

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 12th December, 1933.

	PAGE
Bills: Health Act Amendment (No. 2), Com., 2d. ...	2399
Employment Brokers' Act Amendment, 2d. ...	2399
Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment (No. 2), Assembly's message ...	2423
Fire Brigades Act Amendment, Assembly's message ...	2423
State Transport Co-ordination, 2d. ...	2423

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

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

In Committee.

Resumed from the 8th December. Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on the Title.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move—

That the Title be amended by striking out the words "to repeal Subsection (1) of Section forty-three, Subsection (1) of Section forty-four, and Section forty-five of the Health Act, 1911-1933, and substitute other provisions in lieu thereof; to amend Section eighty-six, and to amend Part IV. of that Act by making further and better provision" and inserting the following in lieu: "amend the Health Act, 1911-1933, in order."

The Title will then read—

A Bill for an Act to amend the Health Act, 1911-1933, in order to enable local authorities to finance and undertake (either alone or in combination) and to maintain sewerage and drainage works; and for other relative purposes.

I made inquiries on the point raised by Mr. Hamersley regarding septic tanks installed in country areas, and have been advised that septic tank installations must be approved by the health authorities and the fittings be of standard pattern. In the event of a sewerage system of the kind mentioned in the Bill being installed, the fittings would be quite suitable for linking up with the system, the tank being the only exception. That is a minor matter. The same conditions would prevail as prevail in the metropolitan area. Municipalities that are considering schemes of the kind, I understand, have no objection.

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

Bill reported with amendments and an amendment to the Title, and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

BILL—EMPLOYMENT BROKERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th December.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [4.49]: A Bill dealing with employment brokers is before us again. I note the proposal to change over to magistrates from the Licenses Reduction Board, who have hitherto granted registration to employment brokers. I do not know that there has been any urgent call for the change, though probably it will be for the benefit of those seeking registration of their offices as employment agencies. I have sometimes wondered why the Licenses Reduction Board dealt with the subject. Many districts have local magistrates who are more directly in touch with centres where registration is needed. The effect of the change, therefore, should be a greater convenience, besides which the police will be available for inquiries concerning those who apply for registration. The penalties which the Bill proposes for breaches strike me as somewhat severe. In many ways it may be a good thing to have severe penalties, but the Bill is rather one-sided. The employer who may commit some breach can readily be brought to book, but it is much more difficult to bring the employee to book. The Bill stretches the matter rather too far. It looks almost as though the Government were inclined to strain a point and possibly extract revenue in respect of breaches of agreements. Unsatisfactory episodes crop up from time to time, but it is too drastic to impose a maximum penalty of £20 where the offence would be adequately met by a fine of £5.

The Honorary Minister: There is only one clause under which the employer is liable.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: But the penalty is too heavy. Breaches which the employee,

in committing them, does not regard as serious, sometimes cause the employer loss. What employment brokers and also employers fear is the tendency on the part of Governments—not the present Government in particular—to whittle away the sphere of the employment broker and bring more and more engagements directly under the Labour Bureau. I make an appeal to hon. members on behalf of employment brokers, because a bond has been created between employment brokers and employers far distant from the centre where engagements are made. The employer looks upon the employment broker as his special agent, who will know something of his special work, it may be in the pastoral industry or perhaps in wheat-growing. Employers at a great distance seldom come in direct touch with applicants, and such employers look upon the broker as an agent who knows their particular circumstances. The Labour Bureau, it is felt by those employers, have not the same close touch with them and are not so reliable for this particular work. The Labour Bureau, it has been found by several employers, have a tendency to send out the next man on the list. Again, it has been told me by men seeking employment that numerous notices are put before them, and that any applicant who happens to notice a particular job can get that job. The Labour Bureau make inquiry as to the applicant's capabilities, and in many cases accept his statements. Then when he gets to the actual place of employment, he may not prove as capable as the employer desires. It is only because the Labour Bureau are not so closely in touch with that particular employer, and have not so full a knowledge of his particular circumstances, that the same judicious care is not exercised in the selection of the employee. I do not know that the Labour Bureau would use the amount of care that I know is taken by employment brokers in many cases. The employment brokers, moreover, know full well of employers whom they are not too keen to supply with hands. They find that employees sent to such employers bring back to the employment office complaints of the employers. The employment brokers make a list of such employers in the same way as they may have certain employees on their black list. I know of a recent instance in which an employment broker engaged a person and sent him by boat to Carnarvon. The employer took

the employee out 80 miles to the job, and within a week had to take him back and pay his return passage to Perth. And that is not an isolated instance, but one that has happened frequently. However, we may be sure that in that instance sufficient inquiry had not been made into the capability of the employee, and that his case would be well noted for future reference. On the whole, however, employment brokers do exercise a shrewd judgment and discretion. There are many farmers and pastoralists whose conditions differ widely and it is impossible for one agent, or one agency, to know all these circumstances. I realise that many employers do not get satisfaction from one or another of the employment brokers, but eventually they do find one who understands their special circumstances. A bond then grows up between the employment broker and the employer, and that bond should not be interfered with or severed. Equally, there are brokers who realise that they are not able to suit by sending employees to the service of certain employers. We know that there is a tendency on the part of some employees to put up a tale and thus get train fare or steamer fare to some part of the country, fully realising that if they can only manage to reach that locality, they will fall on their feet with something else if the particular job for which they are engaged does not suit them. That is a difficulty it is hard to overcome. I know of a number of instances where men who have been engaged have had their fare paid and have failed to fulfil their agreement to attend the job. There was a case where a man well-known to a number of us decided, after having engaged a man, actually to take him down to the train and see him off. The employer himself bought the ticket at the station and gave it to the employee, who was to catch the departing train to proceed to the country. The employee went through the barrier all right and the employer left him. Within a couple of hours the employer received a ring from the railway station to say that there was some money there for him. The railway officer who had sold him the ticket apparently remembered him and got into touch with him when, after the departure of the train, the employee went to the window and demanded a refund of the money on the score that he had missed the train. Unfortunately, there

are many instances where employees get away with this kind of thing.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Perhaps one per cent.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: There are others who, after having proceeded to a job, do not remain, and the employer has no chance of recovering anything. That is why I feel we should certainly watch the Bill so as to provide greater protection to employers as well as the brokers who have always given good service. I should be sorry to see the Government succeed in obtaining what they have been after for a long time, namely the sole right to carry on this useful work of conducting an employment agency. There is one part of the Bill to which I object, and it is that which gives the right to an inspector to enter a broker's office and inspect his books and correspondence. Brokers will be obliged to keep their correspondence for a period of six months. I consider that this proposal is an interference with the liberty of the subject. There are many employers, I suppose, who would report to the brokers how the employees who had been sent along had discharged their duties. These reports would be kept, and I have no doubt that if they were not treated as confidential there would be the risk of litigation arising from their contents. It is quite on the cards that some of these reports would be construed as being actionable, and so there would be broken down that good faith which has always existed between the employers and the agencies. Of course there are many employees who render good service, and at the end of that service like to have the fact recorded. On the other hand, we know there are men who are not so particular in this respect and, in the interests of industries generally, it is as well that the brokers should know something about the type of the individual. Generally speaking, the Bill should prove useful and I intended to support the second reading, but I shall reserve to myself the right in Committee either to amend or vote against some of the clauses.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [5.7]: When introducing the Bill the Honorary Minister said that the object of it was to tighten up the Act relating to employment brokers. I admit the necessity for tightening up the Act, but I go further and say that when a similar Bill was before this House previously, the Minister was not prepared to take what he could get. Conse-

quently the Bill did not pass. On this occasion I hope the Minister will realise, as many of us will have to realise, that if we cannot get what we want, we had better take what we can get. As far as seeing that employment brokers do their job properly, and do not take down any employer or employee, I am entirely with the Minister, and I will help him in that direction to the best of my ability; but when the employee has to be protected, the employer who finds the worker he has is also deserving of consideration, he, too, will have to be protected. There are many employment brokers who have been carrying on business in an honourable and straightforward way for many years, and it would not be a fair thing for Parliament to do anything to rob them of their business which has been carried on, as it should have been conducted, to serve a useful purpose. The advantage of the employment broker's agency is that from it an employer gets what he wants. The broker has been in business for many years and he knows the employees and employers, and is familiar with all the circumstances. Thus knowing what the employer wants, the broker sends along an individual who in nine cases out of ten proves to be a suitable employee. But written all over the Bill is a distinct attempt to close down the private agencies and drive the work to one channel, the State Labour Bureau. Anyone who chooses to study the Bill will see that running right through the measure. At the present time the fee to be paid to the broker is half the first week's wages, and the other half is paid by the employer. Thus the employer is at the disadvantage that he has to pay half the broker's fees and half the first week's wages, on top of which he has to provide £1 weekly for board. One has to look for the object for driving all the employment of labour into the one channel. We know that owing to the depression and other circumstances, union funds have been depleted, and we know further that a man cannot get a job through the Government Labour Bureau unless he is a unionist.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is wrong.

The Honorary Minister: Entirely wrong.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: We shall see. The Minister for Works has said, "Our policy, and we declare it from the housetops, is preference to unionists, and there is no turning back." I accept that statement, which is in writing in preference to the interjection by

the Honorary Minister that I am entirely wrong.

Hon. G. Fraser: Tell us the unions.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: We always know that when we are scoring another point, someone bites.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are as far from the point as you are from the North Pole.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I should like to know who has the floor.

The PRESIDENT: I trust hon. members will allow Mr. Holmes to proceed without interruption.

The Honorary Minister: May I ask a question?

The PRESIDENT: Does the hon. member rise to a point of order?

The Honorary Minister: I should like to ask whether a member is not entitled to question another hon. member's statement when he knows that that statement is not strictly true.

The PRESIDENT: The Honorary Minister can reply afterwards and show that the statement is not correct, but while an hon. member is speaking it is highly disorderly to interrupt him, unless an hon. member wishes to rise to a point of order, or unless he desires to call attention to some matter which, he considers, is personally objectionable to him.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Honorary Minister has the right of reply.

The Honorary Minister: But some members have not that right.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: When I was rudely interrupted, I was pointing out that owing to the depression the funds of the unions have been depleted. I do not object to employing genuine unionists, for there are many good men amongst them. It is the tail-end I am talking about, the man who pays the necessary fee merely to get a job, irrespective of his capacity to carry on the occupation. One advantage the Labour Bureau offers that private employment brokers do not give, I understand, is the rail fare of the employee to his destination. The Labour Bureau, however, with the assistance of the police, can locate the employee, but whether he is located in order to get his union fees or the return of the fare paid I do not know. The police have sometimes got into touch with my station in order to find out if such and such a man was there, as it was desired to collect some money from him on behalf of the Govern-

ment. The Labour Bureau, therefore, has a distinct advantage over the private broker. Under the Bill, the employer will have to find the fare. Some of the complaints against employment brokers may be justified, but that is not so in all cases. The Minister can rely upon me to help in ensuring that the brokers do their jobs properly, but I have to see that other people are also protected. The arrangement to-day is that the employee pays half the first week's wages to the broker; and the employer pays the other half of the necessary fee. This Bill provides that the employer pays the whole lot. I assume that if an employee gets a position through the Labour Bureau, in view of the announcement to which I have referred, that employee has to make himself responsible for 25s. a year to his union before he can take the position.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That is not so.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: When the man arrives at his destination, he may prove unsuitable. If the Bill is agreed to, the employer will have to pay the whole of the broker's fee, and the full fare, which he will never get back, while the employee has got the job for nothing. If the man loses that job, he will be expected as a member of a union, to liquidate his debt of 25s. before he gets another job. The custom at present is that if the employee stays with the employer for three months, his fare one way is paid, and if he stays six months his return fare is paid. There is thus a responsibility on the employee to do his job properly. He also is responsible for half the broker's fees, but under this Bill he will be responsible for nothing except for moving from one district to another at the expense of some employer.

The Honorary Minister: Do you say that this should apply to a purely temporary job?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The fare is paid by the employer, for the first three months.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I have been accustomed to employing people on permanent jobs. They are well treated and well paid, and usually go on from year to year. Under this Bill I may engage a man to take a position. I have to pay the broker's fee and the rail fare one way, and if I dismiss him I have to pay the return fare. It would be easy in some isolated locality for the employee to make himself so objectionable in every way that immediately after his arrival

he has to be dismissed. This would not be regarded as wilful misconduct, and his return fare would have to be paid.

The Honorary Minister: The Bill would cover that point.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Honorary Minister referred to the treatment of employees. Second-hand information can be discounted to a great extent. I desire to give some first-hand experience.

The Honorary Minister: Do you discount the evidence of the department?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I will not have words put into my mouth. I say that second-hand information does not carry the same weight as first-hand information.

The Honorary Minister: That depends on where it comes from.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The first-hand information is coming from me. I engaged a cook who seemed to possess all the necessary qualifications. Although I accompanied him to the station I did not know he had a bottle of whisky in his bag. A car had to be sent in to Mingenew that night, a distance of 16 miles, and, unknown to me, he obtained another bottle of whisky. He consumed that during the night, and at 6.30 I found him running amok in the kitchen. The first thing he did was to grab a kettle of hot water to throw over me. I caught him by the throat before he could do this, pushed him out of the back door, and ordered him off the station. When I went into the storeroom later I found he had taken a carving knife, and slashed open every bag of sugar and rice, allowing the contents to run on the floor. Under this Bill I would have to pay the broker's fees for that man, the fare up, and, because I threw him out of the back door, I suppose I would have to pay the fare back. I used to employ my own men, persuading myself that I was a judge of character. I sent several men to the railway station with their fares in their pockets, and they were never again heard of. I have sent two men at a time with a letter to the manager, sent a man to the railway station to hand them their rail tickets, but nothing was ever heard of them. I brought the police into the matter but failed to trace the individuals concerned. I then engaged an employment broker, because of the knowledge he possessed of men of this type, and now we do not get the duds we used to get.

I have looked up this Bill and the principal Act. I can find no definition indicating the meaning of "fares." Does this mean a first class railway ticket with a sleeper, or a second class ticket? Does it mean a first-class trip on a steamer over a distance of a thousand miles north, the employee to be met by a motor car and taken 200 miles inland to a station, and, because he is unsuitable, a further trip of 200 miles back to the port, and return ticket by steamer to Fremantle? We should know what the word means.

