determine whether a man is improving or getting worse, and to prescribe treatment calculated to result in his cure. The evidence before the select committee proved that that sort of thing had never been done at the hospital. We had examples of patients being punished for trivial offences, we had instances of their being shut up in solitary confinement, given croton oil, and placed in strait-jackets for unreasonable periods, but no instances of medical attention being given to the mind of any patient. The time of the medical superintendent and of the Inspector General is largely taken up in looking after the business management of the place. Even if he had the ability, the Inspector General has no time to properly attend to the medical requirements of the patients. It was to secure an alteration of that system that the committee brought in the report which they did. They wished to take the business control, the matter of running the dairy, and the general organisation of the institution, out of the hands of the medical man, so that he could devote the whole of his time to effecting cures amongst the patients. Has the Bill striven to bring about that change? Of course not. It seems so reasonable to ask that the patients should receive what they are not getting to-day, namely, medical attention. If the Bill can be amended to provide for that, I have no objection to it. It is better to have a board than to leave questions of life and death to one man. But it is better still to define the powers of that board in such a way as will tend to the benefit of the institution, instead of as contemplated in the Bill. I do not intend to oppose the second reading, but I appeal to the Minister to be reasonable in the matter of amendments, to let us try to make this a real board of control, to free the doctor from duties which should not rest on the medical profession, and give him a chance to prove that he is an alienist by effecting cures and so raising the very low standard of discharges from the Hospital for the Insane at Claremont.

Mr. STUBBS (Wagin) [5.40]: As a member of the select committee which inquired into the control and management of the Hospital for the Insane, I think it my duty to touch upon a few of the outstanding points which came under my notice while the committee were engaged in their task. I was struck with the short period of time which the doctors spend amongst the patients. They seem to depend a great deal upon the cards submitted to them every morning by the attendants. The evidence of very many witnesses examined tended to confirm the opinion that on an average the doctors spend about 1½ hours per day in the examination of hundreds of patients.

Mr. Jones: And that includes attending to hospital patients also.

Mr. STUBBS: That is so. One of the doctors in his evidence said that he walked around and usually spoke to patients who spoke to him. But it is well known that many of the mental defectives there are morose and do not complain unless they are first spoken to. If a board were appointed to control the institution it would relieve the doctors of all the routine work and the business part of the management of the institution which they at present attend to, and which, in my judgment, should be taken from them, so as to enable them to give at least three or four hours daily to the examining of patients, and the alleviating of their sufferings. I believe the Inspector General to be a highly qualified man, and I believe also that Dr. Bentley is equally clever and perfectly capable of doing all the work required of him. I will support the Bill, but I should have preferred to see the recommendation of the committee for the appointment of a board of control given effect to. In the opinion of the committee that board should have full control. I agree with the previous speaker that the Bill does not go far enough or give effect to the recommendations of the select committee. If members will read the evidence they can come to no other conclusion than that the recommendations of the committee were reasonable and fair, and that it was in the best interests of the institution that we devoted so much of our time and attention to the examination of witnesses and the inspection of the institution. It was this exhaustive inquiry that enabled us to form the conclusions we did. Whilst I have no desire to reflect upon officers in charge of the institutions, I am firmly of the opinion that the present management requires to be greatly improved. So long as I am a member of this Chamber it is my intention to have the present state of affairs altered. The best way to do that is to appoint a board of control and allow the present officers of the institution to perform their proper functions of attending to the patients, leaving matters of routine in the hands of laymen. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill, but I hope the Minister in charge of it will allow it to be re-drafted for the purpose of giving effect to the recommendations of the select committee.

Mr. ROCKE (South Fremantle) [5.47]: The question of the management of the Claremont Hospital for the Insane is one which requires a great deal of thought. Had it not been for the fact that the House has had the benefit of the report of the select committee which took evidence regarding the management of the institution, our position would have been very much more difficult. The report of the select committee has been duly presented in accordance with the evidence tendered, and the burden of it appears to be that the system of management is not of the best. The committee recommend that a board

of control be appointed in the place of the present system. The fact that the committee were unanimous on that point proves that they had good ground for their recommendation. The Bill goes some way in the direction of giving effect to the recommendations, inasmuch as it gives the board power to release patients. I am glad that this little improvement has been made, even if the Bill does not go as far as the committee desired. I do not think any additional obstacle is created in the way of patients getting out of the institution. The board of management may overrule the decision of the present administration. It will have that power. The Bill certainly provides that there must be a majority of the medical members of the board in favour of the release of a patient. In my opinion that is an important provision. The lay mind is not the proper mind to decide whether a person is sane or insane. Members who have visited the institution, and spoken to the patients, have probably come away with the conviction that many of them are perfectly sane.

The Minister for Mines: I have experienced that myself.

Mr. ROCKE: And so have I. I spoke to a man there for two hours, and was very much impressed by what he told me. On one occasion, however, he said he would write out his case and asked me to present it to members of the House. He wrote it out and I read it first. It covered about 90 sheets of foolscap, and when I had read it I was convinced that it was proof of the man's insanity.

The Minister for Mines: Did you read the 90 pages?

Mr. ROCKE: I did.

Mr. Pickering: Come inside!

Mr. ROCKE: There is another aspect of the subject which I am sorry has not been dealt with by the select committee, and that is the subject of classification. We speak of the classification of other institutions and go so far as to demand it. I do not know of any institution where a classification of the patients is more necessary than in the case of the Hospital for the Insane.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We cannot do that until we have larger buildings.

Mr. ROCKE: People are sent there suffering from a temporary derangement. If they succeed in overcoming that, it is certainly proof that they are pretty sound mentally, because the environment of the place should be enough to turn any average mind. I hope that such a system of classification will be brought about. One case comes to my mind, namely, that of a married woman in Fremantle. She was sent away to Perth seven days after her second child was born, and was placed under observation at the Perth Public Hospital. She was detained there for three days, and was sent to the Hospital for the Insane within ten days after the birth of the child. It is common knowledge that a woman's system is out of order just at that time. This woman was suffering

from a nervous breakdown, and as a result of her affliction she was confined to the Hospital for the Insane for a period of 14 months. Eventually she secured her release by the good offices of a medical officer of the institution. Had it not been for that officer I am convinced the woman would be there still. Her experience in the institution is further proof that it is not under proper management. She complained of the food which was cooked by the inmates, and because of the manner in which it was prepared it was nauseating to her, and she refused to eat it. This was looked upon as proof of her insanity. In my opinion it proved that she was sane. She refused to bath under the same conditions as the other patients, or to use the same sponge as the others used. Because of this it was claimed that she was insane. She tore up one of her garments to use as a sponge, and was reported for having destroyed her clothing. She was punished by being put into ward No. 2. I believe. All this is proof that the woman was perfectly sane. There are classes of reform which might be dealt with by the lay mind, and those which should be dealt with by the professional mind. There is much in the domestic arrangements of the institution which is altogether wrong. The lay members of the board could deal with those things, whilst other matters might be left to the professional members.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This is only a committee.

Mr. ROCKE: My hope is that a board of control will be appointed upon which there will be both laymen and professional men. The institution could be placed on a much better footing than it is at present. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) referred to some figures concerning the recoveries which have taken place in the Eastern States and compared them with those in this State. I have here a few figures showing the recoveries which have taken place in Western Australia. In 1916 the recoveries were 10 per cent less than they were in the previous year. In 1917 they were 10 per cent less than they were in 1916, and 1918 they were nine per cent less than they were in 1917.

Hon. T. Walker: They are getting worse all the time.

Mr. ROCKE: Yes, from that point of view. We are quite safe in saying that, for this reason, the institution is not fulfilling its functions as a hospital for the insane. I do not think the treatment is correct. Possibly because I am a layman not much notice will be taken of what I say in that respect. Any ordinary man should be able to see that the conditions at the Hospital for the Insane tend to increase the degree of insanity rather than cure it. The Attorney General says that the Bill might be made presentable by amendments in Committee. That is an admission that the Bill is not what it might be. I would prefer to see the

Bill re-drafted. I shall support the second reading, however, because it does go some way towards making an improvement in the lot of these unfortunate people.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. F. T. Brown—Beverley—in reply) [5.55]: I realise that this question should not be dealt with lightly by any hon. member. My desire in bringing the Bill forward was to cover as nearly as possible the recommendations of the select committee as to the control of this institution. I realise, as Colonial Secretary, that we should have some other avenue whereby patients can obtain their release from the institution if they are fit to be free. I do not say this because I am of opinion that the medical authorities of the institution are not capable of saying whether a person is sane or insane, but I say it because of the innumerable letters that I have received from different patients, and from the relatives of other patients in the institution, asking for their release, and I have come to the conclusion that if we had a board possessing power to release patients, apart from the decisions of the Inspector General or the Superintendent, it would at least give some satisfaction to the patients, and to the relatives who might think that there had been wrongful detention of the patients in the institution. No one knows better than the medical authorities—those who are supervising the institution—whether a man should be released or not. It has been stated this afternoon that patients are frequently let out during the week end and sometimes for periods of two or three days. It was suggested that, if patients could be released for a few days in this way, they should be released for all time. I would draw members' attention to the fact that patients frequently apply to be allowed out at week ends or for other periods, and the Inspector General or the Superintendent is obliged to refuse the request. Everything depends on the condition of the patients. Unfortunately, some of the worst cases in the institution are those who are only periodically insane. These are called "paranoics" and they are dangerous not only to themselves but to the public at certain times. These people appear to be perfectly sane. I have had interviews with some of them, and as far as I, a layman could judge, I could not see anything wrong with them. When, however, these people are put to the test on a certain subject that affects them, they immediately lose control of themselves and become dangerous.

Mr. Roche: These would be people suffering from delusions.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, from certain delusions. The member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) the other evening mentioned a particular case. Hon. members will see from the evidence that there is a certain patient in the Hospital for the Insane who appears to be perfectly normal. This man came to see me in my office. His case was thoroughly investigated. A doctor and a solicitor took

the case up and went to the institution and interviewed the patient. They were left together in the room where the patient was. Before he left, the Inspector General mentioned something to the man regarding which it was known the patient suffered from delusions. The result was that the patient lost his head entirely and nothing could be done with him. Both the doctor and the solicitor were quite convinced that the man was insane and that he was not fit to be at large. There are a number of such cases and they are particularly hard cases.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There was a case where a patient induced two doctors to give him a certificate of sanity.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is the case I mentioned. He was so cunning as to go to two medical men in the city and obtain certificates from them.

The Minister for Mines: That does not prove anything. Why should there be necessity for placing people under observation if doctors can tell by such an examination whether they are sane or insane?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Quite so, that is the position. In any case, the man went to them and secured the certificates as I state. We have to be very careful in this matter and I am sorry that the member for North-East Fremantle did not say whether he would agree that a majority on a board of laymen should be sufficient to release a patient from the institution.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I did not say anything about it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member refrained from dealing with that, but the leader of the Opposition criticised me very severely because I have made a provision in this Bill which is a safeguard and a necessity not only in the interests of the public but of the patients themselves. He criticised me because I have made provision in the Bill that the majority of the board, when deciding as to a patient's sanity, must include a medical man. He said that in such a case the patient would have to go before four medical men instead of two as before. There are two medical men appointed to the institution and two medical men who are independent of the institution. The latter, having nothing to do with the institution, can form their own opinions and conduct investigations and examine available information at any time. I have made provision that the board can go to the institution at any time with or without notice.

Mr. Hickmott: Regarding the doctors, the patient you referred to a little while ago went to them and secured a certificate of sanity. They never saw him at the institution.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In that case the patient went to these doctors separately and asked to be examined regarding his physical condition, as, he said, he was going on a trip and was about to enter into a partnership with another person. When he was receiving his certificate

he asked the doctors to emphasise the point that he was mentally sound. One doctor said that he did not know whether he was mentally sound or not, but presumed so.

