

shows that the people in question are entitled to consideration. Though parliamentary action was necessary to conserve the interests of the railways, the passing of the measure has resulted in the expectations of the Government being more than realised. That being so, why cannot we extend a little consideration to the people in the few isolated districts, and thus endeavour to give satisfaction to everybody?

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 20th October, 1936.

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

QUESTION—STATE TRANSPORT BOARD.

Claremont-Nedlands Facilities.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Works: In view of the fact that a considerable time must elapse before the people of Claremont and Nedlands enjoy the facilities promised by the provision of trolley buses, will he inform the House whether he has any objection to, or has placed any obstacle

in the way of, the State Transport Board lifting the restrictions in force against the use of buses, parlour cars, and taxis along the tram route?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: The restrictions referred to have been in force for many years, and they can only be varied or removed by the Transport Board.

QUESTION—EDUCATION, SCHOOL AGE.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Education: 1, Has the question of raising the school age to 16 years received attention? 2, Has he any information as to whether in those States of the United States of America, where the school-leaving age is 16, State subsidies are paid to parents on the lower grade of income?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Yes. 2, We have knowledge of this question in other countries but have no information from the United States.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is the measure annually introduced for the purpose of imposing land tax and income tax. As already announced when the Budget was introduced, it is not proposed to alter the rates of these taxes, which will be the same this year as for last year and for several years past. The receipts last year were—land tax £117,682, income tax £272,984. It is not anticipated that there will be this year any great variation from the amounts received last year, and the estimates therefore are—land tax £116,000, income tax £270,000.

Mr. Stubbs: You are an optimist.

The PREMIER: I do not think there will be much difference; we did not have an exceptionally good time last year. There are two small alterations proposed in that part of the Bill which exempts from land tax land that is used for agricultural, horticultural

tural, and pastoral purposes. The first amendment is to extend exemption to land used in connection with bee, pig, and poultry farming. The principle of this is contained in an amendment in a Bill already introduced into the Chamber by the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson). The second alteration is to limit exemption on all these classes of land to that used for the purpose of business of a specified nature. It was clearly the intention of Parliament to grant exemption only to those people who derived their livelihood from land used for the purposes mentioned. The actual wording enabled claims to be successfully made by persons using their land simply to provide for their own consumption, or as a side-line or hobby. For example, a man using a paddock to graze a cow for his own convenience, or with a quarter of an acre on which to grow oats for horses used for pleasure, could claim exemption. The exemption was never intended by Parliament for such people, but for people who engaged in these particular industries for the purpose of making their living; that is, engaged in them as a business. An amendment is, therefore, proposed to include in the exemption land used for the purposes of bee, pig, and poultry farming, but limited to those persons who make those branches of agriculture their livelihood. It has been found that some people have made applications, which have been resisted, but sometimes unsuccessfully, for exemption from land tax in respect of very small areas. Therefore it is proposed specifically to limit the exemption to people who make a business in the directions for which the exemptions are provided. When another Bill which has been introduced into this Chamber is before hon. members, I propose to move an amendment so as to make the measure applicable not only to agricultural, pastoral, and horticultural lands, but also to lands used for the business of bee keeping, pig raising, and so forth. Otherwise the Bill is limited to what has been in existence for some years. In those respects there is no alteration proposed. The House has approved of these principles of taxation for the last four or five years, and therefore I do not expect there will be much debate in connection with this Bill. Without further ado, accordingly, I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—ABORIGINES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [4.40] in moving the second reading said: This measure, which has been introduced in another place, is an amendment to the Aborigines Act of 1905. That Act has been amended in minor particulars since 1905, but has not been altered in a way that applies to or suits present-day circumstances. Great difficulty is found in administering the affairs of the Aborigines Department under the existing legislation, which was framed to suit the circumstances of other days. Accordingly it is desired to alter the existing law so as to fit the needs of to-day, both in regard to the requirements of the natives themselves and for the purpose of assisting in the administrative side of their affairs. Other States of the Commonwealth have found it necessary to amend their legislation from time to time, and it is stated by our Aborigines Department that many of the suggestions they support have been embodied in the legislation of other States. With our large aboriginal population, the department are seriously hampered and disadvantaged in endeavouring to administer native affairs under the existing law. It will be remembered that in 1929 an Aborigines Bill was introduced into another place and passed by that Chamber, but was turned down by the Assembly. The measure now before hon. members is not a counterpart of that Bill, but may be said to embody the better features of the 1929 Bill, as well as other features found necessary as the result of the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner into the question of aborigines. It will be recollected that in 1933 the member for Kimberley (Mr. Coverley) moved in this Chamber for the appointment of a Royal Commission in connection with all affairs relating to aborigines, the result of the carrying of that motion being that Mr. Moseley was appointed a Royal Commissioner for the purpose. The Commissioner's report was distributed last session, and is in the possession of hon. members. The Government have given full consideration to all the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner. Some of the recommendations have been put into effect; others involve legislation, and have been included in the Bill before the House.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Not all of them.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, not all of them; but all of them, as I have stated already, have received mature consideration from the Government. Those which are of the greatest moment from a legislative point of view and have been found necessary from an administrative point of view are embodied in the Bill. The inhabitants of the State affected by this legislation and controlled by the Aborigines Department represent over six per cent. of the total population of Western Australia. In 1905, when the existing Act was introduced, being made law in the following year, the number of aborigines in the State was an unknown quantity. Many efforts had been made to ascertain just what number of aborigines and different castes live within the boundaries of Western Australia. It has been found most difficult to arrive at an absolutely accurate indication of the full-bloods, although the last estimate shows that there were 22,119 full-bloods and 4,245 half-castes.