Hon. E. H. Gray: If you want to make provision for the first class fare, you can put that in when we reach Committee.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I suggest that at this stage in the session the hon. member should not waste the time of the House. One would think the employers induced these people to travel long distances, at great expense and inconvenience, to themselves only for the sake of dismissing them. It may be that the wife of a station manager, with children of her own, wants some assistance. Can it be suggested that if the woman who is engaged comes nearly up to the mark she will be sent back a journey of 200 miles, and that the station manager's wife will be prepared to wait for several months before she gets someone else? Most of the employers do not engage people to come such a long distance merely for the pleasure of sending them back again. I do not desire to raise too many points at this stage, but I think perhaps some of the amendments would be better placed in a Bill to amend the Masters and Servants' Act than in a Bill dealing with employment brokers. That phase can be dealt with later on. Another position may crop up. It is well-known to many people that the shearers generally move in accordance with a somewhat set programme that commences in March in the Kimberley area and gradually the teams work down until they reach the southern parts of the State about December. Men know that if they manage to be in the areas that will be traversed by the shearers, they may be able to pick up jobs with the teams. At times shearers may become sick or a man may become tired of his job and want to pull out, if the work does not suit him. A man who takes on a position with a station-owner knows that if he is in the locality when any-

thing of the sort happens he has a good chance of joining the shearing team. His employer has already paid his fare to the station. By making himself objectionable at the right time, he can earn the sack and, in such circumstances, he may not ask for his return fare from the employer. He would join the shearing team at a higher rate of wages, which is fixed on a basis that includes fares. In other words, he would draw a higher wage and his fare would be paid by someone else. The most objectionable clause of all in the Bill is Clause 19 which provides that an employment broker must retain copies of all inward and outward correspondence, including letters, telegrams and so on, and of all other documents covering a period of three months, and that an inspector shall have the power to enter the employment broker's premises and inspect those documents. What would the inspector expect to find if he examined such correspondence and documents?

Hon. V. Hamersley: And he can take copies of them.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Why should the inspector desire to obtain possession of those documents? We have no indication to suggest why they should be regarded as necessary, but in my opinion, the clause is included with the object of preventing employers from furnishing true reports about men who have been sent up to them by the employment brokers. If we permit such a provision to be enacted, I can see no end to future libel actions. We know the old adage: The greater the truth, the greater the libel. The Minister will perhaps explain, the necessity for the clause that will permit an inspector to examine documents, not necessarily having a bearing on employment. To give such power with the object either to prevent an employer from furnishing a true report regarding an employee or for the purpose of blacklegging an employer and preventing him from securing the services of someone suitable when he so desires, would be wrong. I urge the House that such a clause should not be included in the Bill. On the other hand we should include in the Bill a schedule embodying the maximum charges to be levied by employment brokers. They should be allowed to charge less if they so desire, as at least one employment broker does at the present time. There should be maximum charges prescribed, otherwise, if we

allow those charges to be fixed by regulation, they will be fixed at such a low rate that every employment broker will be wiped out and that will force employers to go to the Labour Bureau to secure men when they require them. For my part, that would not suit me. We must have, as the present Act provides, an allocation of the amount to be paid by the employer and the employee respectively. The employee should be prepared to pay something if he requires a job. Regarding the powers with which inspectors are to be vested with respect to the examination of documents, it is true that if an inspector divulges any information that he may ascertain from a perusal of documents in an employment brokers' office, he is liable to a penalty not exceeding £25. On the other hand, to whom would the inspector report? For whom would he seek information? If he reports in the direction I suggest, there will be no question of the imposition of a penalty of £25, because the employer or agent concerned would never hear of the divulgence of the information and the inspector would not be called upon to pay £25.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do you think the employer is likely to be put through the third degree?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I warn the Honorary Minister that a similar clause appeared in a Bill to give an inspector power to enter private residences and communicate with domestic servants. If we had agreed to that provision it would have caused trouble and disruption in many homes but we prevented anything of the sort being possible. I hope the Council will pursue a similar course on this occasion and refuse to agree to such a provision.

Hon. A. Thomson: No wonder a prominent member of another place said on one occasion "Thank God for the Legislative Council."

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Such a clause could have no other purpose than to harass employers. We should encourage employers in these days to engage as many men as they can and not put obstacles in their way. I am agreeable to passing the Bill in a form that will put the various interests concerned in their proper places and tone up the position as between the employer and employee so as to do justice between them. Another point occurs to me. Under the provisions of the principal Act,

any person acting as an agent is a broker. There are a number of people in Perth and Fremantle who buy requirements for station-owners in the North and also sell their produce. If a station-owner should require the services of a man he would communicate with his broker with that object in view, but under the principal Act, which we do not propose to amend, any person in Perth who engages an employee for an employer immediately becomes a broker.

The Honorary Minister: Have you not left a few words out of that definition?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The interpretation in the principal Act reads:—

“Employment broker” means every person who follows, for reward, the calling of an agent for procuring engagements of persons seeking to be employed for reward, or for procuring employees for persons seeking to employ them for reward . . .

The Honorary Minister: That means that he is an individual who follows that occupation for reward.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Has the Honorary Minister ever heard of a broker doing anything for nothing? If so, I will appoint that individual to be my broker to-morrow, as soon as I ascertain his name. I have been advised on the best of authority that an agent representing the owner of the station who, on behalf of his principal, employs a man through a broker, becomes a broker himself within the meaning of the Act. Then again, fortunately for the employer, we have lost the type of individual who, in the past, was referred to as “humping his bluey.” Such a man went from station to station, looking for a job. Employment brokers have got over that difficulty and now find jobs for suitable persons in suitable places. If we agree to the Bill which will drive the employment of men into the hands of the Labour Bureau, rightly or wrongly, the employer in outback centres will say, “If I have to engage a man through the Labour Bureau, they will send me a unionist, irrespective of whether or not he will suit the job. I will not pay the fare and take the risk. I will do without a man until someone comes along, possibly humping his bluey as in the past.” That is not a position we should create in this State. I am sorry to have delayed the House for so long, but I regard this matter as serious from the standpoint of employment, particularly

in these days when we should do everything possible to find employment for as many people as we can. I shall support the second reading of the Bill, but I shall reserve the right to attempt to amend the Bill considerably during the Committee stage.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.43]: I had not intended to speak on the Bill and would not do so but for some remarks made by a few hon. members, not only to-day but during the speeches when the Bill was previously debated. Anything connected with the workers apparently impels some members to speak detrimentally regarding that section of the community, and, in fact, it seems to have become an obsession with them. It has been suggested that if the Bill be agreed to, employers will be forced to go to the Labour Bureau, which will be regarded as a recruiting station for unionists.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And will it not be?

Hon. G. FRASER: Since I have been a member of this Chamber, I have heard many extraordinary statements, but some made regarding the present Bill beat anything I had previously heard. One member put up what he described as a hypothetical case. It was, in truth, hypothetical. Statements made then and again to-day suggested to me that the members making them forgot for the moment where they were. Instead of speaking in connection with the Bill introduced for the benefit of the community, they thought they were in a butcher's shop lading out tripe. The great-et tripe I have heard in six years in this Chamber has been served up in the course of this debate. We have been told repeatedly that the Labour Bureau would become a recruiting agency for the various unions. To show how little there is in that statement, I have taken from the “West Australian” of to-day the list of advertisements showing the vacancies on offer by the various employment brokers. One has only to look down that list to see the type of work handled by the employment brokers. Let me quote just a few of the jobs:—Harvester drivers, bag sewers, general farm hands, rouseabouts, youths and lads, generals, married couples and so forth, all for farm work. Similar lists are to be seen in the “West Australian” each day. But how many of the engagements enumerated in this list are covered by a union? I doubt whether there is one organisation catering for

the people who fill those employments; and, moreover, there is no Arbitration Court award covering them. I do not think there is one industrial organisation that would be of use to the people engaged through these employment brokers. Yet we have it said here that the Labour Bureau would be a recruiting agency for the unions. Practically the only industrial organisation covering any of those engaged through employment brokers is that related to work in hotels and restaurants; and it is not necessary for a person to be a member of that organisation in order to secure a job. Members have declared that preference to unionists would be exercised through the Labour Bureau. As a matter of fact, preference to unionists can be exercised only in the various trades such as carpentry and bricklaying, and then only when the employment is on Government works. I hope that any other member intending to speak will think twice before repeating those statements to which I have taken exception.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Then I will not speak at all.

Hon. G. FRASER: If this is the class of statement the hon. member thought to make, it will be as well if he does not speak on the subject. One does not mind fair criticism, but I stoutly object to these incorrect statements. I will support the Bill because one or two of its provisions will be of advantage to men down and out looking for a job. It is provided in the measure that fares shall be paid. Mr. Holmes, when dealing with this provision, mentioned several instances of persons engaged for work who, after travelling long distances, were found to be incompetent; and the hon. member argued that if this provision were agreed to, the employer would have to pay the return fare of such incompetents. But the hon. member did not point out to the House that there is also in the Bill a provision covering such cases. Moreover, the hon. member should have told the House that when an employee proves incompetent, the employer has a claim on him for a refund of the amount expended.

Hon. V. Hamersley: But is there any chance of getting it?

Hon. G. FRASER: The employer would have just as good a chance as other people have of obtaining orders from the court. The court is there for the recovery of anything legally due.

Hon. A. Thomson: But if a man has no money, how is the employer to get a refund from him.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Did not the hon. member say something about tripe just now?

Hon. G. FRASER: An order of the court stands, and even though the person against whom the order is given may have no money or belongings at the time, the person obtaining the order will have a good chance of recovering when the person against whom the order is made obtains employment. This provision in the measure should serve to do away with the complaint we have heard of the scarcity of labour in the farming area. The harvesting work covers only five or six weeks, and the employee's railway fare to the farming areas would be anything up to £3, which, together with the employment broker's fee that he has to pay at present, would mean more than half of his earnings while on the job. Under the provision in the Bill, that difficulty will be overcome, and so a much larger number of men will be offering for employment at harvesting. I hope the second reading will be carried and that the Bill will go through Committee without any important amendments.

HON. H. J. YELLAND (East) [5.54]: I am afraid it will be necessary for me to repeat some of the points raised by Mr. Holmes. In 1927 a Bill similar to this was brought down containing certain principles which were deleted by this House, and in consequence the Bill was dropped by the Government. Some of those principles are contained in the Bill before us, and since they were objected to six years ago, they might well be objected to to-day.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The world has not improved in six years?

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: The world has improved considerably, but the principles contained in the first Bill are no more applicable to-day than they were then. The Bill endeavours to introduce the principle of preference to unionists throughout not only the rural industry, but every other industry. I would not object to preference to unionists in most instances, but I do not see that it would be of advantage to the agricultural industry to have preference for the unionist instead of preference for the ability of the employee. The Bill of 1927 proposed to abolish the private employment brokers.

There is no such direct proposal in the Bill before us, but the effect of some of the clauses probably will bring about the abolition of private brokers, by making it impossible for them to carry on. For instance, Clause 21 provides for the fixing of maximum fees by regulation. If those fees are fixed too low, it will be impossible for the broker to carry on. That is a subtle way of forcing the employment brokers out of business, men who to-day are rendering valuable service to the community. Then Clause 13 provides that the broker shall not charge any fee to the employee, and may charge the employer a fee only when the employment broker has completed the bargain. The employment broker is not even to be entitled to receive a voluntary payment for the services he renders. So it is easy to imagine that it will be found impossible for the employment broker to carry on in business. On the other hand, if under the regulations the fee to be charged to the employer is made too high, employers will think twice before seeking the services of the brokers, and in that way the Bill will make it impossible for the broker to carry on. When an employee goes to a private employment broker for a job, he goes on his own initiative.

Hon. J. Cornell: Sometimes from necessity.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: But already he has the alternative of going to the Labour Bureau, where he would get the same service gratis. I naturally ask why the Government should claim to be out to assist the workers and at the same time prevent the workers from exercising free choice by going to an employment broker, whom he is prepared to pay for the service, instead of going to the State Labour Bureau where the service is given free. The same may be said of the employer. The Bill would practically force an employer to go to the State Labour Bureau, although he was prepared to engage a private broker and pay him for his services. Such a provision would interfere with the course of private business.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is the policy of the Government.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: The very fact of a Bill of this kind having been introduced indicates that the State organisation is ineffective. It is recognised in the farming

industry that the best men go to the private brokers. That is the reason why the employers prefer to pay for the service in preference to patronising the State Labour Bureau.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is open to doubt. The employer does not pay; the employee pays.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: The charges of a private broker do not exceed those that have to be paid at the State Labour Bureau. I have discussed the matter with men in my employ and have asked them why they did not seek employment at the State Labour Bureau. They distinctly stated that the best employers did not go there, and that the cost to them would be almost equal to that imposed by a private broker. The only difference was that they paid the private broker for the service he rendered and at the State Labour Bureau they had to pay for the right to join a union.

The Honorary Minister: I challenge that statement and ask you to produce proof of it.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: I am only repeating what has been told me.

The Honorary Minister: I challenge the truth of the statement.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: Employers prefer to patronise private brokers, even though it involves them in a little higher cost. Let me give an instance to show that the State Labour Bureau officials do not give the consideration that is given by private brokers to employer and employee. The compatibility of the employer and employee is not taken into consideration. I had occasion to seek a person for my farm the other day and later I asked the broker whether he had been successful in securing a man. He replied, "We could get you two or three men, but we know they would not be suitable for you."

Hon. V. Hamersley: That is the point.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: The broker continued, "Consequently we would not send them on to you."

Hon. C. B. Williams: Did he give any reason?

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: He went on to say that he had men who were looking for work and would accept nothing but contract. The firm put themselves out to secure contract work for the men—bag sewing—and when the men were informed of it, after

they had been calling at the office for about a week; they complained that the place was a little too far distant and decided not to take it. The whole of the broker's time given to those men went for naught; the men refused to take the job when it was obtained for them.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You have only the broker's word for that.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: I should like to mention a case that came under my notice a few years ago. One of my Parliamentary friends, a farmer, received a telephone message from his manager stating that he had dismissed an employee and had sent him away by the night train. He requested that another man be sent the next day. That member rang up the State Labour Bureau and told them to send a man to his farm by the next train. The dismissed employee, on arriving in Perth, went straight to the State Labour Bureau and registered, and had not left the office when the announcer stated that there was a farm job waiting at such-and-such a place. The man said he would take it, and he returned to his old job by the next train.