Mr. Hickmott: Why did he give him a certificate then?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The patient asked for the certificate and it was given to him. This incident shows how cautious we must be and shows how easy it would be to allow an inmate to leave the institution although he might appear to be sane. I have always taken the advice of the superintendent or of the Inspector General regarding the release of patients. That is a proper course to take, and I would not accept the responsibility over the heads of the medical men with their years of experience and constant watching of mental cases, of saying that any patient could leave the hospital.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I wish they did watch them.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The leader of the Opposition criticised me because provision is made in the Bill that visits to the institution may be made with or without notice. It may be necessary sometimes to give notice of the board's intention to visit the institution, in order to make certain that those they desire to see are present. They may desire to investigate a certain case, and unless they give the notice suggested, it may be that the patient may be absent from the hospital. Provision has been made for the board to visit the institution as often as they like without giving notice. A board of visitors is substituted for the visitors as in the past, and that board will be able to go through every part of the institution and make recommendations to the Minister. When they consider it is essential that certain alterations should be made, undoubtedly the Minister will give instructions that these things shall be attended to. There can be no doubt about that. It was clearly understood that it was recommended by the select committee that with the board of control brought into existence, Ministerial control would be abandoned and that the board would take the administration of the institution entirely out of the hands of the Inspector General.

Hon. T. Walker: Oh no!

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Reading the recommendations of the select committee, we can come to no other conclusion.

Hon. T. Walker: That is not so, any more than is the case with the I.A.B.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I took it that it was just the same as the board of management of the hospital.

Mr. Jones: No, that is not so.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The point has been raised that the Inspector General has quite enough to do in that institution attending to the medical part so far as the patients are concerned. I agree with that view. There is no man living who could

manage an institution like the Claremont Hospital for the Insane and the other institutions he has to deal with, control the farms at Whitby and Claremont, although there are managers there, and deal with other aspects including the medical work as well. I agree that some provision should be made for the management of the institution, apart from the medical part. I intend to ask the House to pass the second reading of the Bill and to postpone the Committee stage, so that I may go into the question and see whether provision can be made to overcome the difficulties that have been mentioned. I desire, and the Government desire, to make the institution as perfect as is possible. We all sympathise with the patients there and it is essential that we should do all we possibly can to provide for their comfort. Provision will be made in the new buildings, which are to be erected, for the classification of cases. Patients suffering from mental disease in a mild form will be put together in different classes. No doubt the position regarding the percentage of recoveries among the patients is due to the overcrowded state of the institution. The present buildings were never constructed to house the number of patients we have there now, and the sooner the new additions are built the better it will be for those in the institution.

Mr. Pickering: What is the new building to cost?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I cannot tell the hon. member. Building costs have gone up considerably. The plans for the new building are now being drawn and as soon as we can ascertain what the structure is likely to cost the information can be supplied. The question of cost must be a secondary consideration. The building is necessary and it will have to be constructed whether the cost is large or small. Regarding the board of control, it seems to me that, in order to secure the best results, it will be necessary for them to appoint a man to be constantly at the institution if the work is to be of any use.

Hon. T. Walker: The board will require to have its permanent officer.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There should be a secretary appointed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Provision is made in the Bill that when instructions are given for certain conditions to be altered, those instructions are to be final, and this will relieve the Inspector General of the management of the institution so far as outside work is concerned. That can be overcome by the appointment, as I suggest, of an officer to devote his attention entirely to this aspect of the work. I do not know that it is necessary for me to dwell further at this stage upon the different matters which have been referred to. Before concluding, however, I desire to emphasise the point I have already made regarding the release of patients and the necessity for all care in arriving at decisions to give inmates

their liberty. I do not want members to disapprove of the clause in the Bill wherein I have proposed that one medical man must be included in the majority of the board before a patient can be released. Provision could be made for an appeal to a jury as well as to a judge, if such is deemed desirable, and that will give still another tribunal to decide whether or not a man is sane. We have in Dr. Birmingham a man of wide experience in this class of work, and I have had a report from him upon the recommendations of the select committee dealing with the release of patients. He says—

Final court for considering suitability for discharge.—This is probably the most important aspect of the question. Unless this duty is carried out with wisdom and discretion and knowledge of the subject, there is grave danger in homicidal and suicidal persons being allowed out. The danger here is very real. The average layman thinks he is quite able to pronounce on the question of mental condition. Even the omniscient judge errs in this direction. About 1902 or 1903 a certain man was released by a judge against the advice of Dr. Montgomery and signalled his return to civil life by an attempt to shoot up his family. Fortunately there were no casualties. Even medical practitioners are not very clear on this point. At the Parliamentary Committee I was shown certificates from two medical practitioners stating that a man was sane, whom I know to be insane. Of course, no doctor gifted with common sense would declare a man sane on the evidence of a brief interview; the furthest he would go would be to state there was no evidence of insanity present. To entrust this duty to a mixed committee, none of whose members have been trained to the work, would be to court disaster.

That covers the position on this particular point.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—PRICES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th October.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [7.30]: During the 10 months that the Prices Regulation Act has been in operation, it has occasioned a good deal of comment from various sections of the community. Perhaps it would be correct to say that the major portion of that criticism has been rather antagonistic, but notwithstanding that there may have been disappointments as to the results achieved by the operations of the Act, I believe that on the whole it has exercised a beneficial influence.

Mr. Underwood interjected.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is a very controversial question, one upon which many men might hold widely different views. It is true that the Act has not prevented a rise in the price of food supplies and necessary commodities generally, and because week by week and month by month prices have kept on soaring, a considerable number of consumers take the view that the Act has been a failure. It seems to be forgotten, however, that the power given to the Commission under the Act is very limited because, as was pointed out by the Minister for Mines when moving the second reading of the Bill, the Commission could only deal with prices upon their landed costs. We know that a considerable portion of our food supplies are brought from overseas, mostly from the Eastern States, and necessarily the prices were to some extent fixed before the goods were in the way of a policeman. After all, the Commission could do was to see that our local traders did not obtain an undue profit by raising prices unfairly above the landed cost. I think that the operations of the Act have been beneficial, and that the Act has operated in the nature of a policeman. After all, the traders in this State are no different from the traders in other parts of the world, and if an opportunity offered to indulge in excessive prices, or what might be described as profiteering, retailers would not be above taking advantage of it, any more than any other section of the community. That is only human nature.

Mr. Underwood: Did the Commission prevent prices from coming down?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Some people hold that they did. Some sections of the community are of opinion that price-fixing has a tendency to raise prices.

Mr. Underwood: Or to keep them up.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not think that price-fixing here had that effect. If the price-fixing tribunal does its work thoroughly and exhaustively, the prices fixed generally would be such that no trader would or could sell at a lower figure if such a law were not in existence. The hon. member seems to think that because prices are fixed by an outside body, the people dealing in commodities would not reduce prices below those fixed by the tribunal, even if they were in a position to do so.

Mr. Underwood: There is a restraint of trade which prevents them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know that commerce is carried on in any part of the world without being subjected to restraint in some direction or another. Since this Bill was introduced in another place, I have read statements to the effect that there is no necessity for legislation of this character at all, that the price of commodities should be left to what is known as the law of supply and demand. I do not know whether that law was in operation when the Bill was originally introduced. I am satisfied that the law of supply and demand is not operating to-day."

The Minister for Mines: We could not permit it in the interests of our producers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Even if we could, those who argue along those lines have failed to observe the trend of events in recent years. It may have been that in years gone by the law of supply and demand did regulate prices, but that has not been the case in recent years, and even before the war broke out and before the necessity for any restrictive legislation was recognised, the law of supply and demand had gone by the board.

Mr. Gardiner: The demand to-day is a long way in excess of the supply.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not necessarily; there are any number of commodities in Australia, the supply of which is altogether beyond the demand, but the prices do not come down. As a matter of fact, the supply of quite a number of commodities in this country is enormously beyond the demand, but I will not say that that applies to the world demand.

The Minister for Mines: We cannot reach the demand.

Mr. Pilkington: Beyond Australian demand, not beyond the demand of the world.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But where there is an excessive supply, prices to-day are higher than they have ever been in the history of the world.

Mr. Underwood: That is because of the price-raising board.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is all very well to talk of the law of supply and demand as regards the whole of the world's requirements. It might be argued that the producer in Australia should be allowed to take advantage of the law of supply and demand, because there is a scarcity in other parts of the world, and that he should be allowed to obtain the higher prices ruling in the world's markets. The people who argue thus forget that, but for the power and the organised force of Governments throughout Australia, it would be impossible to take advantage of the world's demand.

Mr. Pilkington: The producer cannot do it now.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He can, to some extent. If he cannot do it now, and admitting, as has been stated, that there is an over supply of certain commodities in Australia, prices should come down. Apart from that aspect of the question we know perfectly well that, even when the supply in Australia is greater than the demand, prices do not come down.

Mr. Underwood: The price-raising board stop them from coming down.

The Minister for Mines: Why do we give guarantees against some of our commodities? Because the world's prices are not high enough. We enable some of our industries to hold out against the glut and because they cannot reach the world's markets. That was the case with pearlshell.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Why do we guarantee the price of wheat when prices else-

where are high? It is because our producers cannot take advantage of the high prices ruling elsewhere. The London prices of flour and wheat are of no use to the producer unless, he can take advantage of them.

Mr. O'Loghlen: And of fruit.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so. Consequently the Government step in and guarantee a certain price. Apart from that aspect the combinations of traders and capital in recent times have altogether eliminated the law of supply and demand. It is a well recognised principle to-day that in almost every line of goods, it matters not whether they be food supplies or goods of any other description, there are what is known as honourable understandings. The men engaged in producing or selling particular lines of goods have organisations.

Mr. Underwood: Do not the Commission pay attention to these honourable understandings?

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not think so. There are organisations which meet to fix prices at which goods shall be sold, quite regardless of whether there is an excess of supply.

Mr. Underwood: And the Commission back them up.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Pilbara can vote against the Bill if he pleases. By the organisation of combines, and in the case of monopolies where competition does not exist, prices are fixed and regulated by those concerned. Price fixing is no new thing. It has been indulged in for many years past.

Mr. Pickering: For many centuries.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps so; certainly to a degree in recent years that was not known in former years. It has been adopted by individuals and combinations of individuals who have goods to sell. They meet together, fix the prices at which they will sell their bran or flour or whatever the goods might be, and the consuming public have to pay the prices so fixed, prices for the benefit of themselves, a comparatively small section of the community. This being the case, there is nothing wrong with the principle of the Government acting on behalf of the whole of the people, stepping in and fixing prices, or taking steps to fix prices for the benefit of everyone.

Mr. Johnston: Western Australia was the first State in Australia to adopt that principle.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and all the other States in the Commonwealth have fallen into line. There is not a State in Australia which has not one or more price-fixing tribunals. This, of course, may not be a sound argument in favour of price-fixing tribunals.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Ours has not been effective.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member cannot say that.

The Minister for Mines: He is quite wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe he is quite wrong.

Mr. Hudson: It has acted as a check.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, as a policeman. The member for Pilbara cannot say that prices would not have gone still higher than they have if there had been no such legislation.

Mr. Underwood interjected.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member may say it, but he cannot prove it.

Mr. Gardiner interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! This is not the Committee stage; this is the second reading stage.