Mr. Stubbs: How long is it since that estimate was made?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Eighteen months ago.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It was published in the Commissioner's report.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In 1905 the half-caste population was under 1,000, and only 50 of that 1,000 lived between Perth and Albany. The position, of course, has materially changed since then. In 1917, when the first definite attempt was made to frame an estimate of the total number coming under the scope of the Aborigines Department, from the returns received it was estimated that there were 24,491 full-bloods and approximately 1,600 half-castes. In the intervening 19 years those figures have altered to 22,119 full-bloods and 4,245 half-castes, as previously mentioned. There has been a decrease in the number of full-blooded aboriginals, and a marked increase in the number of half-castes. The decline in full-bloods occurs not so much where they have been controlled by mission stations. Although there has been a marked decline on the whole, there has been an increase in the native population where they have been under medical supervision and under the control of white people at mission stations. There has been a slight increase in the population on those stations. Of the total full-bloods

included in the number I have mentioned, it has been estimated in the past that there are 10,000 living outside the confines of civilisation. But it is doubtful whether that is an accurate figure. I am inclined to think that that figure is far in excess of the actual number. In the past the department has estimated that in the desert country and in the northern parts of the Kimberleys the number of aborigines approaches 10,000, but the department to-day has some doubt of the accuracy of that figure. The actual position regarding the increase in the number is better gauged by comparing the different rate of increase in full-bloods as against half-castes. Children under 12 to adults amongst the full-bloods last year represented 16.48 per cent. Amongst the half-castes of various grades of colour the percentage of children under 12 was 46.75, the majority of the children being females. The original Act deals with full-bloods, who are termed aborigines, and half-castes who are defined as literally people of half blood. It can well be imagined that with the intermixtures of the castes great difficulty has arisen in administering the affairs of the native population of the State. Under the existing Act it is very difficult to know just who comes within the scope of the Act, particularly in connection with what the department calls the coloured people, the castes of various sorts, and just how far the present legislation can be made to apply to-day. That difficulty is just how many of the people of mixed blood come within the scope of the Act at all. It is found that in the administration of the affairs of the department it is not possible to define half-castes by simply setting up the rule that he or she is a person of half blood, or as a test, whether he or she is living as an aboriginal. A great many difficulties creep in and it has been found that children almost white in appearance, who so far as definition of half-caste is concerned come within the scope of the present Act, but are not, however, living as aborigines. This difficulty in administering the Act is one to a certain extent peculiar to Western Australia. In other States and countries where there are natives, it has been sought to cover the position in various ways. The definition of "aboriginal" varies in the law in almost every State where aborigines occur and are covered by legislation. In America, for example, any person in any degree of negro origin is a negro. In New

Guinea any person wholly or partly descended from an aboriginal is a native. In Papua the term "native" includes all half-castes and other aborigines of aboriginal descent. In New South Wales "aboriginal" means full-blood or half-caste. In Queensland "aboriginal" means an aboriginal native of Australia or a half-caste who lives as such or who cannot manage his own affairs. In South Australia "aboriginal" means an aboriginal of Australia or a half-caste who is or was an aboriginal of Australia or a child of such persons. So the position in all the States is very involved in an endeavour to cover all those who come within the scope of the administration by the department controlling native affairs. Mr. Moseley, the Royal Commissioner, defined half-castes as including persons of aboriginal origin in remote degree, and proposed to allow such a person to appeal to a magistrate to decide whether or not he or she should be subject to the Act.

Hon. C. G. Latham: A very worthy object.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The question is how to define these numerous coloured people within various ranges of colors. It is desired to give those who are deserving, a better chance to rise socially, to give them some opportunity to rise from the position of being always in native camps. It is claimed by the department that very many of the colored people of various grades of colors do not like to be classed as aboriginals; indeed, it is stated by the department that the word "aboriginal" is repugnant to all those who desire to rise in the social scale and become, say, mechanics and useful members of civilised society. In an endeavour to draw a line between the various classes it has been decided that the whole of the colored population, including aborigines, shall be termed natives, and so the words "aboriginal" and "half-castes" have been eliminated from the Bill. In practice, all the colored people are termed "aborigines" and are treated as such, and the department claims that there is no chance of altering that position if the law remains as it is today. Therefore, it is also proposed in the Bill to speak of them only as natives and also to alter the title of the department to that of "Department of Native Affairs". Apart from making the change for the reasons I have given, there is ample precedent for that change. Under Com-

monwealth administration Papua has its department of native affairs, and in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea the same title is used. In New Zealand there is a department of native affairs. Of the 74,000 Maoris with which that department concerns itself, only 50 per cent. are of pure Maori blood. The Union of South Africa also has its department of native affairs. So our own conditions render the change of name to that used in other countries very suitable indeed. The Royal Commissioner, in reviewing the present system of administration, dealt with the possibility of establishing divisions, each of which would be under the control of a divisional protector responsible direct to the Minister. The only difficulty the Commissioner saw was the cost involved. That, of course, is a very great consideration, but it has been decided that it will be far better to have the control under one central authority responsible to the Minister, with district inspectors instead of divisional inspectors. Each district inspector will be responsible to the Chief Protector, who in turn is responsible to the Minister. That will obviate the necessity for dividing the States into several districts, and perhaps extending each to a separate administration, whereas under the proposal in the Bill, only one person under the Minister will be responsible for the general control of native affairs. As I say, the Government are satisfied that the whole of the affairs of the natives should come under one person responsible to the Minister. The present Chief Protector urged that district inspectors should be appointed, and full scope is given in the Bill for the carrying out of that idea. Also there is ample provision made for the appointment of travelling inspectors, in addition to the permanent inspectors resident in any district. In the Act there is provision dealing with the properties of natives. Great difficulty has been experienced in handling the affairs of deceased natives who did not in any way come within the control of the Curator of Intestate Estates, for one reason that the native was not legally married. Since the Curator of Intestate Estates could not recognise a tribal marriage there is in the Bill a clause dealing with the administration of the affairs of a deceased native by the Commissioner, or the Chief Protector as he is styled to-day. At present although a deceased native may have

left a wife and dependants, his estate could not be made over in the usual way.