Hon. J. Cornell: There was nothing wrong about that.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: If the employer had engaged a private broker, he would have recognised that the employee had proved unsuitable and would not have sent him back to the same place. The result was that the man had to work for a week in order to pay his fare.

Hon. C. B. Williams: But he got even with the boss.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That sounds like a fairy tale.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: I know the member concerned and he assured me that it was a fact.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It must have been unique.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: Provision has been made in the Bill to tighten up the Act and a number of the provisions are necessary. There are some, however, that are quite objectionable. Clause 8 seeks to amend Section 9 which deals with objections to the granting of licenses. There is a long array of reasons why licenses may be objected to, but then it is proposed to add the following:—"or that for any other reason which the court deems sufficient the applicant

ought not to be granted a license under this Act." If those words had been inserted first of all, all the other verbiage could have been omitted, and the court would have been given a free hand, as was evidently intended. Why include a whole array of reasons why a license should not be granted, and then provide that it may be refused on any ground which the court deems sufficient. Clause 15 has given rise to a good deal of discussion. I do not propose to discuss it now because it will be fought out fully in Committee. The clause deals with the payment of fares. As was asked by Mr. Holmes, should it be a first-class fare?

The Honorary Minister: What is the usual thing?

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: A second-class fare. I presume that would apply, even though the clause were passed, but it would be open to an employee to engage a taxi, the cost of which would represent his fare to the job.

The Honorary Minister: It does not lay itself open to that at all.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: Of course it does; there is no definition of fare. The Bill simply refers to the fare from the place of engagement to the place of employment, and it does not stipulate how a man is to travel.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale: He might take an aeroplane.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: If the place of employment were Kalgoorlie, he might take an aeroplane at the expense of the employer.

Hon. J. Cornell: The employee usually walks from the registry office to the train and carries his portmanteau.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: The Minister would be well advised to allow the matter of fares to remain as at present. The fare is paid if the man proves satisfactory. If he does not prove satisfactory, he does not deserve to have his fare paid. On Clause 16 I have given notice of certain amendments that I consider necessary to tighten up the Act. I believe my proposals will be an improvement on those of the Minister. At present there are only eight employment brokers operating in Perth, five of them women and three men. Until a little while ago there were six women and two men, but I understand that one woman recently transferred her business to a man. I believe those brokers are giving general satisfaction.

If they are not, Section 9 of the principal Act permits the Government to step in and compel them to comply with the Act. If the applicant is not a fit and proper person to hold a license, or if he is guilty of fraud, imposition or extortion, a license may be refused. It is quite an easy matter to prove imposition and extortion, and, on those grounds, the court would be justified in refusing a license. The Minister, in moving the second reading of the Bill, quoted various unsatisfactory cases to prove the claims he was advancing. We recognise that such cases must occur on both sides, but if there is no proof, isolated objections will not justify the amending of the Act as the Minister suggests.

Hon. A. Thomson: It is difficult to give the proof at times.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: I admit that there have been abuses, but it must be borne in mind that employment brokers are serving the community in a very important direction. If they are serving the community, we have no right to drive them out of business. The outback man relies on the judgment of the employment broker, but he will not rely on the judgment of the State Labour Bureau officials.

The Honorary Minister: He does not go to the State Labour Bureau now.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: No, because the officials have not shown any regard for compatibility between employer and employee. The abuses suggested by the Minister are outweighed by the service rendered, and Section 9 provides all the power necessary to deal with any abuses. I shall support the second reading with a view to moving amendments in Committee.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [7.30]: It is about six years since a Bill similar to this was before the Chamber. If my memory serves me rightly, it was in the year 1919 that Parliament first saw fit to pass legislation imposing a certain control on private registry offices. Three years later the then Labour Government brought down a small Bill to amend that legislation. Twenty-one years have gone by since there has been an amendment of the Employment Brokers' Act, and I am at a loss to understand how any hon. member can argue that during the intervening period

no amendment of the law has become necessary. It may be said that I am biased and have a small grudge against private employment brokers, since my experience of their offices was anything but fortunate. When a somewhat similar Bill was before the Chamber, I became reminiscent and told how in 1895, being forced by dire necessity, I resorted to a registry office and secured, without possessing the slightest qualification for it, a job as groom and gardener. In point of fact, I had never worked in a town in my life. This was in Melbourne, and the agent was a Mrs. Burton, of Lonsdale-street, whom perhaps Mr. Clydesdale will remember. Though engaged as groom, I did not know the right boot of a pair of riding-boots from the left. However, my reminiscences of that job are to be found in "Hansard." From that experience I learnt that the private registry office keeper's main concern was to get someone or other for the employer-client and collect the fee. I paid the whole fee, 15s., which was a week's wages and a lot of money in those days. I have also had experience of registry offices in this State, and these again were not fortunate. I do not know whether conditions have altered, but I think the incentive to deceive is there now just as it was then, and for the same reason. I remember in the year 1897 going to a registry office in William-street, kept by a man who was notorious in those days. I went to him in response to an advertisement for a man to go to the country, "farming experience necessary." Before coming to this State I had done a little farming as well as a bit of shearing. I secured the job and, of all places in the world, it was at Parker's Road. I went there about 35 years too soon. It is a great wheat centre now; but in 1897 it consisted of a public house and a brewery, and no wheat. On arrival I had a suspicion that all was not right. About two days later I definitely ascertained that all was not right. A previous man sent to Parker's Road had returned to Perth and put a brick through a window of the registry office in William-street, which cost him three months' pay. I had still another experience of private registry offices then. In Hay-street, at the same period, there was a tony restaurant called the Spanish Restaurant. I was a pretty smart-looking young chap, and applied at this restaurant for a job as waiter.

The wages were £1 a week, with my meals at the restaurant. At that time I resided with the present Detective Hickey in Bazaar-terrace, among a lot of Rumanian Jews—where the Capitol Theatre now stands. I lasted a day and a half at the restaurant, having paid 15s. to get the job. My reason for leaving was that the dago proprietor told me I could not speak English, whereupon I threw a dinner at him. Applying at another registry office, I got another position, though not as waiter, and I may say that in point of experience I was one of the last men who should have been so employed. This time my job was that of boots, and I paid 10s. to get it. I was to be boots at Mrs. McDermott's hotel at Midland Junction. I arrived there on a Friday night; never having cleaned anyone's boots in my life—not even my own. I said to myself, "I won't clean boots," and I left that night. Another 10s. gone! Several years later I met the lady in Boulder, where she was running the Australian Bar. She said to me, "I think I know your face." I replied, "I know yours; you owe me a day's wages." However, the lady did not pay up. Such have been my experiences of registry offices. I venture to say that exactly the same incentive exists to-day as existed in those by-gone years. The position really is that labour is required, that the employer goes to a registry office to procure the labour, and that the registry office keeper then sets out to obtain the necessary labour for engagement. It is bad enough to be a suppliant for work, but it is worse to have to pay for the right to labour. It has always seemed repugnant to me that any person able and willing to earn his daily bread should be called upon to pay for the privilege of doing so. Yet that is exactly what happens in the private registry offices. The Pastoral Labour Bureau, I understand, does not fall within the same category, any more than the corresponding bureau in New South Wales did so far back as 1895, when I got a job at shearing through it. In those days the Sydney bureau engaged shed hands and made no charge for doing so. The Pastoral Labour Bureau in this State has re-established the good conditions which obtained many years ago in New South Wales. By this time we should have progressed sufficiently to be able to set up some system of registration and employment under which the suppliant for work shall not be required to pay for the privilege of toiling. That, I

understand, is the main purpose of the Bill; and to that extent I support the measure. It has been said that there are only seven or eight employment brokers in the metropolitan area. My personal view is that there is no need for any. The State Labour Bureau, I understand, is not too popular; but why should not that bureau be made attractive? Hon. members have complained about the class of labour that is sent to them through the Labour Bureau and at times through private employment offices. However, there is this to be said for the Labour Bureau, that it does not make anything out of the suppliant for work, whereas the employment brokers do make something out of him. To that extent, I repeat, the Bill has my support. Mr. Yelland has complained of the class of labour the farmer gets. I carry my recollection back to the class of labour the farmer got 45 or 50 years ago, and I regret to say that largely the conditions of that period have reappeared. In those days how did the farmer obtain his labour? He did not obtain it through registry offices. He invariably obtained his seasonal labour through men who called and looked for it, carrying their belongings on their back. That state of affairs has now returned. I have known farmers in this State to look askance at the man who appears at the farm, to use an old phrase, "waltzing Matilda," carrying his swag. I take off my hat to the man who is prepared to do that, to go out and look for work. I have done it myself, and am not ashamed of having done it. There are, I venture to say, better qualified men applying for labour on farms today in that fashion than the men who want to obtain work through registry offices.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The trouble with you was that you did not last too long on the job.

Hon. J. CORNELL: No. The trouble with me was that I applied for the wrong job and in the wrong place. If I had applied for and secured a job in a capacity that I understood, I would probably have kept it. When I did take jobs which I did not understand, I did it out of sheer desperation, because there was no dole to be collected in those days and a man had to exist on his own resources. What happened to me has happened to many members of this Chamber. My employer found me out. When hon. members are considering whether or not they will vote for the second reading

I ask them in the light of experience extending over 21 years whether there is not something wrong in the position that needs very badly to be amended. The reason why the State Labour Bureau has not given satisfaction, why it has not been patronised to the extent it should have been is that those responsible for conducting it have more or less taken the wrong view, they have had a wrong conception of the method of management. They have treated all the applicants for work there as derelicts. Do we not know that William Morris Hughes who rose to be Prime Minister of this Great Commonwealth of ours had occasion in the early period of his life to seek employment at a Government Labour bureau? Whether or not all the powers that are sought to be given to the State bureau are given, I hope that steps will be taken to bring the institution up to date, and make it a place where it will be possible for a man to register and ultimately get employment, though not from the point of view as a last resource, but from the humane point of view. I shall support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [7.43]: I intend to support the second reading of the Bill. I congratulate Mr. Cornell on his advocacy of the measure. If everyone gave his personal experiences I am convinced that members would soon alter their attitude towards private labour exchanges.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Not at all.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: My experiences and those of my family have been unfortunate. What surprises me in connection with the debate on the Bill is that no mention has been made regarding the international aspect. The evils of labour exchanges have been recognised by every country in the world, little and big, and it has been pointed out on innumerable occasions by the Minister for Works, that Western Australia, and some other parts of Australia, have been defaulting States in regard to this matter. This is a fact that I desire to impress on Mr. Holmes—because I know of his abhorrence of anything in the shape of default—in the hope that he will alter his attitude. Since the War, Australia has spent huge sums of money in sending expensive delegations to the League of Nations. The International Labour Office has discussed the evil and

has recommended the affiliated nations to take decided action.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Did they discuss preference to unionists?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That has nothing to do with this Bill, and the references that have been made to it by members are frivolous and will carry no weight. The criticism that has been levelled against the administration of the State Labour Bureau has not altogether been fair. We know that the officer in charge has occupied his present position for only six months, and that during that time there has been a remarkable improvement in the administration. The officer should be given a fair chance and if there should be any complaints I am convinced that any representations made directly to him or to the Minister, will receive immediate attention. I intend to read to the House an extract from the Peace Treaty because Western Australia is a party to it, and we are, in honour bound to observe the decisions arrived at—

The preamble to Part 13 of the Treaty of Peace mentions "The regulation of the labour supply" amongst the conditions, an improvement of which is urgently required if social unrest is to be avoided. In Article 427 of the Treaty among the principles of special importance which signatory parties considered well fitted to guide the policy of International Organisation stands in the first place the principle "that labour should not be regarded merely as a commodity or article of commerce."

Another part of the Treaty reads:—

Conscious of the importance of the problem and in view of the stress laid upon it by the Treaty of Peace, the International Labour Conference directed from the outset its interest in the question of the abolition of fee charging employment agencies. In a recommendation on unemployment adopted at the first session held at Washington in 1919, the Conference recommended "that each member of the International Organisation take measures to prohibit the establishment of employment agencies which charge fees or which carry on their business for profit." It further recommended that where such agencies exist "they be permitted to operate only under Government licenses," and that all practical measures be taken to abolish such agencies as soon as possible.

Then there follows a long list of the countries that have adopted the total or partial abolition of fee-charging employment agencies. These include Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Cuba, Denmark, Esthonia, Fin-

land, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, India, Italy, Irish Free State, Japan, and many other countries. Those countries have either abolished the agencies or have passed legislation to deal with them. Therefore we should not look at the question from our own petty viewpoint, but take the broader aspect and carry out the decisions of the International Conference at Geneva. In that way we would keep Australia abreast of the other countries of the world. Why should we not stand in with civilised countries of the world, all of which have recognised the evil of private employment agencies. Mr. Cornell made an exception in the case of the Pastoral Labour Bureau. From personal experience I know of the good work that bureau has done. Therefore, having such an efficient and free private bureau operating under skilled direction, why not follow their example and abolish the other institutions which charge fees for engaging employees. Mr. Holmes has been an employer of labour for the past 40 years, and his opposition to the Bill is based on an experience he had with a drunken cook, who, with the aid of a bottle of whisky, assumed control of the kitchen, and sliced up the sugar and rice bags and did other damage. Mr. Holmes gives all this as the reason for his opposition to the Bill. Is that a fair argument to adopt for asking the House to defeat the Bill? Reference has been made to lads being sent by the Boys' Employment League to work on farms. During the past two months, members have not missed an opportunity to refer to the dearth of labour in the country. But what do we find when we examine the position? It has been stated in the Press that lads have been sent to farms and after they have completed their jobs which lasted perhaps seven or eight weeks, for a remuneration of 5s. a week or less, they returned to the city with nothing because it was found that they had been charged their fares to and from the positions to which they had been sent.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They got more than 5s.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Hundreds of boys have been sent away by the Boys' Employment League to positions in the country where they have averaged 5s. a week and less, and the fares have been deducted from the miserable pittance they received. Is that an inducement for lads or young men to go

into the country? It is a scandal. If the history of labour on farms in Western Australia were written, this would be a terrible indictment against a large number of farmers. A good farmer has no trouble in securing a good workman provided he pays that workman a decent wage, but when farmers offer 5s. a week to youths, they are not likely to meet with success when they renew their applications for labour. That is why a large number of farmers cannot get sufficient labour.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The average boy today is getting 16s. 4d. a week, and keep.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I question that. I say that boys have finished their job and come back and have had 5s. a week and under. I know the boys and their fathers. There are many farmers who will not pay decent wages and give decent conditions. I hope this Bill will be passed, not only in the interests of employees generally, but so that we may keep our word to the League of Nations of which we are an integral part.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan-Suburban) [S.2]: After listening to the speeches on this Bill, I realise that members have a good deal of bias both ways. The Government supporters put up cases that are intended to blacken the characters of the employment brokers, and the employers state that the employees are of such poor skill and make such bad servants that the onus lies more upon the employee than upon the others. There is something to be said for both sides. I understand the Government Bureau have been doing this work free of charge. It may be said that no person who is out of work would be so foolish as to pay a fee to a private broker, if he could get a job for nothing from the Government Bureau.