Hon. P. COLLIER. The hon. member cannot prove it; at least I have not been able to get hold of any figures to prove that contention. I believe that price-fixing has been effective in keeping down prices. Price-fixing has been adopted in Great Britain. In fact, Governments in all countries have adopted it. It seems to me that if individuals, or associations of individuals, who are in the position to control the necessary food supplies of a nation during a war period, and by doing that hold the life of that nation in their hands—to ask anyone to believe that those people if unchecked and uncontrolled would keep in mind all the time the needs of the country without regard to their own pockets, and that they would not take advantage of their position and opportunity to raise prices to enable them to reap a reward—to ask me to believe that they would not do that, is to ask too much. Therefore, Governments in all countries have taken control, either direct control or by means of legislation similar to ours. The time has not yet arrived when we can afford to discard legislation of this description and allow things to go back to the state in which they were. If there is not greater need, there is equal need to continue price fixing legislation. We know that prices are higher to-day than they were even in the war period, but if they were not controlled they would be higher still. One needs only to remember that week after week during the first year of the operation of the Prices Regulation Act in this State, requests were made by various sections of the trading community for permission to increase prices, and frequently it was refused. Will anyone tell me that had the Commission not been in existence the merchants would not have raised their prices? Of course they would. I believe that the Act has justified itself, and I believe that it should continue for another year at least. With regard to the operations of the Act during the past 12 months, I notice that the Minister proposes to amend it in order to take the power to forfeit, if need be, necessary commodities. I think the House believed that we were taking to ourselves that power when the measure was going through last year. Certainly on read-

ing the clause in the Bill now, it seems to me that it is not strong enough and will not be effective in enabling the Government to take control of commodities or to compel persons trading in necessary commodities to sell them at the prices fixed by the Commission. We have an instance—there are many, I suppose—with regard to what took place in connection with the supply of bran and pollard in Western Australia during the present year. We know that a few months ago there was a great scarcity of offal—bran and pollard were unprocurable. That condition exists to-day, and whilst the people of this State were unable to obtain the necessary supplies of bran and pollard, we were at the same time exporting large quantities to New South Wales. It was never intended when the Act was passed that such a condition of things should exist. The reason of course was that, whilst the price fixed by the board was between £7 and £8 per ton, the price obtainable in New South Wales was in the region of £11 or £12. Of course whilst those who had supplies were able to get such a high price in New South Wales, they were not prepared to sell the offal locally for £7. There should be power to compel those concerned to meet all local requirements before being permitted to export, otherwise the legislation is of no value whatever in regard to any of those commodities for which there is a market outside Western Australia. The Bill seeks to give the power to prevent a repetition of that state of affairs. We thought we had it in Section 14 of the Act, and I believe that the Government, had they desired to take steps to prevent the export of bran and pollard, could have done so. The Government have not endeavoured to administer the Act in so far as the export or the local supplies of bran and pollard are concerned, as they should have done.

Mr. Pickering: They should have held supplies for future requirements.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They should not have allowed the export of offal from this State when it was likely that there would be a scarcity here.

Mr. Johnston: You could not prevent the export to the Eastern States.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I think we could.

Mr. Johnston: Not under the Federal Constitution.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Bill seeks to prevent the export; it assumes power to forfeit the goods to the Government.

Mr. Pilkington: Those goods would have gone overseas before the question arose.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps so, and if that should be the case it will not be much use passing the amendment. We thought that under Section 14 of the Act we were safeguarded in similar circumstances. Now the member for Perth tells me that the Bill is not going to assist us out of similar difficulties.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He has little faith in this class of legislation.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At the same time the legislation does not affect the point as to whether the Government would be able to attain the object they have in view by the passing of the amendment. I should say they would have the power, but of course it would be possible to export the goods before the Government could act. At any rate I hope they will be able to prevent the export of commodities that are required in the State. There is something radically wrong in the condition of things which allows the export of goods to another State whilst the industries in Western Australia are closing down for the want of the article. That has taken place during the present year. Something like 5,600 tons of bran and pollard went to New South Wales.

Mr. Teesdale: Mostly contracts.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am led to believe that most of that quantity went within a period of two or three months, towards the end of the financial year.

The Minister for Mines: Just at that period there was every prospect of the mills here going full time and then having a surplus.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But only in the event of our having a surplus would local requirements be met at the price fixed by the Commission. So long as a market can be found outside Western Australia at a higher price than that fixed by the Prices Regulation Commission, so long will there be a shortage of supplies in Western Australia. There is something defective in an Act which permits that. I need not point out what results are likely to follow so far as poultry raising and similar industries are concerned owing to the shortage of bran and pollard. I know of dairymen on the goldfields who are unable to obtain supplies and they are forced to the position that they may have to give up business altogether.

The Minister for Mines: Crushed oats are cheaper and better feed.

Mr. Underwood: But the price of oats has gone up as well.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Whether that price increases or not depends on the Commission. If there is a market overseas for that commodity it will be exported.

[The hon. member resumed his seat.]

Mr. PILKINGTON rose to speak.

Mr. SPEAKER: Did the leader of the Opposition conclude his speech?

Hon. P. Collier: I did intend to continue. I had something more to say, but when everybody is carrying on a conversation one cannot speak.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member resumed his seat.

Hon. P. Collier: I resumed it in disgust, because of the conversations.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may proceed.

Hon. P. Collier: I do not wish to.

Mr. PILKINGTON (Perth) [8.2]: The Bill before the House is one of great importance. It is important that we should realise the value of such a measure as this. I believe that price fixing can be used, if it is used with great discretion and care, for one purpose which is beneficial, namely for preventing or breaking a corner. I think it can be used for that purpose. No such use, however, has been made of the Prices Regulation Act. What has been done with the measure has been to attempt to reduce prices, to reduce the cost of living. Putting aside the single case of a corner, to which I have referred, I am perfectly convinced that the fixing of prices can have no effect except that of raising the cost of living. The first and simplest case which arises is this: if the price fixed is higher than what I will call the uncontrolled price, the natural market price without any control, there is no effect at all. If, on the other hand, the price fixed is lower than the uncontrolled price, what is the effect? The effect is to increase consumption, and to reduce production or importation. When the thing that one desires to do is to increase the supply, what one in fact does effect is to increase the consumption and reduce the supply.

Mr. O'Loughlin: Can you enumerate any commodities for which prices have been fixed higher than the uncontrolled price?

Mr. Underwood: I will give you one.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I merely say that if the price is fixed higher, it has no effect, and that if it is fixed lower, then one immediately increases the consumption of the article, and as quite a possible result the article is put clean off the market. Take a simple commodity like marmalade. Say the price is fixed below the uncontrolled price, so that it does not pay people to import the article. Then at once the consumption is increased, and the importers cease to import marmalade, which goes off the market altogether. The result is that the demand for other articles which can take the place of marmalade is increased, and that their prices are increased.

The Minister for Mines: That is a simple illustration—so simple that there is nothing in it.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I know the Minister for Mines still clings to those beliefs which he used to hold when he belonged—the hon. member will correct me if I am wrong—to, I think, the last party but one of which he was a member. Another effect of this price-fixing has been mentioned by the leader of the Opposition. He has pointed out that in the case of bran and pollard the effect of fixing prices was to denude certain parts of Western Australia entirely of these commodities. I believe I am right in saying—this does not appear in the report to which the leader of the Opposition referred—that in the metropolitan area there was practically no bran and pollard left, because when the price was fixed below the uncontrolled price, the result was that the commodities took to themselves wings and flew off to the Eastern States,

where there was a better market. That is another effect. Of course nobody will suggest that we can reduce the cost of living by reducing the price of an article to such a pitch that the article is not available at all. The position then is, not that one cannot get the article cheap, but that one cannot get the article at all. The harm that is done to the industries requiring such articles is, of course, such as must result in increasing costs generally. Now to take another example which is given in the report of the Prices Regulation Commission. The Commission's report is one I would like to recommend to hon. members for their perusal, not because I think they ought to come to the same conclusion as the Commissioners arrive at, but because I think they ought to arrive at an entirely different conclusion. Here is a result which the Commissioners give us regards jam, and it is a very plausible result. It looks most plausible, but I ask hon. members to consider exactly what takes place. The report states—

On the 12th May the Commission fixed by proclamation the maximum retail prices for imported jams of Australian manufacture. This action was deemed necessary, in view of the tendency to advance prices to those operating in the Eastern States without regard to landed costs. When the Commonwealth Government agreed to grant an increase in the price of sugar to the Colonial Sugar Company the price of jams in the Eastern States advanced immediately, and at the time of this report jam is being sold in Melbourne as high as 2s. 1d. per tin (27ozs.). Our inquiries revealed that local importers had made large contracts in November last with jam manufacturers for supplies of jam at their old wholesale price, namely, 11s. 9d. per dozen, as against the new price of 15s. 5d. per dozen. The Commission was satisfied that the stocks of jams to arrive at the old price would be sufficient to supply this State's requirements for some time, and the effect of the proclamation issued by the Commission has been that the public have during the last three months been purchasing jams far cheaper than in any other State of the Commonwealth.

On the face of it that looks as if by fixing prices the cost of living had been reduced. It is of course perfectly true, as the Commissioners say, that this community did get those particular jams to which they refer at a lesser price than the community would have got them at had there been no price fixing. That is perfectly true; but I would ask hon. members to consider what is the real, ultimate result of that price fixing. It will be observed that what was sold at a lower price was jam which had been bought forward, or jam which had been laid in in large stocks by merchants who no doubt anticipated a rise. The ordinary practice of merchants is familiar to most of us. When they have a stock which they have bought, and there is a rise, and they buy new stocks at a higher price, the practice of merchants, I think, is

to average the price over the whole lot. They get the advantage of the rise, and yet the consumer does not pay as high a price as he would had there not been stocks in hand imported at a cheaper price. That is the ordinary thing which takes place apart from any price fixing. But under the system of price fixing which has been adopted, no merchant will lay in big stocks or buy forward in the expectation of prices rising, and for this simple reason, that if prices rise he will get no benefit, and that if prices fall he has to bear the whole of the loss. What is the result of that position? That the benefit which the consumer would ordinarily get from the merchant buying forward in the expectation of a rise, is a benefit which the consumer does not now get. Again the effect is a rise in prices. Let me take another example of the way in which this price fixing works. This is also in the report. Having dealt with the question of kerosene the report proceeds—

After giving every consideration to the documents made available by the company, and taking into consideration that the shipment in question was landed in the State in September, 1919, it was resolved to refuse the application.

That, of course, was the application to raise the price. I am not going to say whether the kerosene people were acting rightly or not. The next point is the one to which I desire to draw the attention of hon. members—

Considerable resentment was shown by the local representatives of the company, and a shipment of kerosene en route to Fremantle was diverted to another port.

So that sum total result was that kerosene coming here, where it was badly needed, was diverted elsewhere.

Mr. O'Loughlin: The power of the company is greater than that of the State.

Mr. PILKINGTON: The law of supply and demand is greater than the law of the State. The law of supply and demand is a law of nature. It is a law like the law of gravity. It goes on operating wholly irrespective of anything that may be done by all the Parliaments in all the world.

Mr. Underwood: No chance!

Mr. PILKINGTON: It ultimately operates just as the law of gravity operates, and it will continue to operate notwithstanding any legislation that any legislatures may put upon any statute book.

Mr. O'Loughlin: You have been asleep during the last few years.

Mr. PILKINGTON: The law of supply and demand cannot be interfered with any more than one can interfere with the law of gravity. There is another passage in the report of the Commission to which I would like to refer, because again it has a plausible appearance and rather suggests to any person who reads it hurriedly, or without giving the matter sufficient consideration, that price-fixing has had the effect of reducing the

cost of living in this State. On page 9 of the report, towards the end of the first column, I find this remark—

It is interesting to note that from May, 1919, to January, 1920, when no price controlling authority existed in this State, the percentage rise was the greatest on record for a like period since August, 1914, when prices control was introduced.

That statement does on the face of it look like a plausible argument, and I daresay a great many people upon reading that statement have felt that there was something at any rate which supported the principle of price fixing. But when one takes the trouble to ascertain the facts, that statement becomes merely grotesque. During the latter part of the year 1919 the cost of living in England went up by a larger percentage than in any six months since the war began; and that increase which took place in England—and I have no doubt, though I cannot give authority for it, in other parts of the world—was reflected throughout Australia, and in Western Australia as well as elsewhere. I have not been able to find any figures which exactly justify the statement made in the report. I am not doubting the statement. I have tried to find supporting figures in "Knibbs," but have not been able to find them. However, I have no doubt that if the Commissioners were asked for figures, they would give figures which would reasonably demonstrate that the statement was justified. It would have been a miracle if in Australia, or in Western Australia, there had not been a big rise in prices during that period. And for the Commissioners to suggest that the rise in prices was merely due to the absence of a price-fixing commission in Western Australia is grotesque. They might as well contend that the absence of a price-fixing commission in Western Australia caused a similar rise to take place in England. I should like to refer to a matter which I think strongly corroborates the view I take. A short time ago in England a committee was appointed to go into and report upon the vastly important question of the cost of living. This committee put in its interim report at the beginning of last September. It is a remarkable fact that while a year or two ago, and for some time afterwards, the high cost of living was by a great many put down to profiteering, and the remedy suggested has often been price-fixing, this committee to which I refer, having heard a great deal of expert evidence from economists, financiers and business people, reported that the main cause of the high cost of living was the expansion in the currency, and reported that as being a more important cause than contracted production; and they recommended that the first thing to be done was to reduce the inflation of the currency, and that the ultimate remedy was to be looked for in increased production throughout the world.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I venture to think that every member of that committee holds the same political views as you do.