Mr. Marshall: What has happened to such property in the past?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It has been arranged with the Curator of Intestate Estates that the Chief Protector should administer it. However, that has not been legally provided for. This new provision will rectify that.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: An aboriginal native cannot be legally married without the permission of the Chief Protector.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so.

Mr. Marshall: Does the Bill legalise all past acts?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, it is for the future. Coming to the question of medical aid, it is proposed to establish a medical fund somewhat on the lines of the fund in the Northern Territory. This provision in the Bill follows the lines of the Royal Commissioner's recommendation. A person who is otherwise insured will not be required to contribute to the proposed fund. The same will apply to natives insured under the Workers' Compensation Act, but all those persons not already insured, and who prefer not to do so in the ordinary way, will be required to contribute to the fund. The next point I wish to mention is one that was dealt with in no uncertain way by the Royal Commissioner, that is, in regard to sexual intercourse between blacks and whites. I would refer members to the remarks of the Royal Commissioner, which will be found on page 5 of his report, as well as to his proposals and recommendations for the amendment of the existing law, which will be found on page 20 of his report. Mr. Moseley's recommendation has been closely followed, except in regard to penalties. He desired to impose a penalty without option of fine, but it has been considered that there should be an alternative, a fine.

Mr. Marshall: I thought the Chief Protector was in favour of getting rid of natives in that way.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I cannot answer for that. This is not the Chief Protector's Bill. The Government desire to follow the lines of the Royal Commissioner in that respect. It has been decided that the word "cohabit" in itself is insufficient, and it is necessary, to clarify

the position, to add the words "sexual intercourse." Drastic legislation in this respect has recently been introduced in Queensland and the Northern Territory. All members who are aware of the conditions obtaining in our outlying districts realise that something should be done to tighten up the law in this direction. Apart altogether from the association between white and black referred to by Mr. Moseley, there is the unfortunate position of the coloured girl who has been trained in an institution or a mission and who goes into service as a domestic in some home where she very often becomes the prey of those whites who have a great disregard for the moral welfare of any section of the community. I am not in any way desirous of casting a reflection upon the white race, but members know that there are certain types of white people who consider these girls fair game. There has been a great deal of controversy as to how far any department should interfere with tribal practices. While it is considered dangerous to interfere generally with tribal practices, there are certain practices carried out upon natives within the confines of civilisation which are considered to be dangerous; for example, the pledging of very young girls to elderly males. There are many cases which have come to notice of polygamy and of injuries, sometimes resulting in death, which have been sustained during tribal ceremonies. There is no intention on the part of the Government to interfere with natives who are leading their own lives as natives, but there are numerous instances which have come to notice of the mating of children with old men and of young half-castes having been subjected to tribal ceremonies which have resulted in their death, and endeavour has been made to prevent such practices, in many instances in vain. The department considers that no marriage of natives should be permitted without its consent. Under the original Act, the Chief Protector only required to give his consent in the case of a female aboriginal desiring to marry some person other than an aboriginal. There were scarcely any such marriages when the existing Act came into force, but it has been found necessary to interfere most rigidly in connection with some claims for certain people to marry young native girls. Due to the increasing missionary

efforts and the civilisation of the aborigines, there has been a great increase in legal marriages amongst the wholly black population. Many cases which have occurred without the consent of the Chief Protector have proved definitely harmful, people having been permitted to marry who were closely related tribally. The Bill provides for the permission of the Chief Protector to be obtained in all cases before a marriage is celebrated. A marriage cannot proceed if the Chief Protector raises objection.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is one of the most farcical things in the Bill. The Chief Protector can simply object. He need not have any reason.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: He must have good grounds for his objection.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Is that justified in the case of half-castes in the southern districts? A number of them are as intelligent as the Chief Protector himself.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It has been the view of the Chief Protector for many years that native courts should be established, and the Royal Commissioner agreed with that view. The Government believe that the type of court contemplated in this measure will prove satisfactory. It is intended to adjudicate only in connection with tribal offences, in cases as between native and native. That type of court exists elsewhere in the Commonwealth. Queensland has similar native courts operating, and the Commonwealth Government recently instituted the system in the Northern Territory. It is contended that a native should not be permitted to plead guilty before trial. It is well known that under pressure a native will tell his interrogator exactly what he wishes to know. It is a trait of the full-blood at all times to say anything he thinks will please his questioner. There are many other matters dealt with in the Bill: for example, the right of appeal for the employer whose permit to employ natives has been cancelled. I intend to amend the Bill to permit an appeal also in the case where a permit has been refused. In each case the right of appeal will be to a magistrate. The present Act does not allow the right of appeal, and I think members will agree that this is wrong, and has been the means of causing a great deal of dissatisfaction

in connection with the employment of natives.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You will take those strings off it, won't you?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There are no strings on it. It is all very clear. There are many matters dealt with in the Bill. I think it is unnecessary for me to go into them at length. I feel I can confidently submit this measure for the favourable consideration of the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT OF MAINTENANCE ORDERS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 15th October,

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

Clause 5—New sections:

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This clause, as I pointed out in the second reading debate, proposes to introduce some new sections into the Act which replace and extend paragraphs that have been removed from Section 5 of the principal Act. These new sections will deal with the variation and rescission of orders, the taking of evidence, the question of the payment of arrears and papers going from one State to another. When we discussed this the other evening the member for Katanning drew attention to what he believed to be an error in the drafting of subclause (2) of proposed new Section 6D and it proved on investigation that there had been an error. To rectify the matter I move an amendment—

That in lines 4 and 18 of Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 6D the word "five" be struck out and the word "six" substituted.