Hon. A. Thomson: Do the employees work for nothing when they go through the Government bureau?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: So many people support the private employment agencies as to indicate that they are of some value to the community. I hope to see that justice is done to these establishments as well as to other parties interested. I think, too, the Government bureau should have an opportunity to continue its work. If it were placed under the management of a man of special efficiency, and were the only place

at which employment could be obtained, we would possibly get better results.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You mean to make a monopoly of it?

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: As a Government institution it may not be very popular, but I would suggest an institution independent of Government interests. Some way must be found to provide a means of overcoming the present difficulty. Mr. Cornell cited cases to show that the charge should really lie against the employee, who applies for a situation when he is not competent to take it. His experience has been the experience of others. Many people take a job hoping that they will be given sufficient time in which to become efficient at it. This has led to many disastrous experiences for employers. It is particularly hard upon the employer who may go to the expense of bringing an employee to his home, which may be many hundreds of miles away from Perth, seeing that, when the employee arrives, he may be quite incapable of filling the position for which he has applied. The Government labour bureau is not able to do any more than private brokers, who are making a living at the business and must give good service if they wish to retain their livelihood. I am somewhat in favour of the private brokers. I admit they require to be controlled within reasonable limits, and within those limits I am prepared to support the Government. This is the third occasion I can remember when this legislation has come forward. On one occasion the Government were charged with wishing to destroy the private employment broker. That would be a proposal I could not support. There is something wrong with a situation which allows a man to take a job in the country without an efficiency certificate as to his suitability. He may be found to be quite incompetent on arrival, and his employer may be put to all the expense of paying his fare to and fro. A responsibility should be cast upon the employee to deliver the goods. I support the second reading.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [8.8]: I support the second reading. It is time the parent Act was brought up to date. The faults are not all on one side. I have complained so much about the work we have to do at this time of the session that I do

not intend to recount my reminiscences. There is every justification for this Bill, though I hope it will be amended in Committee. It is time the Act was tightened up. My principal reason for speaking is to correct Mr. Gray in his reflections upon the work of the Boys' Employment League.

Hon. E. H. Gray: I did not reflect upon it.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I think it was a reflection. I have the report which was presented to the annual meeting of members of the league on Friday last. The type of employment broker we want is similar to the Boys' Employment League. The report can be vouched for as correct, and discloses the fact that up to the 30th November last 2,966 boys were placed in positions over a period of two years. Of these 2,300 went to the country. Most of the positions in the country are of a permanent character. The boys are well fed. They have improved visibly in health and bearing. A few have to be placed more than once in order that suitable employment may be found for them. There are many cases of malnutrition due to the home conditions, but these have been rectified by the plentiful fresh food on the farms. In July last the demand exceeded the supply. The demand has gradually increased owing to the general success of the lads on the farms. Had the boys been available, the number of placements would have reached 3,000 in September last. The present success of the boys indicates the reasonably permanent character of the positions that have obtained in the past. The placements for the last six weeks have been 48, 40, 50, 48, 50 and 50. Over 100 offers of employment at an average of 10s. a week have been received during the last five weeks, but were not accepted. The average paid to these boys is 16s. 4d. per week, plus tuition and keep.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Take the railway fare away and you will get a much lower average.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I do not think that has anything to do with it. For the week ended 27th November there were 14 positions available, and not one lad offering for them.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It has cost some of these boys 5s. a week to pay the railway fare.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: That is wrong. The league is placing more boys than ever

before, but requires more in order to meet the demand. The movement is one of the very best of its kind in the State, and has done a wonderful work. During the two years under review the subscriptions, mostly of a private nature, amounted to £510 5s. 7d., while the expenditure involved in placing 3,000 boys was £460 10s. That is something to be proud of on the part of a voluntary effort. The Government have kindly provided a secretary in the person of Mr. Cross, who has done wonders. He takes the utmost interest in the work, and is a most careful and painstaking officer. But for his work, the league would not be in the position it occupies to-day. The Government also provide free offices, stationery, and the use of the telephone.

The Honorary Minister: You have to add that to the cost.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: The Honorary Minister will admit it is a wonderful effort. When the league was formed two years ago we decided to endeavour to do without Government assistance. The only Government assistance we received was the loan of the officer from the Education Department, Mr. Cross, and the use of an office and stationery. I think you will admit, Mr. President, that the statements made by Mr. Gray were entirely wrong and misleading. If there is any body that deserves the very best that can be said of it, it is the Boy's Employment League.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Those statements were not misleading; no one would believe them.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: It is a pity we have not others who are willing to do the same work at the same cost as the Boys' Employment League. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill, but I hope several of the clauses will be amended at the Committee stage.

Personal Explanation.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: By way of personal explanation, I desire to say that, neither directly nor indirectly, did I intend any reflection on the Boys' Employment League. I mentioned the name of the league only in connection with wages; I did not refer to the league in any disparaging way at all. In fact, I hold an opinion quite the contrary to that. I admire the work of the league, but one cannot get away from facts.

Debate Resumed.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [8.17]: I support the second reading of the Bill and reserve my right to seek to amend it in Committee. I did not misunderstand Mr. Gray when he was speaking and I did not take his remarks in a sense derogatory to the Boys' Employment League. On the other hand, I think an apology is due from Mr. Gray to a majority of the farmers for the deliberate statements he made regarding them. One usually accepts statements made by Mr. Gray as being made with his usual sincerity. He has been bowled out, and his statements have been disproved most pointedly.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They were not disproved at all.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: In view of that, I think an apology is decidedly due from Mr. Gray to the farmers of this State.

HON. C. B. WILLIAMS (South) [8.19]: It has been said by some members that I do not know where I am on this question. Like Cousin Jack, I know where I be. As a Labour man, I am pledged to certain principles embodied in the platform of the Labour Party, and that platform contains something about the ownership of production and exchange. This Bill has something to do with the production of the country. I have heard some members speaking disparagingly regarding the Labour Party and the policy of "spoils to the victors." In my opinion, I think that is what should obtain, and with a change of Government should come a change of civil servants. I believe in the State Labour Bureau and I think it should be the only avenue through which employees should be engaged. Under our present system, a Labour Government may come into power and, as a matter of course, the civil servants remain in their positions and are expected to change their coat according to the change of Government policy. That would never appeal to me, and does not appeal to me now. No one should change his coat except of his own free will. I have had experience on the Sandalwood Board, and in this Chamber I have spoken of what I have known the Forest Department officials to do. The Minister never answered me and sidestepped my questions. What is the difference between a private labour bureau and the State Labour Bureau? The principal difference is a matter of graft. With the

private employment broker the employer has to pay, or the employee has to pay. With the State Bureau who pays the most is likely to get the job. Under our present system, the Labour Bureau is officered by members of the permanent Civil Service and under that system the man who puts in most gets the best job. I make that statement definitely and clearly. That is one of the things I have against the present system. I believe the Government should be the sole employer of labour through the Labour Bureau, provided we can get the proper officers to do the work. Under the present system that does not obtain. Better efficiency is to be obtained through the private employment brokers because the broker asks for his fee and gets it. If he does not suit the employer, then he does not get the job of finding another employee on the next occasion. There is no incentive, unless it be the graft, in connection with the Labour Bureau to render similarly efficient service. If we changed the Civil Service with the change of Government, then we would get better service. Unless we can have the service staffed with officials who approve of the policy of the Government in power, we can never secure the efficiency that we desire. I, too, can talk about the farmer, but I shall not do so for electioneering purposes at all. In these days, if a worker is receiving 5s. a week and keep, he is getting more than the farmer who employs him. If we are all socialists and say that the labourer is entitled to get as much as the farmer, then if we give effect to that policy it will mean that the labourer will get nothing at all. More than two-thirds of the farmers in my province are under the Agricultural Bank, and, even under a Labour Government, the bank does not pay for wages.

Hon. R. G. Moore: They are not working for the Government.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Who is not working for the Government in these days? We ourselves are.

Hon. R. G. Moore: But we are paid.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: We see to that ourselves. We are organised, and we see to it that the policy of preference to members of this Chamber or of another place is adhered to, and we fix our own wages.

Hon. J. Cornell: We are one on the question of pay.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: We have the right to say whether we shall be paid less

or be paid more. Those who ridicule the policy of preference to unionists raise my ire. If the farmers adopted that principle, they would not be complaining about what they had to pay. They would be organised and would be prepared to pay. The farmer is the only person who works and produces for nothing.

The PRESIDENT: Order! We are discussing the Employment Brokers Bill.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I realise that but I was replying to an interjection and linking my remarks up with the Bill. Everyone who believes in the policy of preference to unionists gets something out of it. The farmer is the only man who gets nothing as the result of his labour.

Hon. J. Cornell: What about the Primary Producers' Association and the Wheatgrowers' Union?

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: They are political organisations and are pulling against each other.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I must ask the hon. member to link up his remarks with the Bill.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I was replying to an hon. member—

The PRESIDENT: It is better to ignore irrelevant interjections.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I am afraid you are quite right, Mr. President. People who represent metropolitan constituencies and provinces are not much concerned about the farmer.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Don't you believe it.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Only the farmers who live in the metropolitan area are worrying about the position, although there are certain business people who are in a somewhat similar situation, seeing that the farmer is under obligation to them. I am talking about the men in the metropolitan area who are not worrying about the farmer and who say that the farmer will not pay wages. In the days of my youth we used to leave our ordinary occupations and go out back harvesting and knock up a cheque for £30 or £40. In these days farmers are not able to pay like that. They cannot pay the fees that may be prescribed in the Bill or levied by the State Labour Bureau, because they have not got the money. To-day the farmer is dependent on the Agricultural Bank, some other bank, or a commercial institution. I will not have the farmer slated in this House. I admit that they are not Labour sup-

porters and I will probably realise that to a greater extent when I seek re-election next time. Nevertheless, I cannot help feeling for them because I realise that they have been spending the last three or four years working hard for no return, and they will probably work for another three or four years with nothing in return. The farmer has to provide the fee. That is one thing the farmer can do, he can nod the head to the Government, although he cannot nod the head to the employment broker. By "nod the head," I mean of course, make friends with someone that one cannot pay. The farmer can always nod the head to the Government, whereas he cannot nod the head to the employment broker. It is useless for him to go back to the chap who has already provided him with a couple of employees, for the broker, if he has not been paid his fee, will not listen to him any more. As the result of my experience I have no time for any business or office being run by public servants, who have no idea as to how any business should be run. This is to the point, Mr. President, because, after all, the Labour Bureau is only another Government department. I have seen on the goldfields hungry men entitled to receive £750 from the Government. But it takes two months to get any money from the State Insurance Office or from the miners' phthisis department, because they are Government institutions. I have to vote for this Bill, but I should like to see a remedy for it. If a Government institution cannot pay a man in less than two months the £750 that is owing to him, then Lord help the man who wants a job and has to go to a Government office to get one. I have no time for an office run by public servants, nor have I any time for appeal boards. That is how I view the situation. I have to support the second reading, but I trust the Government will appoint to these positions men who can be relied upon, men who respect the job they have and the money they are earning. Unless the Government Labour Bureau works faster than do other Government departments, I do not know where the applicants for employment will get to.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [8.35]:

If we had to judge the merits of the Bill by some of the statements made in this debate, we would accept it as a long-felt want that the whole of the universe was crying out for. I was extremely interested in the statements

of Mr. Gray, who described us as defaulters simply because we have not adopted the principle of abolishing private employment brokers, as certain other countries are said to have done. He did not mention Russia. I understand there are no employment agencies there, for the authorities are a bit ahead of that system, and they send the employees along at the point of the bayonet. If we were to accept Mr. Gray's statement, we would regard most of the employers in country districts as a lot of soulless Shylocks exploiting boy labour to an extent that those who lived a hundred years ago in another country would have been ashamed of. However, I do not accept those statements, and I will not allow them to go without protest. Many employers of labour, not very affluent either, are treating boys as they should be treated, and I can assure Mr. Gray that many of the lads employed in the South-West are having the happiest days of their lives. They are not living luxuriously, but their wants are amply supplied, and while their hours may be long, they are not working at high pressure. Many of them are likely to remain on the land for the rest of their lives. I do not deny that some farmers should not be employers. I have been in homes where one shudders to think anyone could live, and I know that some people living in such homes are often looking for employees. Whenever I have been asked what I thought of so-and-so as an employer, I have never hesitated to speak out. Not very long ago a man offered 25s. a week and keep for a boy of 16. A lad's father asked me what I thought of the prospective employer, and I told him on no account to allow his boy to take the job, because the prospective employer was not in a position to pay 25s. a week, or anything like it. On the other hand, many employers are paying reasonable wages while doing what the Minister for Employment asks people to do, namely find employment for others. It is not fair that all employers should be placed in the one category and castigated by hon. members in the way they have been. I cannot speak from experience of the employment brokers of Perth, but I have made inquiries within the last fortnight from those who have had to use those agencies. If what I have been told is correct, there is one employment broker in this city who ought to be in gaol. I make that statement knowing what I am

saying; if that person has been guilty of what I have been told, he should be in gaol for taking money under false pretences. On the other hand, the majority of the employment brokers of Perth are spoken in fairly satisfactory terms. It appears to me there is something wrong in the position as it affects both the employer and the employee. If they can go to the State Labour Bureau and get satisfaction without payment, why do they go to the private employment brokers? The question is, rather, why should the private employment brokers be preferred? I made inquiries regarding the State Labour Bureau, and the sum total of what I was told is that no matter what explanations a client may make as to his requirements, he is given practically the first on the list, whether it be a job or an employee that he may require. On the other hand, the private employment brokers evince some interest in their job and endeavour to earn their fees. So it seems to me there should be a place in the sun for those people, and it is quite wrong to talk about abolishing them. While there is in Perth at least one employment broker who, as I say, should be in gaol, the presence of one black sheep is not sufficient to condemn all the rest of the flock. Mr. Williams suggested as a novel cure for some of our troubles that the public servants should be changed every time we change the Government. That is something to think about. I do not know whether we should apply it to the Employment Brokers Bill, or to any other Bill, but I am trying to picture the chaos that would result if that suggestion were put into effect. We might wake up some day to find that there had been a change of Government, and that an old and valued civil servant, say, like the Under Secretary for Law had been removed from his office and was to be employed on the wharf looking after the lumpers. On the other hand, we might find that a man from the Lumpers' Union had been selected to take charge of the Crown Law Department. To follow that suggestion to its logical conclusion would be extremely interesting, but I do not feel equal to that task to-night, and I am afraid I cannot accept Mr. Williams's panacea for the difficulty. I shall support the second reading in the hope that in Committee we shall be able to tighten up the Act, and make it possible for those people on both sides, who are battenning on the misfortune of others, to be dealt with.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East) [8.47]: I have listened with great interest to the debate on this Bill. During my trip to Katanning the other evening I saw a young lad who said, "You have forgotten me, Mr. Piesse." I could not call him to mind at first, but then I remembered having seen him in an office in Perth. He showed me a ticket from the State Labour Bureau, indicating that he was going to a position as a harvester hand. He was supposed to be a fully trained harvester hand, capable of driving six horses. His great worry was to find out whether the farmer to whom he was going would be able to pay him his wages. I said to him, "Your best worry would be to find out whether you can drive the harvester." That boy had not received the slightest bit of training, and yet he had been sent to that position and a farmer was waiting for his help to carry on his harvesting. I am of opinion that we should not grant a monopoly in this class of business. It is most important that the private agents should be retained. If one does desire to go past the Labour bureau, I think an advertisement in the local paper is the best medium through which to secure assistants.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Hear hear!