Mr. PILKINGTON: Does any other member on that side of the House agree with the member for Forrest?

Mr. O'Loughlen: I think they all do.

Mr. PILKINGTON: I think so too, but they will not say so. I will tell that hon. member the constitution of that committee and give some of the names of its members. I have read a summary of the report as published in "The Economist," and the official summarised report as published in "The Times." This committee, with which hon. members opposite disagree so violently, was a joint committee on the cost of living appointed by the parliamentary committee of the Trades Unions Congress. The joint committee consisted of representatives of the parliamentary committee of the Trades Unions Congress, the Labour party, the Co-operative Union, the Triple Alliance, and a number of individual unions. There was nobody on that committee who was not a representative of Labour. The joint committee included, among other prominent Labour leaders, Messrs. Thomas (chairman), Bowerman (secretary), Thomas, Ramsay MacDonald, Smillie, and Hodges, and Mrs. Cottrell and Mrs. Harrison Bell. That is a galaxy of talent which should appeal even to the member for Forrest.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Yes, they will do me.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [8.20]: The leader of the Opposition has taken on himself to lecture me and tell me my place. I should like to say to him that I am going to express my opinion in the House, and that there is only one power which can prevent me from doing so, namely, a majority of the electors of Pilbara.

Hon. P. Collier: I have not tried to stop you.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: You have attempted to dress me down several times. As a matter of fact you sat down like a big kid just now before you had finished.

Hon. P. Collier: And I will set you down, too, before you finish.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, order!

Hon. P. Collier: I have done it once or twice before, and I will do it again.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, Order!

Mr. UNDERWOOD: After having given considerable thought to this question, I am of opinion that the reduction in prices affected by this Commission do not amount to the salaries paid to the Commissioners. In other words, the Commission has been absolutely ineffective. It has had other effects. I have it on good authority that the Commission asked the retailers of milk to increase their price above what they were charging the consumer, and that the retailers of milk declined to do it, notwithstanding the Commissioner's request. It seems that the producers asked that the price should be

put up, and the retailers refused. There were one or two retailers of milk selling milk to the consumers at a lower price than that fixed by the Commission, and the wholesale suppliers of milk cut them out.

Mr. O'Loghlen: So, too, with flour.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That is the absolutely irresistible force of gravity referred to by the member for Perth. As soon as the retailer sold his milk below the price fixed by the Commission he could not get any more milk. The same thing has occurred in the case of bread. A man started selling bread in Barrack-street at a penny a loaf below what others were selling at, and straightaway his flour supplies were cut off.

The Minister for Mines: That was going on long before the Commission was thought of.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I am speaking of the irresistible law of gravity put forward by the member for Perth. Then take bran and pollard. A considerable quantity of bran and pollard was sent up to Geraldton as ballast on the schooners going there to bring down wheat. It was taken up there, stored at Geraldton, and it is now coming down to Perth at the higher price. There again we have the irresistible force of gravity spoken of by the member for Perth.

The Minister for Mines: Yes, that is quite correct. What goes up must come down.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The only thing that does not come down is the price. We thought we could accomplish that by appointing the Commission, but we have utterly failed. I do not think it is worth paying another sixpence to the Commissioners, because they have not helped the people of Western Australia in one single instance.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany—in reply) [8.25]: I expected that there would not be a great deal of discussion on the Bill because, after all, it is largely a continuance Bill and the principle underlying the measure was decided upon during last session. A discussion, however, would naturally arise as to whether the Commission had been as effective as was expected when the Bill was passed. I do not know that it was ever suggested that the appointment of a Commission to control prices would have the effect of bringing down prices below their market value. What was urged, and what I think has been proved in operation, was that the Commission would, if clothed with sufficient powers, prevent any undue rise in prices. Unquestionably, in numerous cases this has been done. What the member for Perth was dealing with was, not the position arising under this Commission at all, but what has happened in the purchasing of a small commodity. Conditions in such a case could not possibly be affected by the Commission. For instance, we cannot control those commodities which are imported into Western Australia, except on the landed cost. If we were to intro-

duce a system which would reduce the retail or wholesale prices landed in Western Australia below the cost of landing, we would bring about exactly what the member for Perth suggested. But we realise our limitations. We realise that a Commission of this kind cannot be as effective as desired, because we have to import so many of our essential commodities from abroad, where we have no control over prices. Even if we had full control in all parts of Australia, we could not control the prices in regard to the imports into Australia.

Mr. Lambert: You could if you took on importing.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, because, as the member for Pilbara pointed out in the case of the milk and the bread, our supplies would be cut off. Those results were not brought about by the Commission, but have been operating for all time. Traders have a habit of refusing to continue supplies to another trader who may be attempting to undersell them. Many of the articles produced in America can only be sold at a fixed price, that being one of the conditions under which the articles are supplied.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the case with tobacco here.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is the case with quite a number of commodities sold in this State. Prior to the Commonwealth Government taking control of sugar, this was the case with the sugar people as well. They would refuse to sell sugar unless the buyers entered into an agreement as to the selling price.

Mr. Lambert: We have also the traders' association in Perth.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: In the case of dried fruits some time ago the people concerned would not continue to supply a certain trade unless those traders took all their supplies in certain lines. For years in the meat trade—

Mr. O'Loghlen: And in the timber trade.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There were certain people who combined together and refused to supply meat from the North-West, when the people could not get it elsewhere, unless the buyers took all their supplies for the year from that combination. This has not been brought about by reason of the commission. That condition of affairs, however, has been improved by reason of the appointment of the Commission.

Mr. O'Loghlen: The law of supply and demand existed then.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I mention this to prove to the member for Perth that I do not take my views from St. George's-terrace.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You will have to do so in the future.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Never mind about my future. It is as bright as that of the hon. member.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I think you are looking ahead a bit.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is largely a question of the point of view. The member for Perth can take no great exception to some authority fixing prices or fees. He would probably agree to its being made a dishonourable act if any person in a trade or calling dared to give advice unless he subscribed to the fees fixed by some arbitrary authority. When it comes to essential commodities, which make up our very being, the member for Perth seems to imagine that it is interfering with the law of supply and demand or of gravity to fix the prices. We have during recent years in Australia as a whole found it essential not only to fix the maximum price in order to protect the interests of the consumer, but we have even been compelled, in order to protect the whole community, to fix a minimum price and give a guarantee to our producers in order to save the situation. It is true there is a law of supply and demand, but we have been unable to supply articles that we were possessed of in times when other parts of the world needed them. We had wheat stacked at our seaports that was being eaten by weevils, and we had thousands of tons of wheat being eaten by mice when the world was starving for wheat. If we had allowed that condition of affairs to exist and said to the man who produced the wheat, "Go into the markets and get as much as you can for it," some of our more fortunate producers near the seaboard would probably have been able to get from 2s. 6d. to 3s. a bushel for their product, but those in the remote parts of the State, who were in the hands of the merchants by reason of the condition of affairs then existing, would have been obliged practically to give their wheat away to save it from rotting. But the whole of the community came to the assistance of the producers and said, "Subject to your producing this commodity to the fullest extent we will give you a guarantee as to price." That is no new thing, and for the member for Perth to suggest that it has not been effective is to say something which everyone recognises to be incorrect. He takes exception to the commission making reference to the fact that during a certain period when there was no control prices increased. He denies that this was correct.

Mr. Pilkington: I did not say that. I was prepared to accept the statement.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member said it was absurd.

Mr. Pilkington: I said it was absurd to give that as a reason why the prices had increased during that period.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Western Australia was the first country in the British Empire, if not in the world, after the declaration of war, to introduce a method for controlling the price of essential commodities. We were in a position to say that where records were kept,

although there had been increases which could not be prevented, these increases had been less in Western Australia than in any other part of the Commonwealth or the British Empire. As soon as the control was abolished, this abnormal increase occurred. In these circumstances, and in view of the long period under which there was control, and the short period in which there was no control, that is a fair statement to make, and it is evidence of the fact that it was lack of control that caused the abnormal increases. The evidence is all in that direction. The hon. member talks about bran and pollard taking wings and flying to the East, because we fixed a price in this State below their market value, and below the price which could be obtained practically on demand elsewhere. That is not the position. By virtue of the fact that the wheat scheme acting for the British Government encouraged our mills to grind large quantities of wheat for flour, the mills worked full time, as much as 24 hours a day, which they had never done before. Some of the mills which required cleaning up had to continue in their existing state owing to the great demand for flour. The result was that we had a surplus of bran and pollard. Some months ago everyone knew there would be a shortage of wheat in New South Wales. There was not a good harvest in Victoria or South Australia, and between them they would have some difficulty in meeting the requirements of New South Wales and leaving anything over for export. Our mills were, therefore, encouraged to go on working full time in the sound belief that there would be a surplus of offal for export. Our merchants also entered into engagements, when the supplies came forward, to supply New South Wales, where a famine existed. It was believed there would be a surplus to send to New South Wales. Suddenly, however, the Imperial Government said they were not prepared to take any further supplies of flour, and that they required wheat owing to the shortage of offal there. The wheat scheme thereupon had to advise the local mills to reduce their grinding, because there was no market for the flour. We had been grinding wheat and calculated on having a surplus of offal to supply contracts in New South Wales as well as keep up the local supplies. Will the member for Perth suggest that the commission or anyone else would have said that a contract, made in the belief that it would be complied with without injury to Western Australia, should be cancelled in order to avoid a temporary shortage here? It was not a question of bran and pollard flying away because of the small price in this State. The price was increased at that very time. No one could properly control a situation of that sort.

Mr. Pilkington: The facts I spoke of were contained in the report.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The report states that commodities were sent to the Eastern States and re-shipped back.

Mr. Pilkington: I accepted the report.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member did not accept the report alone, but he read into it something which it did not contain. He deliberately said this was due to the fact that we had been fixing prices in Western Australia for offal below its parity, and that it took wings to the Eastern States.

Mr. Pilkington: That is what they say.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not think the commission say that.

Mr. Pilkington: I was dealing with the facts which they set down.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The statement the hon. member made was that it had taken flight to the Eastern States because the price over there was higher than the price here.

Mr. Pilkington: Because the price was higher there; that is what the report says.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It is not correct. New South Wales had a famine and Western Australia was able, through the Wheat Scheme, to grist great quantities of flour and have a surplus of offal. Contracts were entered into to supply New South Wales, and suddenly there was brought about a shortage in Western Australia due to the scheme being obliged to advise the mills that they could not take additional flour for export.

Mr. Harrison: And we had accumulated big stacks at the time.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, the mills were suddenly called upon to stop gristing.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The bran and pollard were sent away before gristing started.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, in the belief that gristing would continue. Of course, there are some traders who will corner stocks if possible in order to get the rise. That is not common to Western Australia alone or to any one trader.

Hon. P. Collier: There was a great shortage before the gristing ceased.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: No.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes!

Hon. W. C. Angwin: People at all events could not get the commodity when they wanted it.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: That is quite a different thing. The member for North-East Fremantle looks at the matter from the trader's point of view. He was able to see that there would not be a continuance of gristing in the mills, and that there would be a rise in the market owing to the shortage, and because of the big contracts that had been entered into in the Eastern States.