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

Clauses 6 to 8, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—JUDGES' RETIREMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. F. C. L. Smith—Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [5.16] in moving the second reading said: This

measure is very similar to one which was brought down last session and passed by this House, dealing with the retiring age for judges. At present there is no retiring age for judges of the Supreme Court. They are appointed for their lifetime. They hold office during their good behaviour, and are only removable upon an address by both Houses of Parliament. Section 9 of the Supreme Court Act provides that all judges of the Supreme Court shall hold office during their good behaviour subject to the power of removal by His Majesty upon an address by both Houses of Parliament. The circumstances in which both Houses can act in the exercise of this power of removal would be somewhat difficult to determine. It is very often provided, with regard to many organisations, that in certain circumstances certain officers shall be removed, but we always find that the rules in connection with such removal are very difficult to implement. So it is in connection with the Supreme Court Act which empowers Parliament to remove judges in certain circumstances; it is very difficult to determine just what the circumstances should be. It may be that a palpable misuse of the prerogatives of the office would justify action against a judge, or it may arise through a condition of mental infirmity in a judge, which, though manifest to others, may through his old age, or for some other reason, not be appreciated by the afflicted person himself. Whatever may actuate both Houses of Parliament in respect to the removal of a judge under the existing provisions of the Supreme Court Act will not be affected by this Bill. The measure before us does not propose to change the constitutional usage with respect to the removal of judges, but it does propose to establish, in accordance with the modern trend of thought, a retiring age for judges. We have in the Stipendiary Magistrates Act legislation which provides for the retirement of stipendiary magistrates when they reach the age of 70 years. That measure was brought down by the late Mr. Davy in 1930. That gentleman, when Attorney General, said that it was somewhat difficult to select an age for the retirement of stipendiary magistrates, but he thought the age selected, 70 years, was a fair and reasonable one. He was guided on that occasion by the fact that there was already in existence legislation

which provided for the retirement of the President of the Arbitration Court when he reached the age of 70 years. There is already legislation in New South Wales which fixes the retiring age for judges at 70 years, and there is similar legislation in operation in Queensland. In Victoria the authorities have recently enacted legislation providing for the retirement of country court judges and magistrates, and others holding judicial positions, at the age of 72. At present I believe there is going through the Parliament of Victoria a Bill to provide for the retirement of judges of the Supreme Court in that State, and the age fixed in that connection is also 72.

Mr. Sleeman: Why 65 for anyone else, but 72 for a judge?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I will deal with that aspect of the matter later on.

Mr. Marshall: Is that legislation enacted or is it only now going through Parliament?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I have not been able to find out whether the Bill has gone through the Victorian Parliament, or what its fate has been, but I know there was some discussion in connection with the matter, on account of the effect it might have on the pension position for judges in Victoria. When an age has to be fixed on an arbitrary basis, there will always be a certain amount of contention with respect to the age fixed. Some will oppose it because they know of cases where the mental and physical powers of judges do not seem to be impaired at the age fixed. They can quote men whose mental powers have not been sufficiently impaired to warrant their retirement at that age. On the other hand, quite a number will support the age fixed, and would be prepared to support a much lesser age, because they know of many cases, and can quote many, of men who have shown signs of both mental and physical impairment at a much earlier age than 70. We have, therefore, to select an age that will provide for the rule as it applies to mental and physical powers diminishing sufficiently to justify retirement, and not for the exceptions, and the rule is, as the exceptions prove, that at 70 years of age the mental powers of a man invariably diminish. The question has been asked why, in the case of officers in various branches of the public service, the age of retirement is fixed at present at 65. I would point out in the first place that this Bill will fix the retiring age of judges by statute, whereas the retiring

age of civil servants is fixed by administrative Act. In considering the age limit, the most important factor to be taken into account is at what age do members consider that the mental and physical powers of a man diminish sufficiently on the average to warrant his retirement. I would say, and I think many members would agree, that that age is 70. If we were considering the question only from that aspect, we would say that 70 years should be the general age, not only with respect to judges but with respect also to those who were in other branches of the Public Service. Another point in connection with the Public Service arises, namely, the up-stream of the younger men who are coming on.

Mr. Sleeman: There are plenty of lawyers coming on.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There are officers who are hoping to get promotion, and that the road ahead will be cleared in some way so that they may improve their positions during the years when that opportunity may be afforded to them. Whether the age in the case of public servants should be 65 or not may be a point upon which there is a good deal of controversy, but I do not think it is a point that should be raised when we are dealing with this Bill. First of all, we are fixing this age for the retirement of judges by statute, and, secondly, there is not that up-stream of younger men anxious to improve their positions by occupying a seat on the bench.

Mr. Sleeman: There would seem to be plenty of competition available.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There does not seem to have been very much competition for the positions which have become vacant in our judiciary, nor do I think there is a very great supply of men who would be found competent to fill such positions. It is most desirable to get men who are thoroughly competent to fill positions in the judiciary. As we insist, so far as possible, that occupants of these positions shall be competent on appointment, we should also insist that they remain competent during their term of office, and see that their physical powers, and their capacity to exercise their judgment, are not affected by old age as the result of remaining too long upon the bench, or other causes.