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Only last week the firm I represent wanted a man in town. An advertisement was inserted in "The West Australian" and within two days 360 applications had been received. The next evening one of my friends asked me to get a farm hand and a small advertisement was again inserted stating that a cottage and milk would be provided for a married man and that the wages would be up to £3 a week.

Hon. J. Nicholson: You might have been committing a breach of the Employment Brokers Act by procuring.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Perhaps so. In three days there were only eight applications for the job and after I had interviewed several of them I was satisfied that they were not practical men and could not be recommended for appointment. I mention this to show that when employers want employees, someone must take an interest in the capabilities of those seeking work so that when they are sent to the country they will be able to do the work. That seems to be the job of a private employment agency as the people engaged in that class of business

take a greater interest in the capabilities of applicants with the result that the men sent to positions prove more satisfactory to the employers.

Hon. J. Cornell: By what method do they find out the capabilities of employees?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: By making inquiries from the previous employer and taking notice of the references. The State Labour Bureau officials seem to make some inquiries, but my experience of men sent by them to the country is that sometimes they are not capable of doing the work properly. I shall support the second reading, but I intend to vote against some of the clauses when the Bill is in Committee.

HON. R. G. MOORE (North-East) [8.50]: I think I can say all that needs to be said on this Bill in a few seconds. In my opinion we can amend the Bill in Committee so that it will be fair to the employer and to the employee and permit employment brokers to carry on under reasonable conditions. I support the second reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [8.51]: The debate has been interesting to me, firstly because quite a number of members apparently do not understand all that is contained in the Bill, and secondly because of the extravagant statements made by one or two members on matters really not affected by the Bill. If I took notice of all the statements made by all the members who have spoken, I would need a considerable amount of time to reply to them, but I propose to deal with only the most important points that have been made. When the Bill reaches the Committee stage, as I hope it will, we may be able to get down to the details to which some members have referred. Stress has been laid on the fact that this is the third occasion on which endeavour has been made to amend the Act, and that because on a previous occasion the then Government did not see fit to accept the amendments made by the Council, there was no need to include the amendments in this Bill. That is a peculiar argument, one containing very little merit. On the last occasion when a Bill was before the House to amend the Act, it was an endeavour on the part of the then Government to put into operation what every country associated with the League of Nations had agreed to do, namely to abolish

the fees paid to employment agencies, as outlined by Mr. Gray. I have a vivid recollection of speaking to that measure, and spending much time in explaining what had been done by other countries, and endeavouring to show why the International Labour Office considered it necessary to abolish private employment agencies. This House would have nothing of that Bill. The measure was amended to such an extent that, in the opinion of the Government, it was not worth proceeding with. This time the Government are not attempting to go so far. Mr. Nicholson said he hoped it was not the intention of the Government to abolish the private agency. I desire to inform the hon. member that the Bill means what it says. As regards the fixing of fees, it is proposed to do that by regulation.

Hon. J. Nicholson: You would have no objection to the scale of charges being included?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Not the slightest, but I am afraid that a lot of variations would be necessary and that it would be difficult for us to agree upon a schedule. If the method suggested in the Bill were agreed to, the regulation would have to be submitted to both Houses, and either House would have the right to disallow it.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: If the regulations were enforced in January and there were no sitting of Parliament till July, six months would have elapsed.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: There is not much likelihood of that occurring, but the interjections show the state of mind of some members. They are not prepared to accept the word of the Minister in charge of the Bill, or to trust the Government to do as they say they intend to do. They are trying to read into the Bill something that is not there. It is just as well for us to understand each other. In Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia, the fees are fixed by regulation. We propose to fix them by regulation, and either House would be able to disallow the regulation in accordance with Parliamentary practice. I have a list of the fees chargeable in the States mentioned, and we can reasonably assume that the Government, in fixing the fees here, would have regard to the capabilities of the people requiring employees to pay the fees. In view of the experience of the State Labour Bureau, we are not without some knowledge of what is necessary. Even if by bad

luck a scale of fees were laid down that was not all it might be, and if members considered it unfair, surely the provision for disallowance should be sufficient security that the Government would not attempt anything save what was fair! Of course the Bill goes much further than the existing Act. It provides that the employee shall not be required to pay anything. That is an important alteration. The question has been raised by Mr. Holmes and others as to why the employee should not pay something. My reply is that offered by Mr. Cornell. It is bad enough to be a suppliant for work, and to be without work. It is a jolly sight worse for a man who is hard up against things if he cannot get a job on account of having nothing in his pocket.

Hon. J. Cornell: He would be receiving sustenance and would have to buy a job.

The HONORARY MINISTER: One could quote scores of instances of extreme hardship through individuals being compelled to sacrifice their last few shillings in order to get a position, only to find that the job lasted no longer than a day or two. It frequently happens that the private employment agency has on its list some job which is not likely to be referred to either the State Labour Bureau or the Pastoral Labour Bureau. My opinion is that private registry offices should be abolished. However, the Bill does not provide for that. If the whole of the work were done by one agency, we should, I believe, get far more satisfaction than we do now, and the abuses which have rendered the Bill necessary would not occur. Some hon. members have expressed the opinion that the present position is equitable, both the employer and the employee paying the same fee for the same service, the employer for having an employee secured for him, and the employee for having work provided for him. If that were the actual position, there might be something in the argument put forward. But in only too many cases that is not the position at all, and the only person paying a fee is the employee. Scores of cases could be quoted to prove that contention. One hon. member reproached me with having mentioned only one or two cases, adding that if those were the only cases, there was no need for the Bill. However, I stressed the fact that the cases I did mention were merely indicative of large numbers of similar cases. I have

here a statement from the Chief Inspector of Factories to the effect that within the last few days he has been informed by a Perth employment broker that on her presenting her bill to one of our large cafe proprietors, he tore it up in front of her and said, "I never pay," and declined to pay. The employee had to pay before the job was obtained. The same employment broker told the Chief Inspector of Factories that another employer in this city offered to give her his work in the way of providing employees so long as no charge was made to him. This employer said, "The other brokers do not make any charge."

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That has been going on for years.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Of course it has. The law is deficient in that respect. The Act simply provides that the charge shall be made, but does not provide that it shall be collected. In too many cases the only fee collected is collected from the employee. We have been trying to overcome that difficulty, but up to date we have failed. The amendment in the Bill certainly provides that the employer shall pay a fee and that the employee shall not; but the measure contains certain safeguards which should satisfy any reasonable employer. Mr. Holmes spoke to-day about his experiences. I have a vivid recollection of Mr. Holmes saying more than once that the bureau which he patronises charges only the employer, and that the employee never has to pay. Apparently the hon. member agreed with the contention that the employee should not pay and that the employer should. Nevertheless, the tenor of his remarks to-day indicates that there will be extreme difficulty in inducing him to agree to that clause of the Bill. As regards the charging of fees, all the books of broker's offices which have been examined contain certain entries indicating that the fees are charged; but, as I have pointed out, we know that in many instances they are not collected. Mr. Nicholson raised a point with regard to the inspector having the right to object to the premises occupied by the person desiring a license.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That is as regards the proviso. I have no objection to it in the other form.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have no objection to the hon. member's suggestion. If it is thought desirable or advis-

able that the applicant should be given three days' notice, as provided in another part of the Bill, there is no objection to that. I take it that if the matter is referred to the court, there must necessarily be some notice given; and there is no reason why the parties should not be informed of the grounds on which the objection is being made. More than one hon. member took exception to the drafting of the clause which provides that the fare of the employee shall be paid from the place of engagement to the place of employment. The arguments used were really too ridiculous to be taken notice of, but I may remark that there is a custom in all these things. Surely it is going from the sublime to the ridiculous to suggest that an employee proceeding to a position on a farm two or three hundred miles up country would be likely to adopt a mode of conveyance that would involve the employer in the expenditure of a large sum of money. That is a type of the argument which has been used against this Bill, and I think it comes within Mr. Fraser's apt description of "tripe." I can quite understand an employer engaging an employee for his farm or station inland and agreeing to pay the employee's fare, but not stipulating by what means the employee shall travel to the place where he is to work. The usual custom obtaining at the State Labour Bureau, which has been so badly maligned by some hon. members, is to provide a railway ticket. I think the same course is followed by Mr. Holmes, but that hon. gentleman sometimes takes the additional precaution of travelling with the workers he has engaged. Among private employment brokers the custom is the same, and they take all manner of precaution to see that the money advanced for a fare is spent on the necessary ticket, whether by motor or by train or by steamer or by aeroplane—and sometimes an aeroplane is required. Mr. Wittenoom was rather afraid that the employer would be placed in a false position if the employee turned out to be a dud and unable to do the work for which he was engaged, or for some other reason proved unsatisfactory. The Bill provides that in such a case, or where the employee leaves of his own accord before a certain period has elapsed, he shall not be entitled to his return fare. It also provides that should the employee for any reason prove not

satisfactory, the employer has the right, if he has already paid the fare, to take proceedings in order to recover the amount. I can quite understand the objection being raised that in many cases the man is not worth powder and shot. However, there are not likely to be many of such cases, and as a rule the employer would say, "I am glad to get rid of the man, and I shall not waste any more time on him." Such cases, however, do not get away from the principle of the thing which, as I see it, is this. If I happen to be unemployed and seek work through an employment agency and am told, "There is a job at Meekatharra if you care to go to it," the least I can expect is that I shall have some guarantee in connection with that employment. If the employer is so badly in need of my services that he is prepared to send down to Perth to secure them, then the least I can expect is that he shall provide the wherewithal for me to get to Meekatharra. Of course I must take the other risks attendant on that employment. It does seem to me manifestly unfair to tell a man, as has frequently been done during recent months, that there is harvest work available for him on a farm two or three hundred miles away which will last three, four, or five weeks, and that he must pay the first half week's wages to get the job and also pay his railway fare. Probably he accepts the job at very low wages, mainly on account of the farmer's inability to pay higher wages. Then, after three or four weeks have expired and he has done his job faithfully and well, there being no more work available in the district he has to come down to Perth or some other centre to get further employment. He is called upon to pay his return fare out of wages earned during three or four weeks' employment. That is manifestly unfair. In stating that there are hundreds of such cases, I am not exaggerating. The prevalence of those cases constitutes one of the reasons why so many men have refrained from accepting country work which has been offered to them in recent weeks. They refuse country jobs, either through the State Labour Bureau or through private employment agencies, simply because there is nothing in it for them.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Some men will not go to the country on any consideration.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Some men should not go to the country, being unfit to do the kind of work required. That reminds me of statements which have been made regarding the inability of the State Labour Bureau to satisfy the employer. Comparisons have been drawn between the State Labour Bureau and private employment agencies. During the period I was in charge of the State Labour Bureau—while the previous Labour Government were in office—there were many complaints, and I did my best to remove the grounds for them, with, I think, a fair amount of success. On the other hand, there were numerous people who pinned their faith to the State Labour Bureau as against the private employment agencies. I can quite understand some of the incidents which have been retailed here. Really there is nothing at all extraordinary in them. In many cases it is impossible for either the State Labour Bureau or any employment agency to have a knowledge of the applicant for work. Naturally, mistakes will be made. But for years there was a downright prejudice against the State Labour Bureau, and the institution was almost blackballed by a certain section of the community. Recently the Minister for Employment stated that many farmers could not secure labour through the private bureaux, but he had been able to secure all the men he required from the State Labour Bureau. That did not refer to a few individuals, but to a matter of hundreds. That goes to prove that the State Labour Bureau can do all that is necessary, if given the opportunity. That reminds me of the remarks of Mr. Bolton who took up the cudgels on behalf of the Boys' Employment League and made a statement to the effect that the average wage paid to the lads was 16s. 8d. per week. I do not wish to contradict Mr. Bolton. I was one of the foundation members of the league at Fremantle and I am still on the executive. I had to strenuously object, when the league was first established, to the wages and conditions offered to boys by various employers.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The position has improved very much since then.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am coming to that. I refused to be a party to sending boys out to positions under the conditions offered to the league then. Offers of 5s. a week and keep were quite common. The farmers did not want boys; they really

wanted experienced men. They asked for boys who could drive harvesters, who had experience, who could milk, and who could do all manner of things. In a very few cases, 7s. 6d. a week was offered at that particular time. Since then there has been an alteration and to-day farmers are prepared to offer better wages for the better type of youth. I would not refer to these lads as boys in many instances, for some of them are 23 years of age.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Not many of them.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Quite a number of them are of that age. On Thursday or Friday last, one young fellow mentioned to me that he had been sent by the league to a job 200 or 300 miles away, at 7s. 6d. a week and keep. He had to travel to a farm 14 miles beyond Newdegate and when he arrived there he was told that the position had already been filled by the farmer to whom he was supposed to be going. The young fellow had no money and he was stranded. Another farmer in the district took pity on him and employed him for a period sufficient to enable him to earn his return fare.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That would be a very isolated instance.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It may be isolated, but I know there are a number of such instances. I do not blame the league, and do not wish to be misunderstood. Both the league and the lad himself were honest. He wanted work. He was about 22 years of age, and did not care what the job was. He came back to town. He will probably get more experience as he grows older, and I would not be surprised, in consequence of the action I took, if he has left town again for work in the country, at more than 7s. 6d. a week.