Hon. P. Collier: And he would sell locally.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: He would hold it for a rise. That is proof of what I have said. It is essential that there should be some control when the demand exceeds the supply, otherwise the man who is supplying will ask a higher price than he should and he will get it. The member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) uttered some words of wisdom in this House in 1914.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I have the statement here.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: There was a drought in Western Australia in our wheat areas at that time. Some portions of the State did not feel the effects, and had a certain amount of wheat to market. The hon. member represented an electorate in which the drought was severely felt. The member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson), in his desire to look after the interests of his electorate, accused the Government of fixing a price under the value of the wheat required for seed. He moved a motion to fix it at a higher rate, and the member for Pingelly pointed out that whilst there were a few people in Katanning with a little wheat to sell, there were many farmers in other parts of the State who had a great deal to buy. The member for Pingelly had no objection to the Government fixing the price which was considered to be fair between two sections of producers. I see no reason why the Government should not also fix the price which is fair between the producer and the consumer in other commodities, where it is essential to do so. The law of supply and demand will continue, but while the demand exceeds the supply and while there are merchants who are willing to take advantage of that condition of affairs, the law of gravity must come in. The Government must prevent the merchant from taking advantage of that demand by unduly increasing prices.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The member for Pingelly did not think that the tables would be turned so soon.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member evidently did not want to see the price fixed too high because the cost of the future harvest would be so high that he would not be able to produce at a profit. I have nothing to add, except to say that this trouble is not confined to Western Australia alone. Even in the British Isles they have had to control prices and have had to do so to a much greater extent than we have found necessary here. In their legislation they have gone so far as to deal with profiteering, and to state it as such. We have not got nearly to that stage here. We have simply controlled prices.

Mr. Pilkington: They have tried to satisfy public opinion in Great Britain and it has not produced the slightest effect.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It has had an effect. There is no question that the bottom is dropping out of prices in the old country at the present time. Quite naturally the British Government were concerned about their manufactures and they had not the slightest objection to manufacturers in Great Britain getting what they could from their export prices. The same position has arisen here, and we have been concerned with the local prices and have not been so concerned with what merchants have been able to get from their profits on exports. What do we care what the producers can get from Europe or Asia if they export their goods to those countries? The Home Government adopted

the same' attitude. Where there is the demand, they can get good prices. As in Western Australia, the British Government were concerned with the prices for home consumption. Take the case of cotton. The Government contended that the profits on cotton in England were not excessive so far as the home consumer was concerned, although they readily admitted that huge profits had been made on the overseas markets.

Mr. Johnston: Including the overseas dominions.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is quite true, but we could not help that. We had to get the cotton. There were demands all over the world for it and we had to pay the price. The British Government never denied that huge profits were made out of the export trade. However, notwithstanding that we import so many of our requirements, I believe that we have done well in Western Australia. The cost of living in this State has not increased pro rata to such an extent as in other British-speaking communities, including America. That result is due in no small measure to the fact that we got in early. In many cases, the capital required to operate businesses is tied up in actual stock, and the cost of insurance and cover generally which the trader has to shoulder, has increased in a greater ratio than the cost of living to the community. The trader is entitled to some recognition for these extra charges. Everyone imagines that because profits appear greater than in the past, the profits are exorbitant. I do not believe that any trader is making exorbitant profits in Western Australia to-day. The Commission have had a great effect in preventing an undue increase in the cost of living during the past 12 months.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Minister for Mines in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to forfeit necessary commodities:

Mr. PLESSE: I would like to know whether it is the intention of the Minister to exempt grain needed for seed purposes.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Commission are not likely to seize wheat that is held for seed purposes, any more than they are likely to seize chaff, seed potatoes, and so on, which are legitimately held for seed purposes or for stock. It is only when the Commission are convinced that the commodities are held in order to corner the market and take advantage of high prices that they will seize them.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Minister's assurance is very gratifying, but unfortunately the Bill does not cover the policy he has indicated. The clause says that the com-

missioners may recommend to the Governor the forfeiture of any foodstuff or necessary commodity that a person has in his custody or under his control if he has failed, on demand and tender of the fixed price, to supply the foodstuff or necessary commodity referred to, and the Governor may order the forfeiture.

The Minister for Mines: A Government would not be foolish enough to take any action as suggested by the member for Toodyay.

Mr. JOHNSTON: We cannot say what would happen. I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to Subclause 2:—"Provided that grain and potatoes held for seed shall be exempt from the operations of this clause."

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We must realise that seed wheat and seed potatoes and so on are essential for next year's production, and therefore we must permit farmers to hold necessary supplies. The trouble is that we cannot stop at seed wheat and potatoes.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Of course not; it is absurd.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It should go on and include all sorts of things until the clause becomes too cumbersome. We are just as anxious to safeguard the interests of the farmers and producers generally as the member for Williams-Narrogin is, but no Government in their senses, except one perhaps controlled from Claremont, would permit the Commission, even if they made such a recommendation, to forfeit seed wheat and potatoes that were held for legitimate purposes.

The Premier: All wheat might be classed as seed.

Mr. PILKINGTON: Is there any provision for notice being given pending forfeiture? Surely a person should be allowed some notice in order that he may be heard in explanation. As it stands at present there is no provision that I can see.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member gave the reply to his own question when he referred to commodities taking wings and going East. If we give notice that it is our intention to commandeer—

Mr. Pilkington: You may commandeer, but will you let the person be heard in explanation?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: He will be heard in due course, as is the practice at present.

Hon. P. Collier: There has to be a demand and tender of a fixed price.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Commission have to be satisfied that the person has failed to supply the goods on demand.

Mr. Pilkington: The Commission might be satisfied without hearing him.

Hon. P. Collier: If a demand is made he has to refuse, and he has to make his explanation. He has to be heard.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I can give an assurance that the Governor in Council will not agree to take action on the recommendation of the Commission unless the Commission prove their case. There is no danger of any hardship under this clause. There is less danger in it than already prevails in other parts of the world.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I congratulate the hon. member on moving the amendment. It is necessary to stipulate the protection in black and white. I doubt whether the clause is of much use. We have two price-fixing bodies in this State and one overrides the other. There is the Prices Regulation Commission, appointed by Act of Parliament, and there is the Wheat Board which overrides the Commission and is supported by the Government. If the Commission fix the price of bran at £6 a ton, and the Government through the other board say that the price must be £7 a ton, the Commission who have powers given to it by Parliament are not permitted to override the decision of the other board which has not such powers. Is it intended that the Commission appointed by Parliament should carry out the desires of Parliament or that the Government should be able to step in and direct the Commission to do as they are told? This has happened in the last 12 months. It might be wise to give the Commission and not the Governor this power to forfeit. If the Commission had possessed this power last year there would not have been a shortage of bran and pollard and consumers would not have had to pay such high prices for these commodities. The Governor is not to be trusted in a matter of this kind.

Hon. Sir H. B. LEFROY: This clause may appear to be drastic, but I cannot see that there is any danger of seed wheat and potatoes being taken from the producer by the Commission. Before this could be done the Commissioners would have to make a recommendation to the Governor, and they would not make a recommendation without consulting holders as to the quantity required for their own use. This has been done in the past.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: When you have no confidence in the Government, you would not give them any powers.

Hon. Sir H. B. LEFROY: I shall not say whether I have confidence in the Government or not.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a bit difficult to make a definite pronouncement just now.

Mr. Jones: You do not know where they are, do you?

Hon. Sir H. B. LEFROY: No Government would forfeit produce which was required for producers' own use. The amendment specifies only seed wheat and potatoes.

Hon. T. Walker: Why not include eggs?

Hon. Sir H. B. LEFROY: This might lead one to conclude that the holder was permitted to hold only seed wheat and potatoes.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We would be in a bad position if we sold all the seed wheat.

The Minister for Mines: To whom would you sell it? You could only sell it in Western Australia.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You might send it away.

Hon. Sir H. B. LEFROY: Even if the Commissioners made a recommendation, the holder would have the right of appeal to the Government.

Mr. MULLANY: I oppose the amendment. I agree with the member for Moore that the Government are not likely to do what the mover of the amendment fears. If the Commission attempted to do so the Government would see that no injustice was done. On the other hand there might be a grave danger if the amendment is accepted, because any person holding stocks of wheat or potatoes could set up the plea that the whole of their stocks were required for seed purposes. The Commission are suffering under sufficient restrictions at present, and the amendment would still further hamper them.

Mr. PIESSE: The Minister does not appear to have grasped the point with regard to grain held for seed purposes. Last year one man, not a producer, secured 3,000 bags of grain for seed purposes. Under this Bill he would have no right to hold the grain if the Commission thought fit to demand its sale, and it would rest with the Governor to say whether the seizure should be permitted. All grain held for seed purposes should be exempt. The same applies to potatoes. We might not always have such a broad-minded Government in power.

The Minister for Mines: We would never get such a narrow-minded one as you suggest.

Mr. GARDNER: Even in the stressful times gone by the Commissioners did not take commodities from men who held stocks necessary for seed purposes or for their own maintenance. If we include wheat, why not include other articles? I do not like to see the members of this party of ours running mad on little things, but they do it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They have not faith in the Government.

Mr. GARDNER: We have to trust to the sense alike of the Commissioners and of the Government. If the Government did anything fraught with destruction to the producer, they would be cutting their own throats and the throats of the consumers. If they are not worthy of trust, put in another Government.

Mr. Piesse: It is not a question of the Government, but of the Bill.

Mr. GARDNER: Nonsense; it is a question of advertising. One would think that the farming community had received no justice or consideration at the hands of this House. I remember two sessions when the House gave up its attention to farming matters.

Mr. Piesse: Mr. Chairman, is the hon. member in order in imputing motives?

The CHAIRMAN: What is the point of order?

Mr. Piesse: I contend that the hon. member is imputing motives.

The CHAIRMAN: That is no point of order.

Mr. GARDINER: I have the right to say, and I am going to say, that in my experience this House has ever been mindful of the interests of the primary producer and more especially of the farmer.

Mr. THOMSON: It comes with a bad grace from the member for Irwin, who claims to have brought this party into existence, to accuse members sitting on the cross benches of advertising themselves.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We all know it; there is no need for him to tell us.

Mr. THOMSON: If in our opinion we are safeguarding the interests of our electors, we have as much right to express our feelings as anybody else. It is nonsense for the hon. member to get up and say that because another member wishes to protect the welfare of his constituents he is advertising himself. We are sent here to protect the interests of the farming community.

Hon. T. Walker: You are going the wrong way about it.

Mr. THOMSON: We are also sent here to protect the interests of the State. I defy the hon. member, or any other member, to prove that we on the cross benches have ever voted for anything that is contrary to the welfare and prosperity of the State. The member for Irwin says he is tired of hearing hon. members advertise themselves. I do not mind fair criticism, but I object to unfair motives being imputed to us.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the hon. member confine himself to the motion, if he can?

Mr. Johnston: We wanted the member for Irwin to do so.

Mr. THOMSON: You were good enough, Mr. Chairman, to inform me, when I wished another member to withdraw a statement he had made, that I could not have it withdrawn.

The CHAIRMAN: I take strong objection to the hon. member's reflection on the Chair. I shall be glad if he will confine himself to the subject under discussion.

Mr. THOMSON: I have no desire to reflect upon the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member did so in a most insulting manner.

Mr. THOMSON: I unreservedly withdraw the remark, but I do take strong exception to the remarks of the member for Irwin, and others, that we are merely electioneering.

Hon. P. Collier: It is cheaper than hiring halls.

Mr. THOMSON: Members opposite are probably kite flying, too. I know the difficulty there was in my district this year in the matter of securing seed wheat for the settlers.

Hon. T. Walker: It was their fault.

Mr. THOMSON: It was the fault of the wheat board. A firm at Katanning, to oblige its customers, secured two or three bags of seed wheat, and was fined for selling wheat without notifying the board. Another firm in Katanning was threatened with a summons in connection with the purchase of some seed wheat from York. This sort of thing shows the necessity for safeguarding the interests of those who desire to put in a certain amount of crop.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I well remember the drought in 1914, and the necessity that existed for securing seed wheat with which to supply the farmers.

The Minister for Mines: The Government fixed the price then.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There was no world's parity about that. Can any reasonable person believe that the Government, bad as they are, would seize seed wheat and sell it when they knew it was required for next year's crop?