Mr. Marshall: The question of competency is very pertinent having regard to the number of decisions in this State that are upset by the High Court of Australia.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: And there is an answer to that point too. Most of the cases that are referred on appeal to the High Court are extremely contentious, in respect of which there has existed much difference of opinion among the legal fraternity. As one lawyer put it, "the High Court has the last guess" or "the last say." Even so, seeing that the issues to be determined are so contentious and have given rise to such differences of opinion, it may be questioned whether the decisions of the High Court were right, even though that tribunal did have the final say. The power we vest in judges and the work they are called upon to perform are of such importance and make such demands upon the mental faculties, if justice is to be dispensed, that we cannot fix the age at which we can be assured of mental fitness beyond 70 years. There is another primary purpose behind the Bill, and that is to fix the age at which a judge may be appointed to the Bench. The reason for that is that the Supreme Court Act provides that a judge must not be less than 60 years of age, nor have served less than 15 years on the Bench, before he can be entitled to a pension.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Not less than 60 years of age?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, before he can be entitled to a pension. I am aware that there is a provision in the Supreme Court Act under which a judge may, on the production of a medical certificate, resign from the Bench, and still be entitled to a pension. In that case the judge need not be 60 years of age nor have served 15 years on the Bench. But instances of that description seldom arise. I submit there is a suggestion in that provision of the Supreme Court Act that 45 years would be quite a good age at which to appoint a man to the judiciary, and that 60 years is a good time for a judge to contemplate retirement. The Bill really postulates, although it does not actually make provision accordingly, that no person over 55 years of age shall be appointed as a judge, because if he has to retire when he reaches 70, and must serve 15 years before becoming entitled to a pension, obviously the judge could not be more than 55 years of age on appointment—if he desired a pension. It may be there is a promising person who will be a likely appointee to a judgeship who may be just over 55 years of age, but he can accept

such a position only without pension rights. Therefore, it is provided in the Bill that the limit of age for appointment to a judgeship shall be 60 years, and the judge qualifying for a pension then will have to serve at least 10 years, unless his retirement is caused by ill-health in accordance with the provisions in the Act. If he were appointed before he was 55 years of age, he would then serve his 15 years on the Bench, and, in any event, his retirement at 70 would be regarded as if it were a resignation under the Supreme Court Act. When a somewhat similar Bill was before the House on a former occasion, the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) referred to the late Chief Justice Avory, and observed that his Honour's mental powers were great even at 84 years of age. The hon. member pointed out that Mr. Justice Avory had been appointed to a judgeship when he was 68 years of age. I think if the hon. member were to look up the facts he would find that the late Chief Justice Avory sat for a quarter of a century on the Bench, and if that were so and he died when he was 84, he must have been 58 years of age when he was appointed to the judiciary. I think the general experience and practice, too, regarding judgeships both in the United Kingdom and Australia, is that judges are almost invariably much less than 60 years of age when appointed to the Bench. In those circumstances I feel no exception can be taken to that particular provision in the Bill, because it really only includes provision for the extension of age from 55 to 60 in respect of judges to enable them to qualify for pension rights under the Supreme Court Act. There is another aspect to which I desire to draw attention. The Bill will not apply to the present judges of our Supreme Court, because it is felt that the terms under which they were appointed to and under which they accepted their positions, should not be disturbed by legislation with retrospective application. The Bill will apply to all future appointments, and it is provided that if one of the present puisne judges is appointed to the position of Chief Justice, it will not be regarded as an appointment for the purposes of the present Bill. Precaution is taken in the Bill to assure that a judge who may reach 70 years of age during the progress of a case taken before him, will be permitted to continue the

hearing until he completes the matter. It is also provided that an acting judge or commissioner, who is over 60 years of age, may be appointed, but he must be under 70 years of age. Here again, if the acting judge or commissioner should reach 70 years of age during the progress of a case before him, provision is made whereby he will be able to complete the hearing before retiring. I commend the Bill to the consideration of members generally. No serious objection can be raised to any of its provisions. It is in keeping with the modern trend of thought with regard to the judiciary, and that trend of thought is reflected in legislation in many of the States of the Commonwealth, and in practice in most of the countries within the British Dominions. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. North, debate adjourned.

BILL—TRADE DESCRIPTIONS AND FALSE ADVERTISEMENTS.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 13th October. Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; the Minister for Employment in charge of the Bill.

Schedule:

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:
I move an amendment—

That all the words after "bedding" in line 1 of the Schedule be struck out, and the words "blankets and flannel" inserted in lieu.

The amendment is moved because of representations made by some of the interests concerned with the operations of the Bill who feel that at the commencement it should not cover a wide range of goods, but a small range. Furthermore, if the range of goods to be covered consists of articles that can be marked easily, the operation of the Bill will be much more satisfactory than would be likely if the range covered a large number of goods including some the description of which would be difficult.

Mr. WATTS: I am rather surprised that the Minister should have moved the amendment because when moving the second reading of the Bill, he impressed upon members the necessity to protect articles made from wool. I could understand the addition of

the words to be included, but I do not think the amendment is in the interests of the wool growers.

Mr. McDONALD: I strongly support the amendment. I have to acknowledge the careful examination the Minister has made of the representations to him by traders who were able to convince him, as they did me, that it would be a matter almost of impossibility to carry out the terms of the Bill in their strict entirety with regard to some items such as "clothing" and "materials for clothing." It was pointed out that some materials sold by retailers were made by half a dozen factories and ultimately were despatched to Western Australia bearing the brand of some house that, in all probability, was not a manufacturer at all, but simply a wholesale softgoods house that collected manufacturers' goods and sold them to people in distant countries. The Minister's amendment will relieve retailers from what would have been a very difficult position.

Mr. SAMPSON: The suggestion of the member for Katanning deserves consideration. It is difficult to ensure that a garment contains the material described. Not always are the remarks of salesmen dependable. If the words "footwear or clothing, and materials for clothing" are deleted, the usefulness of the measure will be greatly reduced. The schedule should be retained as printed with the addition of the words "blankets and flannel."