Hon. J. Cornell: And as good a man as ever he will be.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This young fellow, I admit, is not cut out to be a farmer, but he is willing to give the work a go.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Then he is worthy of encouragement.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I mention that instance because there are numerous cases of a similar description, and the Bill contains provision that will prevent such occurrences. Another instance was brought under my notice within the last week by the

Chief Inspector of Factories. Two girls were sent to Kalgoorlie and were told that on arrival there they would be met by another employment broker. Before they left, they had to pay a fee to the broker here and also had to pay their fares. When they arrived in Kalgoorlie, the other employment broker did not meet them, and they were stranded. They happened to know the name of the broker at Kalgoorlie, and they found her private address. When they saw her, they were informed that no positions were available for them. Policewoman Dugdale, took charge of one of the girls, and gave her lodging for the night. She provided the girl with an introduction to an employer who gave her a fortnight's work. The other girl did not get any work and is now back in Perth. The employment broker in Kalgoorlie refunded the fare one way, and the employment broker in Perth refunded the fare the other way, and in one instance has refunded half the fee. The other girl, who received a fortnight's work, did not have her fare refunded, nor yet any part of the fee she paid, the reason given being that she got work while she was in Kalgoorlie. I have a statutory declaration made by one of the girls and it will be available for members to read. I do not think I need go through it, because I have furnished the essential facts. These particulars were brought under my notice while the Chief Inspector of Factories was discussing with me one or two of the amendments that have been placed on the Notice Paper.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Presumably this is the broker referred to by Mr. Mann.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No; I have been referring to two ladies; he mentioned a "he." One is a woman in Perth and the other is in Kalgoorlie.

Hon. J. Cornell: You would hardly refer to them as "ladies."

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am doing so—for the purposes of this argument. They were supposed to be in partnership, but the partnership has been dissolved.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It was nearly time.

The HONORARY MINISTER: To my mind, it was a mere subterfuge in order to get fees from the girls. It may be that the woman in Kalgoorlie had an idea that she might be able to get positions for the two girls, but she was candid enough

to tell them there was no job for them. If there were that case alone, it would be sufficient justification for one of the amendments in the Bill. The suggestion was made by Mr. Baxter that if the employers only were called upon to pay, that in itself would have the effect of closing down employment brokers' offices in Perth. If that be so, I think it furnishes every justification for the Bill. I have already pointed out that the Act provides that both the employer and the employee shall pay 50 per cent. of the fees charged, but in the great majority of instances the employer does not pay anything. References have been made to the fees charged here in comparison with those obtaining in other States. I find that in Victoria the rates payable are as follows:—

Single persons—1s. 6d. payable by each where weekly wages do not exceed 15s. and increasing by steps to 7s. where wages exceed 35s. per week.

Married couples—where wages payable under £50 per annum, 6s. payable by each and 7s. where annual rate exceeds £50.

Man and members of family as servants—where wages and allowances do not exceed £150 per annum, 6s. each and 7s. each over £150 per annum, with 1s. extra for each member of family engaged.

Country engagements—(i.e., exceeding 30 miles from office)—extra rates of 1s. to 2s. payable by employer only.

There are special rates for work of a seasonal or temporary character. Members will agree that those rates are vastly different from the rates that have obtained here, seeing that usually half the first week's wage is payable by the employee. In New South Wales, the rates are as follows:—

Employee pays 2s. 6d., 3s. and 3s. 6d. where weekly wages do not exceed £1, £2, or over £2 respectively, without board or lodging; employer to pay twice this fee.

Where wages not less than £3, where period of employment is under six months, 5s. each by employer and employee, and where period is not less than six months, 10s.

Special provision is made regarding temporary work, and there is a registration fee of 2s. 6d. in respect of an application for employment or labour. In South Australia, regulations have been gazetted providing for—

In respect of engagement of single persons of either sex, wages not exceeding 5s. per week, 1s. 6d. payable by employee and 2s. by employer; thence by steps until wages exceed 35s. per week, when 7s. and 9s. is payable respectively.

Married couples—rates are 6s. and 8s., and 7s. and 9s. respectively where wages do not, or do, exceed £1 per week. Special rates for work of temporary character or not at a fixed wage.

Deposit at 25 per cent. may be paid or a minimum deposit of 6d. may be charged, and to be refunded upon demand if no engagement made.

I think at least I have shown there is some need for a drastic alteration of the present Act.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That is admitted.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Many statements have been made this afternoon to which I would have liked to reply, but it would perhaps be preferable to defer anything I have to say until we reach the clauses affected during the Committee stage. I must, however, take exception to a remark made by Mr. Holmes.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: What, again?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. He said that a distinct attempt was being made to close down all the private brokers and to draw all labour through one channel. Then there was a typical Holmes touch regarding preference to unionists. That seems to be an obsession with him, and he always embraces an opportunity to refer to it in this Chamber, whether the principle is affected or not.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And to-night you have said, "This goes to prove that the Labour Bureau can meet all requirements."

The HONORARY MINISTER: I did not say that at all.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I took your own words down.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I said that the instance I referred to proved that the State Labour Bureau could meet all requirements, if necessary.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And that means wiping out all the others.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Holmes has every right to place what construction he wishes on my remarks, but, thank goodness, many members are not quite so one-eyed. They will at least give me credit for being sincere in my remarks. I will reserve any further references I desire to make until the Committee stage. I hope the House will agree to the second reading and that during the Committee stage we shall be able to arrive at some compromise that will make this legislation much better than the existing Act, something that will at least

help us to prevent some of the abuses, respecting which I have given members one or two instances. These are not by any means all the instances it would be possible for me to submit, but are merely instances giving an idea of the abuses that have taken place in years gone by. If we can reach that stage where we can effect a compromise in regard to the principles in the Bill, I shall feel that the time we have spent on its discussion has not been wasted.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

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

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to Nos. 1 and 2 of the amendments made by the Council, and had disagreed with Nos. 3, 4 and 5 for reasons set forth in the schedule annexed.

BILL—FIRE BRIGADES ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to Nos. 1, 6 and 8 of the amendments made by the Council, and had disagreed with Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 for the reasons set forth in the schedule annexed.

[*The Deputy President took the Chair.*]

BILL—STATE TRANSPORT CO-ORDINATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th December.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [9.34]: This is one of the most important Bills brought down this session. I commend the Government for having given us an opportunity to express our views upon the question of transport, but I do not agree with the Bill in its present form. It proposes to go the wrong way about reaching a solution of a very serious problem. The most appreciative element I can see in the Bill is that it discloses an acknowledgment on the part of

the Government that the question of transport in its broader sense must be grappled with without delay. There can be no doubt that there has grown up throughout the State a very definite uneconomic competition between State-owned and private transport facilities. A very brief survey shows that on the State side we have an asset of £25,000,000 still largely liable to interest, but which is being seriously and very effectively challenged. If that challenge is ignored and the present position permitted to continue, it will not be long before that asset will become more or less worthless. It is not because the people dislike the railways, but for the reason that motor transport is more mobile, quicker and cheaper. National economy, of which we have heard a lot this session, demands that all traffic and transport services shall be both cheap and quick. We cannot tell the people they can use one form of transport and one alone, else we shall be told we are ridiculous, and that it is their right to use whatever form of transport suits their purpose and their pockets. Motor transport, which is the foremost rival of the railways, is here to stay for all time. Many of us believe that motor transport is still in its infancy. We, in this State, are among the last to realise that this form of transport is gradually eating into the established form of railway transport, to which we have been accustomed for so long. To attempt unduly to restrict any form of effective transport would be only to create tremendous indignation and even defiance on the part of the people. We are all extremely sympathetic with the railways in their difficult position, and appreciate the fact that under present conditions the best men on earth could not be expected to make a success of railways in the face of the competition now established against them. In Western Australia we have good reason to be proud of the performance of the men who have conducted our railways during the past year. This is a State of immense distances, and there have been and still are, fuel and water troubles and many other difficulties to contend with; yet compared with other railway systems in the Commonwealth, we have very little to complain about. Indeed, figures that have been disclosed in the railway returns during the past few years have been extremely gratifying in view of the conditions, and much

better than can be shown by the railways in the sister States. The proper course for the Government to have taken in regard to this matter was to have the position thoroughly examined by a transport commission with a view to co-ordinating all forms of transport. When first the Bill was introduced I hoped that it would prove to be a co-ordinating Bill, but there is in it precious little of co-ordination. It seems to me more of a glorified traffic tax Bill than anything else. In the first part of the Bill, certainly, there is some brief reference to the necessity for co-ordination, but beyond that it is very poor and meagre. Similar action has been taken, not only abroad, but elsewhere in the Commonwealth, for a number of years. I propose to quote briefly from a report of three or four years ago of the Development and Immigration Commission, dealing with internal transport here and in the other States. That Commission was dealing really with the question of internal transport in Tasmania, but I can gather from the report a number of quotations that affect the position here and show that the course the Government should have adopted was first to make necessary investigations by competent men who thoroughly understand the position, and then come down with a machinery Bill. Had that been done the House, doubtless, would gladly have accepted it; but to bring down a taxing measure first and trust to the Lord for co-ordination to follow, is putting the cart before the horse. There are in this report, references to what took place in Victoria in 1929. Alluding to a transport board which has been created, the report says—

The duties of the transport board would be to investigate, report to and advise the Minister on any such matters relating to transport and the co-operation of transport as it may think fit or as may be referred to it by the Minister, such as (a) the economic advantages of the various forms of passenger and goods transport, (b) the elimination and prevention of wasteful competitive services, (c) the most advantageous routing of traffic, including new and altered routes, (d) competitive fares, fees relating to registration, licenses for hire, and parking.

It may be contended that this Bill provides for something of the kind. It does, in a measure, but not to the same extent. Of the Traffic Advisory Committee of New

South Wales it was reported under the date of 2nd April, 1928, as follows:—

The committee recommended the creation of a Ministry of Transport to study transport and traffic requirements of the State, to determine the transport policy of Government or quasi-Government institutions, which at present constitute a component part of the transport system of the State, and to ensure, or where necessary to require, co-ordination between them all.

There is a second instance of a State Government setting about to examine the position previous to introducing legislation. In South Australia a Motor Transport Control Act was passed in 1927.

This Act provided for the creation of a motor transport control board to administer the Act. The board consists of the Railways Commissioner (chairman), the Highways Commissioner, and a representative of the motor industry. Under the Act motor vehicles licensed for carrying passengers or goods for hire outside the metropolitan area require to be licensed by the board for specific route or routes. The board also imposed regulations governing the minimum charges to be made by licensed motor vehicles for the carriage of goods, parcels and passengers. These charges were based upon the economic limitations of motor transport in relation to railway transportation.

In 1919 Great Britain created a Ministry of Transport, but I need not traverse the position there because Mr. Nicholson has referred to what has been done under the merger quite recently. There are other instances. The position in South Africa is interesting. The report says—

The Administration has embarked upon an extensive road motor transport programme, and at the present time owns and operates 7,438 route miles of road motor services for the conveyance of both passenger and goods traffic in conjunction with railway transport, and an additional 2,555 route miles have been authorised.

The goods traffic by these services consists principally of cream, eggs, and small consignments of farm produce and farm implements, although on certain routes heavy loads of seasonal crops are specially catered for to a limited extent.

The road motor services were inaugurated to provide transport facilities to districts not served by a branch railway line, and where such a line, if constructed, could not be operated profitably.

The country districts served by these road motor services have gained considerably in increased production, and although the road motor services are at present operated at a loss, this loss is considered to be only temporary and infinitesimal compared with the

loss which would have been incurred had an equivalent system of branch railway lines been constructed.

One more brief reference will suffice—

In the United States of America, 41 States regulate road motor passenger services and 39 States regulate road motor goods services. The law in these States requires that certificates of public convenience and necessity must be granted before such services may be permitted to operate.

The Federal Government is also introducing legislation to deal with interstate road motor service regulation.

American railway companies are increasingly utilising motor trucks, either owned by the companies or under contract with local truck hirers, to feed the railway systems and effect deliveries from same.