Mr. Johnston: You want to give the Government a blank cheque.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I know the hon. member and his party feel that the Government are not to be trusted. At any rate, the amendment is a ridiculous one.

Mr. ANGELO: The member for Williams-Narrogin would be well advised to withdraw his amendment. He has the assurance of the Government that the seed wheat will not be interfered with as far as the farmers are concerned.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Compensation:

Mr. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 the words "at the price fixed" be struck out and "the cost of such material plus a reasonable profit" be inserted in lieu.

A man may have purchased a quantity of goods, and the Commission fix the price at less than the landed cost of those goods. This clause would give the Commission power to enter premises and compel a man to sell goods at less than they cost him. I do not think it is intended that any section of the community should be placed in that position.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I hope the hon. member will not press the amendment. With regard to his galvanised iron, I think he said that he bought it at £100, and that shortly afterwards the Commission fixed the price at £60 per ton. But he omitted to say that under this measure he could go to the merchants who hold the five tons of iron taken from him, and demand it from them at the fixed price of £60.

Mr. Thomson: But it was no longer available.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: While the Commission have power to recommend the Governor in Council to confiscate certain

commodities, that power is not intended, as I have already explained, to enable the Commission to go round like thieves in the night seizing a sheet of iron here, a bottle of sauce there, and a tin of jam somewhere else.

Mr. Thomson: But that is the kind of thing the Commission are doing.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The Commission require returns of the quantities of a commodity in stock before they will allow an increase of price. It is useless to grant an increased price for 50 tons of a commodity if 500 tons of it are held in stock for the express purpose of forcing up the price. The present clause must be read in conjunction with Clause 2. Its purpose is to enable the Governor in Council to forfeit goods which are held back from sale. What the member for Katanning assumes might happen, could not happen in Western Australia, though possibly it might happen in Russia. The carrying of the amendment would destroy the Bill.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the member for Katanning thinks it is necessary to provide in this Bill against insanity, stupidity, and I may add burglary and a general attitude of confiscation on the part of the Prices Regulation Commission, and of the Ministry, and of Parliament, and of His Excellency the Governor, he is quite right in seeking to insert safeguards which will protect the holders of seed wheat and seed potatoes and galvanised iron and goats and so forth. From beginning to end the Bill assumes that the Government and the members of the Prices Regulation Commission are sensible men, and that they will not approve of absurd, nonsensical propositions put up to them. I do not think the member for Katanning rightly interprets this clause. He says that he would be compelled to sell his galvanised iron at the price fixed by the Commission. But the clause does not say that at all. If the Commission proposed to do anything like what the member for Katanning suggests, it would be time for the Government to remove the Commissioners. Moreover, the Government and the Governor in Council would have to endorse the confiscation of the iron.

Mr. Thomson: But in the meantime the iron would be gone; and what redress would the owner have?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No Government would dream of attempting to take goods at a price lower than their cost. A very important caucus meeting was held this afternoon to select candidates to represent the party to which the member for Katanning belongs at the forthcoming general election. The party expect to come back with an overwhelming majority, and no doubt they will form a Government. Will that Government take the hon. member's galvanised iron from him at £40 per ton less than he paid for it? The present Government are showing no signs of developing Bolshevism. If we on this side of the House should happen to be on the

other side after the general election, and thus should have the power to chase the hon. member's galvanised iron, I will undertake to keep a tight hold on the member for Fremantle. There is no necessity to press the amendment.

Mr. THOMSON: I think there is great danger in this clause.

Hon. T. Walker: Surely you are speaking ironically!

Mr. THOMSON: I wish to safeguard the interests of the trading section of the community. People importing goods in these days have no guarantee as regards landed costs. Prices of shipments vary very considerably from week to week. It is not Ministers who are going to fix prices; the Prices Regulation Commission will fix them, and the Governor in Council will endorse the Commission's decisions.

Mr. HARRISON: I regard this clause as consequential upon Clause 2. If necessary goods are held back from the consuming public by any person or firm, the Prices Regulation Commission can seize those goods; and this clause provides for compensation of the owners in that eventuality. The member for Katanning sees in this clause something that does not exist in it. The clause will not get at any legitimate trader who is doing the right thing by the community.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Determination of prices:

Mr. MULLANY: The clause provides that the Governor may by Order in Council determine the maximum prices, whether retail or wholesale, which may be charged for food-stuffs and necessary commodities in any proclaimed area, on the basis of manufacturing, landed, delivery, or other cost. This is not definite enough and I consider that the word "producing" should be included as one aspect of the basis on which maximum prices may be fixed. I do not think that even the member for Williams-Narrogin or the member for Sussex would claim for one minute that they manufactured potatoes or eggs, and, after the slimmest which their party has shown to-night in regard to the amendment we have just been discussing, I consider that the position should be safeguarded in the direction I suggest. The Commission would have no jurisdiction unless such a provision were made.

Mr. Thomson: You should trust the Government, you know.

Mr. MULLANY: I would trust the Government to do the right thing—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If they had the power to do it.

Mr. MULLANY: The insertion of the word "producing" would give them additional power. I move an amendment—

That in line 6 after "of" the word "producing" be inserted.

Mr. LAMBERT: This clause requires a good deal of consideration, and if the Minister desires to make it effective, he should recognise that in Western Australia we have firms who are practically branches of parent companies in the Eastern States. Most of the goods are imported by the wholesale firms in the East. The goods are then invoiced to the West Australian branch with the addition of the extra charges they put upon them. If a more effective interpretation is to be achieved, some provision should be made to get at the original cost.

Mr. Hudson: Are you not dealing with the whole clause and not confining yourself to the amendment?

The Minister for Mines: That is the whole point of the Bill. We are aiming to go back to where the goods are manufactured.

Mr. LAMBERT: Unless we can strike directly at the basis of the original invoiced cost, we will never arrive at what is a fair charge to the people of Western Australia for the goods imported. Goods may have changed hands half a dozen times, and the inclusion of the words "or other cost" is ambiguous. That phrase will be availed of to hamper the operations of the Commission by introducing considerations which should not have weight. We should have something definite and specific to deal with this position, so as to assist the Commission in arriving at a basis for determining what price should be fixed.

The Minister for Mines: The clause is the most all-embracing I have seen.

Mr. LAMBERT: But we want to say what is the basis for manufacturing costs.

The Minister for Mines: The whole question deals with the manufacturing costs as well as others.

Mr. Teesdale: I spelt it out for you several times.

Mr. Johnston: He could not understand you.

Mr. LAMBERT: I admit that I cannot nor do I desire to understand the hon. member. I contend that it would be better to split this clause up so as to deal with the aspect I have brought under the notice of the Minister.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The amendment brings under the Bill a good deal of what is left out now.

The Minister for Mines: It extends the powers somewhat.

Mr. LAMBERT: At any rate the clause would be more effective if it were split up to deal with the different aspects separately. The point I wish to make is that John Smith & Co. of Melbourne may import, say, 1,000 tons of galvanised iron. It is invoiced to Western Australia by John Smith & Co., Melbourne, to John Smith & Co., Perth. The firm are able to charge its branch what it is considered should be got for it, and it is invoiced accordingly, so that the document that is received in Western Australia is not the original invoice, but a subsidiary document altogether.

The Minister for Mines: This clause is for the very purposes of bringing about what you desire, but you do not understand it.

Mr. TEESDALE: The clause is most satisfactory as it stands. I regard it as a splendid provision, and I have as good an idea of business as has the member for Coolgardie. The clause contains every protection that is required.

Mr. LUTEY: I support the amendment. There is a lot of truth in what the member for Coolgardie says. We should be able to get behind the invoiced cost.

The Minister for Mines: The purpose of the clause is that the Commissioners shall not be compelled to accept the invoice.

Mr. LUTEY: If so, that is all right.

The Minister for Mines: You can disregard their invoice and make your own.

Mr. LUTEY: I am afraid that a lot of these invoice prices are not true prices.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: In considering the clause we must also look at Section 10 of the principal Act, which gives the Commissioners power to get all invoices and information from business houses, and on that information make a recommendation to the Minister to fix a price. Those general powers are not in the slightest degree interfered with; but when the information has been supplied to the Minister the clause gives power to the Governor in Council by proclamation to say, "We will not take the actual recommendation made, but we will say that the maximum price shall be so much per cent. above the actual manufactured cost or the landed cost or any other particular cost." It provides a method by which the Governor in Council may say, "We are not satisfied with the information, but we have got something tangible; we are satisfied that the landed cost is so much, and we are going to fix the maximum price at a definite percentage above that landed cost. And by the same or any other proclamation they may declare what items may be included in the cost which forms the basis of the maximum price; and they may say whether regard is to be had to the invoice cost of the material or they may adopt any other method or principle which seems good to them to prescribe for establishing the basis of cost. The object of the clause is to establish a definite basis, and the Governor in Council will say, "We are going to allow you a percentage above that to fix maximum price."

Mr. Lutey: Will the Governor in Council determine the exact cost in Victoria or in America.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, but it might be easier to find out the landed cost. The goods might be bought from a merchant in England, not the manufacturer, and it might be easier to find out what the merchant in England paid for the goods and what was the actual cost of landing here, than to find out the original manufacturing cost.

Mr. LAMBERT: Say Harris, Scarfe & Co., buying in the Eastern States, were to invoice back to Western Australia goods bought in England; how would you ascertain, unless you got the original invoice cost, what it cost Harris, Scarfe? If you say you will only have regard to the manufacturing costs or to the original invoice costs you will get over the difficulty?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, if you tie them down to one method you will restrict their powers. The clause gives elasticity.

Mr. Lambert: It is very easy to say that regard shall be had only to the original invoice cost or the manufacturing cost.

Mr. PICKERING: I should like the Minister to explain why the word was left out in framing the clause, why we cannot trust the Government even with a little thing like this?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We had no reason for putting in the word. Section 10 of the Act already provides the power to fix the price of every commodity produced in the State. It makes no difference whether the word is put in or left out. It is what the member for Pilbara would call unnecessary verbiage. In the fixing of the price of goods imported from overseas we can use any method we like.

Mr. MULLANY: We shall be much safer in making the clause as definite as we possibly can. I claim that by the insertion of the word the clause will be much clearer. The Minister for Mines is endeavouring to camouflage the whole discussion when he says that to act upon the amendment one would have to go to America to find the producing cost. That is not a correct statement of the position. When we have an influential section of producers and a political organisation responsible for the publication of a pamphlet such as this I have in my hand, hon. members will see the necessity for making the provision as definite as we can. We have here an extract from the "Bulletin" of the 6th September, 1920, referring to the Primary Producers' Union of Western Australia. It reads as follows—

When their crops failed in 1914, hundreds of Western Australian cockies threw up their properties, and a thousand or two others had to ask the State for seed wheat, super, and credit at the store. But the soil ticklers had men among them who did not lose heart. They ran cocky candidates at the elections and won eight seats. They required a small co-operative enterprise and by securing the contract for handling all the Western Australian wheat—their political strength enabled them to do that—they made a big thing.

Their political strength has increased since those days.

Mr. Johnston: And they are still going strong.

Mr. MULLANY: If we are going to have a Prices Regulation Commission we should

take every precaution to leave no loophole such as the party responsible for a pamphlet like this—a party who are becoming predominant in politics—might be able to make by twisting the clause, as will be possible if this word is not included.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot allow the statement of the member for Menzies to go unchallenged because, although he appeared to be serious, he was really ironical. This clause was inserted for a definite purpose and not to control the price of any commodity introduced into Western Australia. The insertion of the word will not affect the clause beneficially or otherwise.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We want that quotation from the pamphlet in "Hansard." We have been looking for it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Well, the hon. member's object has been attained.

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

Clauses 7 to 9—agreed to.

New clause—Sittings open to public; evidence on oath:

Hon. P. COLLIER: I move—

That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 2:—“(1) The sittings of the Commissioners shall be held at such time and place as may from time to time be fixed by the chairman, and shall at all times be open to the public. (2) No evidence of any person shall be received by the Commissioners unless given on oath or affirmation.”