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: The amendment has been proposed mainly to ensure smooth working of the measure from the commencement of its application. The goods proposed to be retained in the schedule can be easily described; those proposed to be deleted can be described only with great difficulty. Power is provided to add other goods to the schedule from time to time. After the interests concerned have had experience and fully understand the requirements of the measure, the question of adding other goods can be considered. Without the amendment a good deal of confusion and difficulty will probably arise at the outset and the measure will receive unmerited condemnation.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Why does the Minister propose to delete footwear? It should not be difficult to state whether footwear consists of leather or other material. Cheaper lines of boots contain very little

leather. I presume that footwear is intended to mean boots and shoes, though it might include stockings and socks. Most of us supported the Bill in the hope that a person desirous of procuring woollen articles might be sure of getting them. At present it is difficult to determine whether an article is made of wool or artificial material.

The Minister for Justice: That is not a new difficulty.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, but the Bill is designed to overcome the difficulty. The amendment will restrict the operation of the measure to flannel and blankets. Men's underclothing is largely made of wool, but so-called woollen singlets often contain a percentage of cotton and customers are entitled to be informed of it. Wool-growers are paying to advertise overseas the desirability of using woollen goods. Yet in Australia, where the wool is produced, it is difficult to obtain an article that can be relied upon as being wool. I support the suggestion of the member for Katanning. To ensure the smooth work of the measure is the responsibility of the Minister. I do not know how he will manage unless he gives traders time to dispose of existing stocks. Retailers certainly could not say what various articles contain, and so the Minister will need to exercise considerable discretion.

Mr. WATTS: I understood that the Minister was agreeable to accept the amendments to Clause 5 appearing in the name of the member for West Perth. If those amendments were accepted, the greater part of the objection raised by the member for West Perth would be removed. At times it is impossible to state accurately the name of the manufacturer of certain goods, and we should not ignore the convenience of people engaged in trading. The schedule should be retained as printed.

Mr. McDONALD: I hope the Minister's amendment will be accepted. A Bill containing a similar schedule was passed in New South Wales five or six years ago, but last year it was amended by restricting the articles to bedding and upholstered furniture. The reason for the alteration was the difficulty and confusion caused in endeavouring to apply the measure to the other materials mentioned. In view of the experience of New South Wales, the inclusion of those articles here would give rise to difficulty, and must entail extra cost

which would be passed on to consumers. If necessary, other goods might be added to the schedule later.

Amendment put and passed, the schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. Hegney in the Chair; the Minister for Employment in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 4 of the principal Act:

Mr. McDONALD: The effect of the clause would be to bring under the measure every factory, even though run by only one man. At present a factory does not come under the Act unless four or more persons are concerned in its operations. This is not an opportune time to remove what has been in the existing law for so long. The proposal will not make things easier for those who are struggling and endeavouring to support themselves in some manufacturing business. I am aware that a great many provisions will apply to those factories employing fewer than four people. Industrial awards and agreements operating in the metropolitan area and on the goldfields will apply quite apart from the Factories and Shops Act itself. But there are also many small manufacturers whose businesses are not regulated by existing awards and agreements, and upon whom the provisions of the Bill would fall heavily. There are in the Act a number of provisions that do not apply to small factories even though they are in areas covered by awards. The Bill, however, will make it difficult for many of them to carry on. Now that we are encouraging people to do something for themselves, we should permit the existing law to stand, especially when we bear in mind that in 1920 a select committee investigated the whole position and that the results of their investigations were embodied in the Act which has been in force since then. I move an amendment—

That paragraph (a) be struck out.

Mr. NORTH: Since 1920, when the select committee reported on this question, a strong movement has grown up in Western Aus-

tralia to increase the manufacture of local products. We have been told that we import from the Eastern States annually £10,000,000 of goods, and that those States take from us only £1,000,000 worth. That is a reason why we should not put up the slightest obstacle against our existing industries, but rather should we encourage them to expand. Sir James Mitchell always used to tell us that over 100,000 people were employed in the Eastern States manufacturing goods for Western Australia. We want those workers here to produce the goods within our own State. We can assist in that direction by allowing existing industries to work under favourable conditions.

Mr. SAMPSON: If it is a virtue that there shall not be registration, why not repeal all the Acts relating to factories? Personally I consider it is essential that the provisions of the Act should be carried into effect, and that in addition the amendments embodied in the Bill are desirable and necessary.

Mr. Doney: Have you really read the Bill?

Mr. SAMPSON: I have, and that should be sufficient. I am not one of those who profess to believe that the Bill will do an injury to anyone. Certainly it will not injure those who are carrying on their businesses properly. There are many small factories not registered that are properly carried on, and they should be brought under the control of this and other legislation.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: This is where an unholy alliance exists between the factory owner and the employees. First there is the man who has established himself and who hopes to keep out competitors who might have sprung from the working classes. That man wants the exclusive right to manufacture goods, which is the whole aim of the factory owner. Then we have the other side, where the trade unionist complains that men are working long hours. The very best type of man in Western Australia, or in Australia for that matter, is the man who gets out of the rut, and he is worth while encouraging. Unless a man has capital behind him, he can never become an employer of labour. Some of our biggest men—the member for Swan is one of them—started from the bottom rung of the ladder, and they did not have to conform to awards of the Arbitration Court, nor were they asked to comply with all sorts of conditions imposed

to-day by the Factories and Shops Act. The hon. member should not try to prevent by legislation people rising from the bottom rung. I say, "Give everybody a chance," and particularly those people who wish to improve their position. I have nothing to say against the person who works all day and then does more after he gets home. That is the type who wants to get out of the rut.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We ought to try to realise that we represent the people as a whole, and not parties to this class of legislation. It is the people who suffer by restrictive legislation. To talk about developing a spirit of goodwill between various classes of people is beside the point here, because this class of legislation will not tend in that direction at all. The provision tends not to assist the general run of the community but to prevent the circulation of money in the form of wages; and it is likely to kill competition by men wanting to start factories on small means. The proposal results from an unholy alliance between owners of factories and trade unions.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I trust the clause will not pass as printed, because the effect would be to inflict grave injustice on many women who are carving out an existence for themselves in small industries. The flowers worn at present by many women are made in homes by one or two workers. In my own electorate numerous people make flowers and sell them to shops, where they are purchased in preference to flowers coming from the East. Many of us prefer cakes made by women in a small way in their own homes. The same remark applies to jams, although these may not be put up as attractively as factory jams.