Then follow references to Austria, Italy, Holland, Hungary, Switzerland, Germany and other countries. My contention is that before the Government attempted to deal with the matter as they have done, they might well have made inquiries as to the results of co-ordinating services in other parts of the world. I believe it would have been well worth while to send someone abroad to ascertain the position. Transport is a very serious matter and this State cannot continue to bear the heavy losses being annually incurred by the railways, which losses must increase as time goes on. We cannot continue to pay for the privilege of running a service that is rapidly becoming unpopular. Consequently, the right thing would have been to tackle the problem as I have suggested. Instead of proceeding with the full provisions of the Bill, it would be preferable to retain Parts I. and II. with some minor amendments, and dispense with the rest of the Bill for the time being. We cannot afford to have the railways altogether displaced. That may be thought Utopian, but we do not know what is ahead of us in the matter of transportation. If the progress of the next quarter of a century is accelerated as it has been during the last quarter of a century, we shall be experiencing different transport conditions in every way. For that reason this is a matter which should not have been presented for our consideration at the last minute of the session. The Government might have given more thought to it. However, as they have shown a recognition of the difficulty by introducing the Bill, they would be wise to accept the suggestion made that the circumstances be

investigated fully before proceeding further. Many members have referred to the constitution of the proposed commission. This is the only clause of the Bill to which I intend to refer. The commission, in my opinion, should consist of five members. I do not like the idea of appointing a commission of three as I do not consider it would meet the needs. There have been objections to the Government having the balance of power on the commission. That is quite a debatable matter, and the commission I suggest would have a governmental balance of power that I think would be justified. The first man to be on a commission of the kind is the Commissioner of Railways. We do not know who is going to be appointed to that office when it falls vacant at the end of the year, but we do know that, when it comes to the question of co-ordinating transport, the railways will be vitally affected. If the new Commissioner of Railways is a man of any ability at all, his services should be freely given on the commission, because his branch of the transport service will be so vitally concerned. Then I would have as another member the Commissioner for Main Roads. I am not speaking so much of individuals in this connection, but I can make an exception in this instance and say that in the present Commissioner of Main Roads we have an estimable officer, an excellent engineer who has travelled widely and has proved himself extremely observant. His services would be of considerable value from the point of view of experience as well as qualification. Then it would be necessary, I consider, to have a representative of the Traffic Department. During the past few years the Traffic Department officials have gained quite a lot of knowledge that would be valuable. The other two members I would suggest would be representatives of country and city interests respectively. That would make an ideal commission who, if given reasonable time, should be able to do valuable work. If the commission were appointed now, they should be able to report to the next Parliament. Six months should be sufficient time in which to bring down a properly co-ordinated system that this House could deal with, and that would go a long way towards solving the problem. I shall support the second reading, but I hope that in Committee members will not accept any more than Parts I. and II. of the Bill.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [9.58]: Mr. Mann said it was a great pity that reports had not been obtained from other countries that had had to face the problem with which we are attempting to deal. Had he read the speech of the Minister for Railways, in moving the second reading of the Bill in another place, he would have been prepared to admit that the Minister had had quite sufficient information to give him a fair insight into the great problem confronting us. The Minister seemed to have been guided largely by the very full report obtained of the Victorian system. When moving the second reading of the Bill he said that the problems of Victoria were somewhat similar to ours. I believe the problems are somewhat similar throughout the world, but I consider the Minister was unfortunate in comparing a small, thickly-populated State like Victoria with a large and sparsely-populated State like Western Australia. The Chief Secretary reminded us that the State railway system had cost the taxpayers 25 million pounds. He very properly referred to the great development of the mining, pastoral and agricultural industries as a result of that expenditure. We have a right to expect that something of this sort should be done with an outlay of 25 millions. It is only reasonable to think that a great public undertaking like this would have done that which the Chief Secretary claimed for it, but can we still continue to stick to what may be an obsolete system? A lot has been said about the inaction of Parliament and Governments concerning this matter. Attention has repeatedly been drawn to it by members, at all events of this Chamber. I should like to quote from a speech I made on the 27th August, 1930. I was referring to the suicidal policy of building roads parallel to the railways. Mr. Glasheen, who was then a member, interjected, "Motor traffic could not successfully compete with the railways if your suggestions were carried out." I went on to say—

It was intended that the roads should be constructed as feeders to the railways to give the producers decent access to the system, and enable the produce of the country to be expeditiously transported, and yet the very people who should be alive to the danger, were responsible for the error.

I quoted Stead's "Review" for April 1928. This contained the following reference to railways versus road transport—

The struggle between the four great British railway groups and the powerful road transport road interests is about to reach its height in a Parliamentary contest, in which the railway companies are seeking full powers to run road services.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The hon. member will help "Hansard" very much if he will quote the page and the year of "Hansard" to which he is referring.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I am quoting from page 83 of "Hansard" of 1930. The "Review" goes on to say—

The technique of modern transportation is changing so rapidly that it would surely be a capital mistake on the part of Parliament to trammel its natural development in the public interest. To give the railways the powers they ask, is not to close the door to their future control. Parliament can intervene when it likes, but to give the motor transport companies all they ask, is only to hand over the public to another selfish monopoly.

We very often blame the railways because they are a Government monopoly. We should be fair in these matters. The problem affects railways which are run by private companies, equally with the Government railways. We need not go any further than our own State. I have it from the executive officers of the Midland Railway Company that they are feeling the motor truck competition along their one main line just as much as the Government are feeling it. A few weeks ago we were debating a motion moved by Mr. Thomson relative to writing down the capital of the railways and their administration generally. During my speech on the motion I submitted a report by Professor Hytten, which most members did not seem to have read at the time. He said—

Let it be said at the outset that no country has yet found a solution of the problem. Expedients of all kinds have been tried and have achieved some success, but no scheme has been entirely successful. That should not stop us from trying again and there are indeed in some of the experiments tried the germs of ideas that may eventually point the way to success. If it were a matter of one form of transport entirely superseding the other on account of greater efficiency, the problem would be comparatively simple, but this is not the case. In some spheres the railway is indispensable, and the time when it may become out of date is not in sight. But, on the other hand, there are spheres in which it is already obsolete or obsolescent, and in

these it must be superseded by the road vehicle. The problem, therefore, is to define the respective economic spheres of the two forms of transport. In seeking a solution the public interest must be considered to the exclusion of all other, keeping in mind that although the railways in Australia are public property, the public interests may nevertheless be best served by the curtailment of their operations.

That applies to the question raised by Mr. Mann, when he suggests that the time is not far distant when the railways will become obsolete. It also deals with the question of the matter receiving the earnest consideration of the authorities in most countries of the world. Had the present Government accorded the support to Mr. Thomson's motion that I think they should have done, it would have served as an excellent prelude to the consideration of this particularly knotty problem. This State, as we are frequently reminded, relies entirely for its progress and future prosperity upon the primary industries. If that be so, the transport services upon which the primary industries depend should certainly be our first care. The debate both here and in another place has convinced me that the Government should have given attention to this matter long ago. I regard these post mortems as futile. The sins of omission and commission, of which the railway management may have been guilty, are by the way in the discussion of an important Bill like this. We are entitled to refer to some of the major points of railway administration, without going into minor matters such as tea, scones, sandwiches and the failure of the trains to meet all demands. I would, however, like to refer to the receiving conditions as one of the points that if put right would help to popularise the department with their clients. I received a wire in Geraldton a few weeks ago to consign certain goods to Perth. A train was leaving Geraldton on Friday night, another on Monday morning, and another on Tuesday morning. I was informed on Friday that I could not consign the goods until Monday to go by Tuesdays train. I saw the station master, and impressed upon him the urgency of the matter; and he kindly agreed to accept the consignment and despatch it by the train leaving Geraldton that night. At most railway stations there is plenty of accommodation for receiving goods, and the custom of binding down consignors to a certain day requires attention from the Commissioner and his officers.

Goods should be received on any day, in view of the accommodation available. I commend that suggestion to the department as a means of cultivating the good will which is so desirable between the railways and their customers. Another serious cause of complaint is in connection with claims for breakages and pillage. Prior to the consignment I mentioned, a case of goods was stolen upon arrival in Perth. I waited exactly a month for the amount of compensation to be paid to me. Again, the time it takes to get claims for breakages settled is likewise altogether too long. Most important of all is the want of an up-to-date rate book. Whoever has had anything to do with the railways knows how shockingly out of date the rate book is. If there is one gentleman in the State who has a close acquaintance with the need for a revision of the rate book, it is Mr. A. H. Mountain, lately president of the Geraldton Chamber of Commerce. He specially travelled from Geraldton to Perth to interview the ex-Premier on the subject. I believe it is admitted by the railway officers themselves that this much-delayed work of revision of the rate-book is urgently necessary. I do not know whether many hon. members are aware of the fact—I was not until my attention was drawn to it—that a railway regulation recently laid on the Tables of both Houses was allowed to pass unnoticed and unchallenged in this Chamber, and now is a departmental by-law. Whilst I have the greatest admiration for Mr. Evans, I consider that he showed a lack of business acumen in putting through so drastic a regulation at this stage of the game.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What was the regulation?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I am not a lawyer, but I am of opinion that if one had sufficient money to take the matter into the law courts, the regulation would not hold good. It is a regulation providing that the Commissioner shall not be liable for the loss of any article once it has arrived at its destination. The goods which I have mentioned were stolen just before the regulation came into force; otherwise I would not have been compensated. I believe that an attempt is being made in another place to disallow the regulation.

Hon. A. Thomson: Is it a railway regulation?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Yes.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I must remind hon members that all interjections are disorderly. They are highly disorderly when an hon. member interjects while out of his seat.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The Bill is aimed principally at controlling motor competition with country railways. My reason for saying so is to be found in a speech delivered by the Minister for Works during the passage of this Bill through another place. I have here an extract which was certainly news to me, and which I would therefore like to quote—

From the remarks of the hon. member (Mr. Keenan) one would consider that at the moment no control is being exercised over motor traction. If one were to judge from his speech, one would imagine that transport in this State had had free play, that it could go where it liked and do what it liked, without direction or control of any description. That is far from the facts. We are one of the States that have had control from the commencement; a board has been operating ever since charabancs and taxis started, and there is no compulsion on the part of the Government to declare routes. We can refuse to prescribe routes; we can refuse to allow anyone to enter into the business in competition with the railways. We established an Advisory Board consisting exclusively of Government employees. That board was established when I was in office previously. At the commencement that board was comprised exclusively of Government officials, but subsequently I agreed to the appointment of a representative from the motor interests. Not always, however, has the Minister acted upon the recommendation of the board . . . The board have been in control, the industry has operated mainly on their recommendations, and there has been no outcry about hardship or partisanship. The motor interests agree that they have received a fair deal and have little of which to complain.

That passage appears in "Hansard" No. 20, page 2182. I made inquiries to-day from a Government official, and he said he did not know there was such a board. On further inquiry, however, I found that on the board there are representatives of the Police Department, the Commissioner of Railways, the Public Works Department, the metropolitan local authorities, who have two representatives, the Motor Transport Passengers' Association, and the tramways. The body is known as the Omnibus Routes Advisory Board, and has done a considerable amount of excellent work, to which little if any publicity has attached. So far as the metropolitan area

is concerned, it appears that the omnibus people are satisfied; so that there is little need for the proposed board in that respect. The only thing for the proposed board to do is to co-ordinate country motor competition. It cannot be said that the Government have not taken action as regards motor competition with tramways and metropolitan railways. It is the failure to realise the competition from motor traffic in the country districts that is responsible for the big drop in railway receipts. We are constantly being reminded of the cheap railway rates applying to super and wheat; but, after all, if we acknowledge wheatgrowing to be essential to the progress of Western Australia, it is up to the people of the State to assist in some way to keep that industry going. I was pleased to hear Mr. Mann's remarks about the appointment of a Commissioner of Railways. I consider that the appointment might well be delayed until the personnel of the proposed transport board has been decided. Arguing along Mr. Mann's lines, I say that if we are to continue the Commissionership of Railways—I have expressed my doubts as to the wisdom of doing so whilst the railways are hedged about with the Arbitration Court on the one hand and governmental interference on the other—it is worthy of consideration whether the gentleman who gets the appointment should not have some say as regards the present proposal, which so largely affects the undertaking he will have to control. Repeated stress has been laid on the question of co-ordination. If we realise what has been done by the Routes Advisory Board, we must wonder where the question of co-ordination comes in, apart from the relation of motor trucks in the country areas to the railway service. The creation of the board contemplated by the Bill will mean another Government department, which, though small, will necessitate salaries and incidentals that will run into several thousand pounds a year. Where will the money come from? People are constantly asking us when taxation and the creation of boards here, there and everywhere by the Government, is to cease. Now we are asked to agree to the appointment of another board, notwithstanding the good work done by the Routes Advisory Board. Mr. Mann mentioned the names of two or three gentlemen in the Civil Service who are capable of dealing with this matter.

The fact that the Routes Advisory Board largely comprises Government officials, gives me reason to hope that if the board suggested in the Bill also consisted of Government officials, they would be so impressed with the necessity to do something to assist the producers and to provide efficient service, that we might expect a report from them indicating what they propose to do to render to the primary producers the service that they expect, which is so necessary if they are to continue the great work they are engaged in. We have had the advice of Professor Hytten that all other considerations must be subservient to the assistance of and carrying on of the primary industries. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill and reserve my right to deal with the clauses so as to frame them in the terms I desire.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I understand the quotation made by Mr. Hall was from "Hansard," No. 20, page 2182. Is that so?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: That is so.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I would draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that he quoted from the current volume of "Hansard" and I advise him if he desires to quote from that authority, not to give the number.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I did not quote directly from "Hansard." But, in complying with your wish for information, I quoted the number of the volume from which I had taken the extract.

THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The hon. member is a little too honest.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East) [10.24]: In common with other members, I consider that the Government should have brought the Bill forward much earlier, as we have had a very slack time during this session. Now we are asked to rush this important measure through. The Government are to be congratulated upon bringing forward such an important Bill. The former Government dodged their responsibility in this matter. After careful consideration I am satisfied there are many excellent features in the Bill, and the officers of the Government who prepared the measure are to be commended on the excellent work they have carried out. That does not mean that I favour the Bill as a whole. A start with

this momentous problem must be made and in introducing the measure, the main point the Chief Secretary emphasised was the protection of the State railway system. We all admit that the railways are the property of the people and must be protected, as it is essential to maintain our railroads for the benefit of the primary producers. Unfortunately, political influence has had a very detrimental effect on the control of the railways, and to-day we have to consider co-ordination in relation to all means of transport. One has only to travel on the main roads to realise the amount of private capital that is invested in motor transport. As a business man in a country town, the firm I represent has, for many years, been loyal to the railways. Opposition firms were carting the main portion of their goods by motor truck, and we found they could under-sell us. We decided to give truck transport a trial, with the result that we have found it more convenient and economical than the railways; on the other hand, I am of the opinion that railway transport will have to be returned to, particularly in larger business centres, as these centres could be regarded as depots, and truck transport could be used to assist. For instance, take centres like Kondinin, Wandering, Williams, Kojonup, etc. In this instance, we will take the position regarding Kondinin. Operating at this centre is a co-operative business, which has a number of branches, one being at Hyden Rock, the terminus of the Lake Grace-Karlgarin railway. To transport goods by rail to this centre, the firm would be forced to consign goods through Wagin and Lake Grace, whereas, if the goods were brought to Kondinin, the company, with their own truck, could deliver the goods at a much lower cost. This and many other centres should have a 50-mile radius, and free license to transport their own goods without paying license fees and without securing a red plate license. Of course, they should not be allowed to cart direct from Perth to Kondinin, but goods could be consigned to the nearest point as the crow flies, which would be Corrigin, and then be distributed by the firm. This would give them the same privilege as is available to the city firms, and the competition with the railways would not exist at Corrigin.