I understand that the Minister intends to report progress at this stage and, therefore, I shall not proceed further with the new clause to-night.

Progress reported.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1920-21.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 2nd November; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair.

Education Department, Hon. H. P. Colbatch, Minister (Hon. J. Mitchell, Premier, in charge of the Estimates).

Vote—Education, £456,122:

The CHAIRMAN: When these Estimates were before the Committee on Tuesday evening Mr. Underwood moved—“That the vote be reduced by £20,000.” In accordance with the ruling given by Mr. Foley on Tuesday last, and endorsed by the Speaker and the House, I decline to propose this amendment to the Committee until the discussion of items has been completed. In doing so I am acting exactly as I would if an hon. member submitted a motion to reduce the last item of the vote. I am also following the precedent established in the first and followed without question in the second session of the present

Parliament. It was recognised that while our Standing Orders, it would seem purposely, exclude motions to reduce a vote except through an item, a member has a natural right to propose the reduction of an amount he is asked to vote, provided he does so without disturbing the procedure laid down by the Standing Orders, or interfering with the rights of other members. Consequently, it was arranged that a member should make his speech on the general discussion, and formally move his amendment when the question "That the vote stand as printed" was finally proposed. Members will find an example of this in "Hansard" of 1917-18, page 918, when Mr. Durack desired to move exactly as the member for Pilbara has done. I quote the following from "Hansard":—

Mr. Durack: I would have moved a reduction of the total vote but for the fact that I understand such an amendment would not be accepted.

The Chairman: I will accept an amendment for a reduction in the total vote when all the items have been discussed.

Mr. Durack: Then I will move the amendment later on.

The Chairman's ruling, that an amendment to reduce the vote would be in order if moved at the later stage, was discussed at some length and was supported by Mr. Collier and pronounced by Mr. Walker to be sound, and as no formal exception was taken to it, the ruling must be regarded as binding. The hon. member for Pilbara will have the same opportunity as was given to Mr. Durack. The general discussion is to proceed.

The Minister for Mines: We stultified ourselves by discussing the point at such length on Tuesday night.

The CHAIRMAN: During the first and second sessions of the present Parliament, this question was discussed and dealt with, and if members care to turn to page 918 of "Hansard" of 1917-18, they will see the ruling which I gave and which was upheld by Mr. Walker and Mr. Collier.

Hon. P. Collier: That settles it. I am surprised that the Minister for Mines should have attempted to depart from it when I was absent.

Mr. GARDINER (Irwin) [10.25]: To-night we heard discussed in three very admirable speeches the question of the cost of living. A far more vital question comes before us now in considering the question of education. A man is wilfully blind who does not see that the educated nation is going to be the nation of the world. Consequently, those of us who think, who are not carried away by platitudes, and who consider it wise to discuss education even though it brings with it some continually, must recognise that if we are going to take our place among the nations, we must be educated. The nature of that education is a question of vital importance. We have heard it said that

on education. The people who tell us this do not tell us in which directions Britain is spending that money. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) and myself have just cause for complaint. Last year we were promised a committee of inquiry. Both of us said quite sincerely that we did not grudge any vote that would enable Western Australia to take her place amongst the other States of the Commonwealth and win for her children a better heritage than she has at present. We wanted this committee, not because we were enviling at the cost of education but because we wanted to be informed whether we were getting value for our money, and whether our education was a fitting education for the results we are all desirous of obtaining. The Minister for Mines was then in charge of the Estimates of the Minister for Education, and I do him this justice to say that his was the first speech made in this House which enabled members to take part in a discussion that did not put the brand of retrogression upon them. I pay him the compliment of saying he was just as sincere as were we in the desire to probe to the root, this question of education in order to ascertain whether we were or were not getting value for the huge expenditure and the huge increase in expenditure. The Minister for Mines promised that committee in good faith and I almost laughed, because I happened to know the Minister for Education and the Director of Education. I venture to say that nothing short of an earthquake will get those two gentlemen to agree to a committee of investigation. The Minister in charge of the Estimates said—I did not know how his colleague would take this—that he was only too glad to have an inquiry into the Education Estimates. I honestly believe the Minister felt that. He knows as well as we do that there is a necessity for an inquiry. I will show directly why I think there is. I said—

I ask the Minister for Mines to request his colleague to redeem that promise and give us a committee of inquiry, so that the next time we discuss these Estimates there will be a hard head to say whether or not the State is receiving value for its money commercially, and a keen analytical mind to say whether we are getting value for it educationally.

Is not that what every member of the House desires in considering this vote? Why the objection to it? All the world over to-day, and in every nation in the world, the one thought is, "Are we educating our people to bring the best returns to the nation?" In almost every province of America there are educational committees. They do not take the word of their Minister for Education. They do not take as the supreme authority their Director of Education. They say, "We will elect a committee." I want to drive this home to members. They did not

committees. They took the editor of a newspaper—why they did this I do not know—they took a lawyer, a commercial man, and in many instances they took a farmer, but in every instance they took a representative of the workers. These men did not say "Is our educational system costing us too much?" They said, "Is the education such as we have in our particular spheres fitting our boys and girls for a better usefulness?" That is the question facing us to-day. Do hon. members think for a moment that all the wisdom in educational effects, especially since the world turmoil, is centred either in our Minister for Education or our Director of Education? If they do think that, there is an end to it, but what would we do if either of them died? We would be left without any guiding hand. If our educational system is one to be so proud of, why should they not welcome the closest investigation of it? Why should they not say, "Here is our system; this is what we are doing; come and fault it if you can; if you fault it with your practical experience against our technical experience, we shall be only too glad to admit that there is a fault in our educational system." But nothing of the kind! I want reform. When I called for suggestions from independent members of the service and persons outside, I received several which opened my eyes, first of all to the laxity, then to the increased cost of administration in many instances, and then to an overlapping to which the member for North-East Fremantle has so frequently referred. Without revealing any names, I tried some of the suggestions on some members of the House to see whether they would rectify some of the shortcomings of our educational system that we knew of. They were good enough to say there were, in some of these suggestions, the elements of a better system of education and less overlapping. If the Premier cares to look up the letters which lie in his office, he will be as sensitive as I was of the fact that we are not getting the best—and we want the best. When we are paying for education the second best is no good to any man. The best is what we want to give, and that expression "giving the best" comes from men like myself, who have had no education. It is we who want to see the children of the State properly educated. It is we who want to see them fitted, when they pass through their primary education, to take up technical education in all its branches and be made expert craftsmen, no matter what sphere they may be in. That is my ambition. When I count the cost, I ask any member to take up "Knibbs" and see if the cost of our educational system does not fill him with a good deal of uncertainty, if not dread. South Australia has a total teaching staff of 452 more than Western Australia. She has 23,000 more children enrolled, and educates them for £24,000 a year less than Western Australia. It costs South Australia £5 4s. to educate her children. In Western Australia in 1917 it cost £7 15s. 11d., and in 1918 it cost

£7 17s. 2d. to educate our children. Queensland educates yearly two and a half times as many children as Western Australia for £244,000 more, at an average of £6 5s., as against ours of £7 17s. 2d.

Mr. Johnston: How does the number of schools compare?

Mr. GARDINER: The number is much the same. The average attendance in Western Australia since 1917 has gone down a trifle. We have added 24 more schools since that year. The general enrolment has gone up 600 in those two years, but the expenditure to the end of 1919 has gone up £95,000.

Mr. O'Loughlin: Were not some schools closed while these 24 were being opened?

Mr. GARDINER: I am taking the average. Taking the Estimates as submitted to us, the expenditure has gone up from £319,000 in 1917 to £456,000 for this year. What knowledge do we get for this increase in expenditure? We have to remember all this time that one-fourth of our children are being educated in private schools. In Victoria from 1915 onwards the education vote did not go up a penny, but ours has gone up and has soared away in the most delightful fashion. Last year we thought the Estimates were big. Generous as this State was in passing an education vote of £389,485 the Government exceeded that expenditure and spent £414,330. I do not think there were any increases in salaries at that time.

The Premier: Yes, there were.

Mr. GARDINER: When were there any increases in salaries?

The Premier: Last year.

Mr. GARDINER: At what time last year?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Immediately after the Estimates had gone through.

Hon. P. Collier: But surely provision was made for those increases, since they were anticipated?

Mr. GARDINER: If they were not anticipated, what was the good of guessing? I say unhesitatingly that the general opinion of the Committee is that the education Estimates are running away with us, and that we do not get sufficient information about them. Be that as it may, we find this year an increase of £41,792. Surely this State has a right to know what we are getting for the money. The only way to know whether we are getting value for the money is to adopt the suggestion first made by the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin), and then endorsed by myself, to have a Royal Commission to inquire into the Education Department, in order that Parliament may be satisfied that value is being received for the money spent. If that really is so, I venture to say not one man in this House will begrudge the expenditure. There is not a man in the community, be his circumstances what they may, who would object to pay a direct national tax, a tax put on the whole community, a tax which would be earmarked, for the purpose of educating our children up to the highest standard of efficiency.

However, the mouths of members have been closed, because the first man who spoke about reducing the Education vote was looked upon as a man whom one ought not to touch.

Hon. P. Collier: The Government have traded on that.

Mr. GARDINER: They will not trade on it any longer so far as I am concerned, even if I have to go the length of supporting the motion of the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood). If the Premier will say that he will grant a Royal Commission, all my arguments go by the board. If he will not say so, we will see if we cannot make him grant a Royal Commission. That is the feeling of the Committee. I can assure the Premier that it is the feeling even of men fretting for education. But if this is the last time my voice is to be raised in Parliament, I will not let it go forth that this State is content, in the midst of the grave educational difficulties facing us, to accept without comment the say-so of two men, to give them an open cheque book and a fountain pen without comment. That would be past the limit, and we will not do it. There are other phases of the question. Turning to technical education, here is a matter of which we have never had the slightest explanation. New South Wales has an attendance of 15,065 at its technical schools, which comprise 544 classes. We have 5,100 pupils in our technical schools, and we have 439 classes. Victoria has 12,139 pupils in 106 classes. Can anybody tell us why there should be such a vast number of classes in Western Australia as compared with the other States? Is it that in our technical education, just as in our general education, we are giving too much smattering, instead of seeking to turn out a finished product in any one direction? Is that the cause? Can any Minister tell us? When I was Treasurer I tried to get the information, but could not get it. It seems to me that our technical schools are trying to ram-jam too much, instead of specialising. If we want to specialise, we shall have to pay specialists; and the specialists in the Eastern States, who apparently are doing good work, are highly paid men. I have not the slightest objection to paying high salaries to men who educate our young nation beyond the limits of primary education. There is not a man in this House who has any objection to that, either. But we are wondering, and we will continue to wonder, whether there are not extravagances in the Education Department? I am not satisfied that there are not.

Mr. O'Loughlen: No one else is either.

Mr. GARDINER: I could quote instances, given to me during the war, of extravagance, and wanton extravagance.

Mr. Teesdale: Why did not you expose it?

Mr. GARDINER: What was the good of exposing any of these things to a House which did not care?

Mr. O'Loughlen: Or exposing them to a Minister who did not care? And you were a colleague of that Minister.

Mr. GARDINER: Yes. My colleague did not care. I bore too much of the brunt of trying to do things in this House without any endorsement. I want to put this other phase before the Committee. Our educational system as it is in vogue to-day is one of the biggest centralising forces in Australia. That is a bold thing to say, and I will give my reason for saying it. If I am a worker working outback and have four children, and cannot get those children to school, what am I going to do in justice to them? I am going to come into the city, where my children can get schooling free, from the crèche up to the university.

Hon. P. Collier: There are even nurseries in the city.

Mr. GARDINER: Yes. Does any sane man contend that it is any use sending a child to school at the age of five years?

Hon. P. Collier: It is absurd.

Mr. GARDINER: It is insane, but we are putting up with it.

Hon. P. Collier: We stopped it before we went out of office, but the present Ministry have reverted to that system.