Mr. Patrick: They are not cheaper.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: No, and nevertheless they are preferred. Moreover, exquisite leather work is made by women in their homes, such leather work as is not produced elsewhere. Many of these women are too old to work in factories. The Minister has said that there should be fair competition, but what chance have these women to obtain fair competition? Many of them are old, and others have children to look after. The Country Women's Association has been teaching women in the country to do craft work, and they are turning out beauti-

ful examples of such work, thus helping their men folk whose farms are not paying. Again, invalids are able to earn in such ways. The independence of these people will be taken away, leaving them to the 7s. dole granted by the State. I speak not from a party point of view but as one who realises the injury which will result, if the clause passes as it stands, to women who desire to maintain their independence in their own homes.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:

Hon. members opposing the clause would lead the Committee to believe that every small factory now operating will go out of existence if the clause is agreed to.

Mr. Doney: Not all of them, but some of them.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:

If some pass out of existence as the result of the adoption of the clause, the same fate will probably befall the whole of them. The objective of the clause is to bring the small factories under a reasonable measure of control. The aim of the officials appointed under the Factories and Shops Act is to encourage and assist factories and shops, and to see that the regulations are observed, especially where articles for human consumption are produced. The Act at present provides that any place where four or more persons are engaged is to be regarded as a factory. If only three persons, or fewer, are so engaged, the place is not a factory for the purposes of the Act. I invite hon. members to indicate at a later stage of the debate why it is reasonable to apply the provisions of the Act to a factory employing four or more persons, and unreasonable to apply them to a factory employing three persons or fewer. No reason in support of that view has yet been put forward. The effect of the clause as it stands would be not to destroy any existing factory or to prevent the establishment of other small factories in the future, but simply to bring all factories on as even a level as possible under a reasonable and desirable measure of control in the interests of the public. As regards the other main amendment, dealing with the home or domestic type of factory, to judge by the arguments put forward one would think that if the clause passes, all home factories will immediately come under the provisions of the Act. If hon. members will carefully read the amendment dealing with home factories, they will see that the Bill

does not aim to establish a position which would automatically bring under the provisions of the Act every home type of factory. Decision in that regard is to be left to the Minister, and decisions would be made only when sufficient justification was put forward by the officers of the department to warrant their being made.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Or when they were instructed by the Trades Hall to do so. Then they would do it.

The MINISTER for MINES: We do not follow the instructions of the Trades Hall any more than you follow the instructions of Monger.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask hon. members to keep order.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: I have been in charge of the administration of the Act for only a few months, but during that period there has not been one single instance where the Trades Hall or any other interested party has endeavoured to influence the administration of the Act.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: You have a lot of experiences to make yet.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Home factories will be brought under the operation of the Act only when circumstances justify its being done.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That will be as soon as the law is passed.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Many of the cases mentioned by the member for Subiaco would, obviously, not come under the Act. I refer especially to cases where the effort is, not to make a living, but to supplement another income sufficiently to attain a reasonable standard of living. For a long time past many of the home type of factories have not been conducted under desirable conditions, and such factories would be brought under the Act. Where they are being conducted reasonably and under desirable conditions, no such action would be necessary. Therefore I sincerely hope that members will see to it that the amendment moved by the member for West Perth is not accepted.

Mr. McDONALD: Dealing with the point the Minister raised as to the difference between a two-man or a three-man or a four-man factory, and the query as to why a four-man factory should be under the Act, and a two-man factory not under the Act, I might ask what is the difference between a two-man factory and a factory employing 100 men. The essential difference is that

the two-man factory is a factory of strugglers, of two men struggling to establish a small factory. Let members turn up the Act and see what a two-man factory would have to do if it were brought under the Act. Sections 30 to 40 all impose obligations on the factory owners, obligations as to the posting of notices and lists dealing with various questions that would not come within the purview of two men trying to run a small factory. To have all those things carried out by a small factory would be to impose an impossible handicap upon the two men composing that factory. As to the difference between a two-man factory and a four-man factory the one, as I say, is a partnership of two strugglers, while the other may be said to have become to some extent established.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	19
Noes	..	..	..	..	23

Majority against 4

AYES.

Mr. Boyle
Mr. Brockman
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver
Mr. Ferguson
Mr. Hill
Mr. Keenan
Mr. Latham
Mr. Mann
Mr. McDonald
Mr. McLarty

Mr. North
Mr. Patrick
Mr. Shearn
Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Warner
Mr. Watts
Mr. Welsh
Mr. Doney

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Coverley
Mr. Cross
Mr. Fox
Mr. Hawke
Mr. Hegney
Miss Holman
Mr. Hughes
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Lambert
Mr. Marshall
Mr. Millington
Mr. Munsie

Mr. Nilsen
Mr. Raphael
Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Sampson
Mr. P. C. L. Smith
Mr. Stants
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Troy
Mr. Willcock
Mr. Wise
Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.
Mr. Seward
Mr. J. M. Smith

NOES.
Mr. Withers
Mr. Collier

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 and 4—agreed to.

Clause 5, Amendment of Section 15 of the Principal Act:

Mr. WATTS: I will vote against this clause because it deletes the word "wilfully" from Section 15 of the Act. It is wrong to delete the word "wilfully," for much depends upon it. There is all the difference in the world between the position

of a man who does a thing wilfully, and he who does a thing but not wilfully. I admit that the clause carries a proviso which to an extent will undo the effect of striking out the word "wilfully."