I do not see any clause in the Bill that would allow for this, and I think on account

of the free transport license that the business houses have in Perth over a radius of 15 miles from the General Post Office, compensation should be given to country centres. I would suggest that a clause might be put in the Bill to this effect:—

That goods transported by rail for 60 miles may be carted within a radius of 15 miles, no road licenses being necessary. Goods railed 100 miles may be carted within a radius of 30 miles; goods railed 150 miles may be carted within a radius of 50 miles, and goods railed 250 miles may be carted up to 70 miles.

That would mean real co-ordination and would bring about pivoting points on the railway. In view of the peculiar geographical construction of the railway system, this would only be fair, as I think it must be admitted by all that our railway system is a peculiar one and is by no means economical for the Commissioner to handle. Another important point is that Perth business houses are not charged any extra rate under the Traffic Act, and can transport all their goods from the port to their back doors without any extra cost, whereas the country store-keeper has to pay either railage or truck transport freight, and naturally a high rate of freight is charged. The cost of licensing under the Traffic Act is very heavy, and if the Bill is brought into operation, the cost of licenses will be considerably increased. Several members have referred to the concessions given by the Government to members of Parliament and railway employees. I am perfectly in accord with the concession given to railway employees, as this is not costly to the department, being only a book entry. As to members' gold passes, they are given to members to transport them from their home town to Parliament and assist them in gaining knowledge of the district they represent and other districts. Whatever walk of life a member is in, he must gain information by travelling through the districts of Western Australia, and this fits him to carry out his duties. Even if a member does go to the Eastern States, this is not any cost to the Western Australian Government as the passes issued are not debited against our Government. Many years ago I joined a Perth firm as their district representative. The general procedure was that a pass on the Great Southern Railway was issued, which cost approximately £100 per annum. I asked the firm if they would pay me the £100 per annum instead, and I would pur-

chase a motor car for my own transport while representing this firm. They agreed and in seven or eight years I travelled well over 300,000 miles. It is essential that business travellers have quick transport from centre to centre. Just prior to entering Parliament I contested two elections and from that date I have kept a diary setting out the mileage I have travelled by train and by car. This shows that in carrying out my parliamentary duties I have travelled 19,165 miles by rail and 21,065 miles by car. Although a member of Parliament has a free pass to travel on the railways, if he represents a country constituency it is almost essential that he have a motor car, for he cannot work in his tours on the branch railways. About a fortnight ago I and two other members promised to attend a sports meeting at Kulin on a Saturday afternoon. To attend this meeting by rail meant we had to leave Perth on Thursday night and could not return to the Great Southern line until Monday, and so could not get to our home towns—Albany and Katanning—until the following Tuesday. In other words, it would take four days to do this trip. On the other hand, we could take a motor car from Perth on Saturday morning, attend the meeting and be at our own home town the same night. Surely, Sir, the time saved and the convenience must be considered. One carrier whom I have known for many years and who has built up a large business in one of the towns I represent has been a most loyal man to the Railway Department, and although he has three or four motor trucks operating he has never carted on the main roads in competition with the railways. He considers that Clause 33 is too drastic, as the 15 miles radius is too short a distance. I think his argument is quite right, for he and many others would be carting for railway transport. If the distance is not increased above 15 miles he should certainly be allowed to cart from any centre in the adjoining towns to the nearest railway depot, because it would mean that this would increase his work and consequently the freight for the railways. Co-ordination with the railways is essential, and I heard a very good example in favour of the road transport man only a few days ago. A road transport carrier approached a farmer some short distance from the railway, with the view of carting his wool. The farmer, wishing to be loyal to the

Railway Department, said "Yes, you can cart my wool if you will cart my super, when back loading, at the same rate as the Railway Department, plus a small extra charge for handling and landing it on the property." The carrier at once agreed to do this, and returned to his railway centre, ordered the super to be consigned by rail to the farmer's nearest railway station, and he carted the super out to the farm from this point. The position was that the carrier carted the high class freight wool to the city, returned with a back loading of high class goods to the centre to which he had consigned the super, and paid the Railway Department 6s. per ton for the railing of the super. So he obtained two high class freight jobs while the poor old railways had the pleasure of carting the 6s. a ton freight and did not participate in any of the high charged freights. In fact the department may have had to haul the empty truck back to its depot. Motor buses and car transport are certainly here to stay in the metropolitan area, and I do not consider the Railway Department will ever get back their lost passenger traffic. It will be essential that lighter railway transport be constructed to compete with the comfortable running motor buses. Of course, we cannot blame the Commissioner of Railways for this, because the money has not been available in the past to meet the competition with the buses. I would like to refer to the railway officials of Western Australia. I am sorry that such an efficient Commissioner as Mr. Evans is being retired on account of the age limit, as he is still a comparatively young man with many years of excellent service in front of him. When this position is being filled, I sincerely hope the Government will appoint a local man from within our own service. Why go out of our own State when we have such excellent men available? When the appointment is made, I hope more freedom will be given to the Commissioner, and less political control, as this is the only way in which he can deal with matters of high freights and that abominable rate book, which should have been altered many years ago. If the Commissioner had had a free hand I feel quite sure a lot of our present transport troubles would not have arisen. Over the past five years all motor transport men have been warned that eventually a Bill would be

brought down to protect the railways. Had this warning not been in the air, the number of trucks operating in the country would have been considerably increased. As I have had selling agencies for motor trucks in several businesses that I represent, I have personally come into contact with prospective buyers for transport purposes, and their great fear has always been that the Government might tax them out of existence and even block them from operating on the main roads. Those people have been enterprising enough to purchase motor vehicles and have provided the country districts, particularly those on branch lines, with great facilities. If they are taxed out of existence or their licenses are cancelled, they should receive compensation. If they are not compensated for the goodwill of their business or the value of their vehicles, they should be given the first right to any motor transport area to assist in carting to railway depots. To my knowledge quite a number of the men engaged in motor transport do not sufficiently consider the burden of repairs and renewals, and will find that after running for 12 months their repair bill will put them out of business. Co-ordination with the railways would avoid price-cutting to a rate unpayable to all concerned. The farmer, who has been able to walk out of his house in the morning and tell the motor transporter to lift his wool for Perth, has not had to trouble any further. The farmer owning his own truck has been unable to cart his perishable goods owing to the restrictions under the Traffic Act, but I am pleased to find that this Bill has made provision for that. Could it not be made to go further and allow all livestock to be carted by the farmer in his own truck to whichever market he desired to patronise? I should like to ask the Chief Secretary whether farmers at places like Quindanning, Wandering, etc., will still be able to get exemption to cart their own wool on their own trucks. Many of the settlers in those and other districts are a long distance from the railway and have to pay freight on long railway haulage. I sincerely hope that those men will be granted exemption by the board when appointed. There is no doubt that truck transport has relieved the farmers considerably, as the wool, when so carted, has had to be handled only on the farm before being deposited at the port. On the other hand, cartage to the

railway involved double handling and loss of considerable time. I am of opinion that the Railway Department lost a great opportunity by not employing local carriers to cart the wool from the farms in the various districts and consign it through the railways. Even if they had paid those carriers a proportion of the freight collected from the transport of the wool, it would have been profitable for the railways in that they would have retained a greater proportion of the wool freight. After listening to the opinions of the different members, I cannot see my way to support the appointment of a select committee. As the Bill is purely a Committee Bill, I would be perfectly willing to attend a session after the Christmas holidays and give this important matter further consideration. It has been suggested that the Bill be passed practically as a skeleton measure and that the Government could then appoint the board. Let me congratulate the Government on having suggested the appointment of a board of three members. I consider that number quite large enough, and the proposed representation, consisting as it does of one representative of the Government, one representative of city interests and one representative of country interests, is pleasing to a majority of the people in the country. The board, when appointed, could take evidence and prepare a new Bill to be brought down early in June of next year. I noticed by the evening paper that the Premier mentioned the probability of a session in March, and if that session is held, the measure could be considered then. A start should be made to co-ordinate the transport of this State because, when all is said and done, the railways are our own property and we must protect our assets so long as, by so doing, we are not acting detrimentally to industry. Clause 47 has been referred to as being absurd. Although it has been characterised as purely an industrial matter having no connection with the co-ordination of transport, I consider the clause quite reasonable. As one who has driven a motor car for thousands of miles, I realise that 5½ hours of continuous driving is more than enough for any human being. I have noticed that several men, who had taken up road transport work, are now nervous wrecks, due to over-driving and long hours. Such a practice is certainly dangerous to the public as

the driver of a motor vehicle needs to be right up to the mark. I intend to vote for the second reading, reserving the right to support any amendments in Committee.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [10.46]: In view of the lateness of the hour and also of the fact that I consider this Bill essentially a Committee measure, my remarks will be brief. I wish to pay a compliment to the great work done by the railways of the State. But for the work of the railways, the State would not have reached its present advanced stage. The railways have certainly played an important part in the life of the country. Considering the enormous distances over which railways have been laid and the enormous loads that have been carried, we must admit that it would have been impossible to develop the State without the aid of the railways. Although it has been stated during the debate that railways are now obsolete, I maintain that in a State like Western Australia, it would be impossible to carry on without them, and I believe that will be the experience for many years to come. In the mining districts which require heavy machinery, railway transport is necessary. Various commodities have to be hauled over long distances, and the cost that would be entailed by a motor service would make the work prohibitive. Consequently I consider that for many years to come it will be necessary to afford protection to the railways. Though I agree that the railways have served a great purpose in the past and will continue to do so in the future, I admit that there are various parts of the State where their use is obsolete. The suburbs of Perth have extended to such an extent that it is impossible for the railways to serve them adequately. People who live in the outer parts of my district, $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 3 miles from the centre, could not reasonably be asked to revert to the old conditions. Many of these people work in the city, and the custom formerly was for them to take tram to Fremantle and then travel by train to Perth. To-day they have a motor service that passes their doors and lands them in the city in the time formerly occupied by the tram journey to Fremantle. Then had to be added the time spent on the journey to Perth. Many portions of the metropolitan area are similarly situated. There are the back reaches of Claremont, Mosman's Bay, etc., where the people have a service operating

past their doors. They could not be asked to revert to the old conditions. I am forced to the conclusion that the Government do realise the responsibility resting upon them, and that they have come to the stage when it is necessary that the chaotic conditions operating to-day must come to an end, and that some tribunal must be set up to govern the various component parts of this intricate business. I wish to touch upon the question of the appointment of a Royal Commission. The Bill is now in such a state that a few amendments will meet the case. I am not convinced that it is at all desirable to appoint investigators to go into this matter. It would not be in the interests of any of the people concerned that this business should be held up pending the decision of a Royal Commission. This House during the week could finish the second reading debate, and afterwards mould the measure into a shape that would make it suitable to all parties. I am satisfied that the board of management proposed in the Bill is a good one. It has been suggested that five members should be appointed to that board. If that were done, no doubt the two extra members would comprise a representative of the railways and one of the motor interests. That would certainly not be an improvement on a board of three. The two extra men would not get us any further. Instead of the tribunal dealing with the problems there would be continual wrangles between the representative of the railways and of the motor interests. Instead of the time of the other three members being devoted to the solution of the problems confronting them it would be a matter of unravelling the tangle that would be set up by the other two.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is what happens in the Arbitration Court to-day.

Hon. G. FRASER: I have no great experience of that court. I am sorry something has not been provided in the way of an appeal from the decisions of the board. It is possible that someone may be deprived of his livelihood. Many persons are now catering for the public in the way of transport, and have invested their life savings in the business. They may be denied the right to carry on this business, and some provision should be made whereby they may appeal to an outside body against the decisions of the board. It is suggested that such appeal should be to a magistrate. I am not entirely wedded to that, but if any

amendments are moved in Committee along these lines, I shall give them my support. The Bill provides that a percentage can be charged on top of the various license fees that now have to be paid. Let me take the ordinary seven-seater taxi running through the metropolitan area. The fees aggregate in the case of such a vehicle £36 a year. As the Bill stands now, with the deletion of the seating fee, the license will drop to £15, but there is a clause which permits the board to charge up to 10 per cent. more on the gross receipts, and if this 10 per cent. is added to the £15, it will represent a total of approximately £66 or £67 per annum.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You are surely out in your figures.

Hon. G. FRASER: I think not. The Government no doubt have a genuine desire to co-ordinate all the transport services in the metropolitan area, and do not intend that this Bill shall be a taxing measure. I hope when the Chief Secretary is replying to the debate, he will give some information on that point. Possibly there may be some misunderstandings as to the actual cost that will have to be paid when the full 10 per cent. extra is charged. It may be said that the board will not charge this much. It will only be necessary for a charge of 5 per cent to be made to bring up the fees to what they are to-day. Let me now take the buses. At present they pay approximately £130 a year, including the seating fee. The correct figure I believe is £129 15s. for a 30-seater bus. With the abolition of the seating fee it would bring the cost down to £40 for a vehicle license, but if the 10 per cent. is added the charge will run into £274. These buses are operating in certain parts of the metropolitan area which are not served by railways or trams. Some means of transport must be allowed to the people. I hope this phase of the matter will be taken into consideration. It does not appear to me that if the board retain the fees it will be necessary to charge such an extortionate rate to enable them to carry on. There must be fully 88 or 90 taxis and about the same number of buses operating in the metropolitan area. A tremendous revenue would be provided if the fees charged under the Bill were to be paid. I do not think it is desired that that revenue should be raised by the board. I believe the main idea of the Government in introducing the Bill is

to arrive at some settlement of the transport problem. In view of that fact I regard it as unnecessary that so high a charge as 10 per cent. should be imposed. In Committee it will be necessary, according to my view, to reduce the percentage. It may be said that probably the board will not charge the full 10 per cent.; but if the full percentage is not required, why give authority to charge it? As I said in opening, we hope to reach the Committee stage soon and to complete the Bill this week. Any further comments I have to offer I shall reserve for the Committee stage. Hon. members will, I hope, give consideration to the two or three points I have raised. I support the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray. debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 12th December, 1933.

	PAGE
Bills: Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment, report	2434
Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment (No. 2), Council's amendments	2435
Fire Brigades Act Amendment, Council's amendments	2437
Financial Emergency Act Amendment, 2nd Com. report	2440
Public Works Act Amendment, returned	2457
Government Railways Act Amendment, returned	2457
Health Act Amendment (No. 2), returned	2457

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

BILL—FARMERS' DEBTS ADJUSTMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.