Mr. GARDINER: Would any sane man deny that the best years of educational life are the last two or three years a boy spends at school, the years during which he begins to reason, begins to see results? That is the age at which education should be given by the State, instead of the Government acting as nursemaids. We tolerate the present system, although we know it to be utterly wrong. We have not the courage to tell the people that that is not the sort of thing we are looking for in return for an annual expenditure on education getting on to half a million. What are we receiving for that expenditure? Has much of the finished product of our educational system passed through the hands of members of this Committee? If so, I will undertake to say that they are not satisfied with it.

Mr. Pickering: Quite true.

Mr. GARDINER: And yet hon. members are satisfied to let the Minister for Education write half a dozen columns telling us we ought not to object to anything in the educational system! Now, I tell the Premier quite straight that this Committee, if I do not mistake its temper, is going to have an inquiry into the educational system. The Minister for Mines, in perfect good faith, promised the member for North-East Fremantle and myself that a Royal Commission would be appointed. Let there be no question about that. Let us have the investigation in the interests of better education, and of a better educated and more highly efficient State. Let us do it in the interests of the children themselves, and give them a brighter outlook. Especially does the necessity for some such investigation apply when we come to view it from its industrial aspect, for anyone can see that it is in that direction that Australia

has got to make her name. What is the good of giving boys a smattering only? It makes me tired—that saying got me into trouble earlier—to notice the tendency to forge all boys' minds in the one set groove. We do not give the genius a chance in such circumstances as these. Such a lad may be the dullest scholar in the face of the world, yet he may turn out to be the finest electrician the world has known. Under the system as it is to-day, we drive that boy slap-bang through the same system as we drive a book-worm. Thus we expect to get a more educated, highly efficient, and highly cultured man! Can it be wondered at that I display some heat when dealing with such a position? I have recently been reading about educational affairs in all parts of the world. Yet I find we are quite satisfied here. One of these days we will wake up to a realisation of what we are paying, and what we should be receiving for the expenditure of that money. I ask the Premier in all sincerity, as a man who wants to see every boy get a chance, to say, "I am willing, as my colleagues said last year, that there shall be a committee of inquiry. I will make provision for that committee, not with a desire to send them into the department to pick holes, but will appoint that committee imbued with one idea, to make the State educational system not only in the primary and secondary schools but in industrial education as well, a credit not only to the State, but to Australia as a whole."

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [10.53]: I do not desire to prolong the discussion on the Education Estimates, and I rise simply for the purpose of saying that I endorse, entirely the sentiments expressed by the member for Irwin (Mr. Gardiner). There can be no doubt that the general administration of this department is due for an inquiry. The Premier would be well advised in the interests of the State, and in the interests of economy and of the general educational system, to see that a thorough inquiry by men competent to deal with the question is made into the operations of the department. While everyone believes in the principle of free education, there has grown up in this House a hesitancy on the part of members to criticise the vote for the Education Department, though it has been growing year by year, fearful lest they should be charged by the public generally and by their constituents with want of sympathy for the principle, or for the extension of the principle, of free education. When we have regard to the manner in which the expenditure is increasing annually in this department, and also to the limited amount of information possessed by members as to the general working of the system, I think it is time a halt was cried. When the Labour Government took office in 1911, the vote for education was £232,695. In 1910-11 it was £200,000; in 1911-12, it was £232,000 and this year it has grown to £456,000.

Mr. Underwood: That is not the lot.

Hon. P. COLLIER: An increase is shown on that vote alone of about £235,000.

Mr. Underwood: And that is not all. It does not include buildings.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so; I am only dealing with what comes under the Education Vote. The increase I have mentioned, in the course of nine years is a very large one. Naturally we must make allowance for increased salaries that have been paid, and the increased cost of requirements for carrying on the work of the department. Even so, while making due allowance for all these different aspects, the question still arises: Are we getting value for the money expended? When we discuss this vote, I trust that no charge will be laid against hon. members to the effect that we are opposed to the spending of money under this vote.

Mr. Gardiner: No one objects to the expenditure of money on education.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The State cannot spend too much money on the education of the children, provided the money is spent to the best advantage and provided that our children are getting a good education. We must be sure that our educational system is keeping in step with the progress in other countries of the world, and that it will turn out the finished product fit to hold its own not only in this country, but in any part of the world. As the hon. member stated, it is absurd that a vote of nearly half a million of money should be passed after merely two or three hours' discussion on the Estimates each year, without practically any knowledge whatever as to whether the money is being well spent or not. I believe we have reached a stage now in the government of the country where it would be well if Parliament were to lay it down as a statutory obligation that an inquiry by competent authorities should be held at least once in three years into the administration of every Government department.

Mr. Gardiner: Especially regarding the Education Department.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We get into the habit year after year of brushing over these things lightly. We know perfectly well that as Governments come and Governments go, Ministers cannot give the time, even if they had the necessary specialised knowledge, which they have not got, to go thoroughly into and overhaul this department which has an expenditure of over half a million of money. Without offence, one may say that the Minister, present or past, is little more than a rubber stamp. The whole power and responsibility of dealing with the education system is in the hands of one man, the Director of Education, no control having been attempted by Parliament for years past. Yet we have voted an annual increase of approximately £50,000 year after year in the belief that by increasing our education vote we were keeping abreast of the times and doing all that could be expected of us for the growing

youth of the country. But the time has now come when the department should be overhauled. I cannot conceive of any objection which either the Government or the Director of Education could offer to any such inquiry. I believe that the Committee will not be doing its duty to the taxpayers and to the youth now being educated and those to come after them unless it insists upon an inquiry which will enable us to decide whether or not we are pursuing right lines and getting value for our money. It seems to me convincing proof of the necessity for an inquiry that when we were in office we decided to raise the age of entrance to the schools to six years—

Mr. Thomson: Seven would be quite early enough.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I believe it should be seven. I did not send any of my own children to school until they were seven years of age, for I consider it cruelty to a child in its infant years, when it ought to be making mud pies and paddling about the yard, to fire it off to school and try to cram its little brain with learning. When in office we raised the entrance age to six years, notwithstanding that this was against the expressed opinion of the Director of Education. Shortly after we went out of office, when the Director of Education had a new Minister to deal with, the entrance age was reduced to four years. I and others strongly criticised that on the following year's Estimates, and as a result the entrance age was raised to five years, at which I believe it stands to-day. Now here is the convincing proof of the necessity for inquiry to which I referred: It seems to me the fact that the head of the Education Department thinks that children four years of age ought to be at school is in itself *prima facie* evidence of the necessity for an immediate inquiry into the whole administration of the department.

Mr. Smith: Necessity for a new director, I should think.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will not go that far, but I am sure it affords proof of the necessity for an inquiry into the administration. It is because of this horrible practice of sending babies to school that we are called upon for so much increased school accommodation week after week. These babies of five years of age ought to be at home with their mothers. Six years should be the very earliest at which a child should go to school, and in my opinion seven years is the better age. Whilst we are taking children at that early age, we have fallen behind other countries in that we still allow the retiring age to remain at 14. That is an altogether obsolete standard. Children who leave school at 14 years are handicapped for ever afterwards.

Mr. Gardiner: The next two years are the effective years.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, those two years spent at school would be of greater value to the children than all the others.

Mr. Griffiths: Victoria has raised the age to 15.

Hon. P. COLLIER: In nearly all the States of America over 20 years ago the age was 16, and in some of the States to-day it is 17 and even 18. But we take our children from school at the very age when the brain and mind are at last sufficiently developed for the proper appreciation of the studies on which the children are engaged.

Mr. Gardiner: We commence at the wrong end.

The Premier: We are wrong at both ends.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is exactly it, we are wrong at both ends. I have no definite figures to prove it, but I believe that if the department were properly and economically administered we could continue the children to 16 years of age without increasing to any material extent the total vote provided on these Estimates. I believe there is in our schools a good deal of frill and indulgence in fads and other things of no use, and that girls of well-to-do parents carry on till 18 or 19 years of age spending their time in the schools learning subjects merely by way of pastime.

Mr. Teesdale: And in some instances the Government find them in materials.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There are things in our educational system which could well be cut out. Then there is the question of the continuation classes, whether they might not be carried on in day time instead of at night. However, I rose, not to deal in detail with the work of the department, but to impress on the Committee the need for an inquiry. I am not urging it as a reflection on the head of the department.

The Premier: I have no objection to an inquiry, neither has the Minister for Education.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Not since I first came to the House has there been any inquiry into the general work of this department. Year by year requests have been made to Parliament for increases of £40,000 or £50,000 until after nine years we have practically doubled the expenditure.

The Premier: It is practically all due to salaries this time.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But the whole system will bear inquiry to the benefit of the department and of the State generally. Parliament is not doing right by voting £450,000 of the taxpayers' money to one man, and taking his word that the money is being wisely and economically expended. I would impress upon the Premier the necessity for a thorough inquiry by competent men. I suppose it would be possible to obtain the services of men, if not in this State, perhaps from other parts of Australia, men who would be competent to inquire into the whole of the work and administration of the department. If we had the report of such men before us, and if next year the department asked for an

increased vote, we could pass the vote with clear consciences, feeling satisfied that the money was being expended in the best interests of the State. I am sure that no member would hesitate to grant an increased vote, knowing that the money was being expended to the best advantage.

Mr. TEESDALE (Roebourne) [11.12]: I have great pleasure in supporting the remarks of the leader of the Opposition. The time has arrived when we can reasonably ask the Government to initiate an inquiry into the work of the Education Department, which annually involves the expenditure of such a huge sum of money. It would be a matter for gratification if the result of such an inquiry convinced the public that value was being obtained for the money expended. Good would result if all possible light were thrown upon every phase of the work. The inquiry should embrace the matter of admitting to the schools children of four or five years of age. A tremendous amount of expense is involved in the maintenance of what is practically a nursery for young children, and if we could save the sum which this particular branch of the system costs, and apply it to enable boys and girls to continue at school for a couple of years longer than at present, beneficial gains would ensue. I hope the Premier will give effect to the suggestion of the leader of the Opposition by promising us to-night to have such an inquiry instituted. It would be an easy matter to arrange, and the inquiry would be a source of satisfaction alike to the House and to the public, who are beginning to speak somewhat disparagingly of the huge expenditure incurred by the Education Department. I hope the Premier will tell us to-night that the matter will be dealt with at an early date.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.15 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 9th November, 1920.

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

CONDOLENCE—RAILWAY ACCIDENT MORNINGTON.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.33]: With the indulgence of the House I desire to submit a motion without notice. Hon. members will have learned, with profound regret, of the dreadful railway fatality which occurred at Mornington on Saturday night last. It is by far the worst tragedy of its kind which has yet occurred in the history of this State. I am sure it will be the desire of hon. members that they should give expression to their sympathy with the sufferers and the relatives of the deceased. I, therefore, move—

That this House desires to express its deepest sympathy with the relatives of the men who lost their lives in the recent unfortunate railway accident at Mornington.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [4.34]: I am quite certain it is unnecessary on an occasion like this to say many words. We must all desire to express our deepest sympathy with those who have lost their relatives in this terrible accident. It has been a most unfortunate occurrence and very difficult to account for. It was also very difficult to have anticipated in any way. I feel I can do nothing less than second the motion.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [4.35]: I deeply sympathise with those unfortunate men who lost their lives in this railway accident, as well as those upon whom so much suffering has been brought as a result of the disaster. The accident occurred in my province, and I know the facts of the case. I also know the dangers which exist in that locality on account of the heavy grades along the line, and on account of the sharp curves there. I deeply sympathise with those who have been bereaved and can only express the hope that nothing of this kind will ever again occur in the State. Western Australia has been fortunate indeed in the past in its freedom from accidents of this nature.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY (Central) [4.36]: To the motion and the remarks of previous speakers I lend my support. I sympathise with those who lost their lives in this sad disaster, and with those who have been so deeply bereaved. It is the greatest calamity that has overshadowed Western Australia, in the history of its railway work. I am quite sure the hearts of all members go out in sympathy for the relatives and the many bereaved persons.

Question put and passed.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read assenting to the following Bills:—

1, Parliament (Qualification of Women).