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 6 to 9—agreed to.

Clause 10, Amendment of Section 27 of the principal Act:

Mr. NORTH: I should be glad if the Minister would explain the meaning of subclause 2 of this clause.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Subclause 2 merely proposes to transfer the provision from one section of the Act to another, because the words "shop or warehouse" will be added. So instead of the provision remaining, as at present, in the factories section of the Act it will be transferred to the general section of the Act.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 11—Repeal of Section 31 of the principal Act:

Mr. McDONALD: The object of this clause and the next following clause is this: As the Act now stands women and boys shall not be employed in a factory for more than 44 hours per week, but men may be employed for 48 hours. If the clause be passed it will mean that men, women and boys will be on the limit of 44 hours per week, but that provision if adopted will not apply as against an award providing for 48 hours if any such award exists. Will the Minister tell us whether, as applied to factories and shops and warehouses, there are many awards which now provide for 48 hours per week for male workers?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: I am not in a position to answer the question offhand. I understand that varying hours operate in the factories, and the same thing probably applies to shops, but wherever an award or industrial agreement approved by the court operates, the provision that it is proposed to make in the Act will not over-ride that award or industrial agreement.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 12 to 14—agreed to.

Clause 15, Amendment of Section 37 of the principal Act:

Mr. NORTH: Regarding this clause, which provides only two days a week or 52 days

a year overtime, I sent a circular letter to various chambers of commerce to find out what they thought of the proposal. The only reply I have received is from Bunbury, and it declares that this provision is too stringent.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 16 to 18—agreed to.

Clause 19, Repeal of Section 42 of the principal Act, and insertion of new section.

Mr. WATTS: If this clause be agreed to Anzac Day will not be held on the 25th April, but on the following Monday, and the same thing will apply to New Year's Day and Boxing Day. I do not think that is desirable.

Progress reported.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1936-37.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 13th October, Mr. Sleeman in the Chair.

Department of Minister for Lands (Hon. M. F. Troy, Minister).

Vote—Lands and Surveys, £54,587:

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [7.59]: In introducing the Estimates for the Lands and Surveys Department, I regret that the seasonal conditions have been anything but satisfactory. Early in the year the crops were such as to warrant expectations of a good harvest, but as the year progressed extreme anxiety was felt as to the future of the season. The position was somewhat improved by the rainfall which occurred a few weeks ago. That rainfall came too late to make any definite improvement, particularly in that portion of the wheat belt where the heavier soils are situated. Where the land has been fallowed and the soils are lighter, the prospects are much better than they were a month ago and it is expected that from such crops there will be reasonable yields, but there is no doubt that owing to the serious lack of rainfall the harvest will not be anything like that which was anticipated a few months ago. As members are aware, the pastoral areas have suffered probably the most severe drought in their history. I can claim a residence in Western Australia of 40 years. During the

whole of that time I have been associated with the Murchison and I have never known a succession of seasons so bad as that which has been experienced in the last four or five years. It is a thousand pities that after years of low prices the State is not able to harvest an abundant crop this year and obtain full advantage of the price for wheat now offering. That price may be regarded as very satisfactory and it may yet reach the price which is known in America as "dollar" wheat. I have no knowledge at all upon which I could advise farmers as to what to do in the present circumstances. I have no knowledge by which I could properly inform them whether to sell now or to hold on. When wheat reached 4s. 9d. the other day I would have been strongly tempted to grasp that figure. I am hopeful that the price will be maintained and that farmers will get the fullest advantage from it. It is certainly an encouragement to farmers to harvest every possible bushel of grain. It does not matter what condition the crops are in, the price is such as to encourage the farmer to extend his labour over the area and get as much wheat as he possibly can, because it will pay him. The prices for wool are not so satisfactory. They are not as satisfactory as those of last year. There is no doubt that the absence of Japanese competition in the market has had a bad effect. This is proved by a comparison of certain figures. In the "West Australian" on the 9th October it was reported that at Buenos Aires 70,000 lbs. of wool was sold at a cost of 1s. a lb. So far we have not reached anything like that figure. South African wool was purchased at 2d. and 2½d. a lb. above Australian rates. Australian butter fat which in 1932-33-34 brought 10d. and 10½d. a lb. is now 1s. 2½d. a lb. The fat lamb export trade is also progressing satisfactorily, although this year there has been a falling off owing to the season. With the return of good seasons production for export should show a very great increase. In 1934-35 the lamb carcasses exported totalled 142,330 and in 1935-36 the figure was 171,615. During 1935-36 the acreage sown for wheat totalled 2,538,930 acres, for a return of 23,309,351 bushels. The estimated figures for the present season are 2,560,000 acres and 22,000,000 bushels. That estimate must be regarded as a very rough one owing to the peculiarity of the season, not only as it

affects the prospect of the yield, but also as it affects hay crops, because owing to the fact that wheat crops are short, there may be a greater acreage cut for hay this year and this will reduce the estimated production. The number of sheep at the 31st December, 1934, was 11,197,156 and the wool clip was 83,991,658 lbs. At the 31st December 1935 the sheep numbered 11,073,715 and the wool clip 85,289,700 lbs. It is estimated that the clip this year north of and including the Murchison will be down by 50 per cent., and that over all the State, the clip will be reduced by 27 per cent. Butter produced in 1934-35 amounted to 13,308,003 lbs. and at an average factory door price of 14.211d. was worth £788,000. The corresponding figures for this year are, 13,081,239 lbs. at 15.205d. worth £828,750. Nobody can deny that during the past year a section of the primary producers of this State have passed through a most difficult time. Pastoralists have had a succession of bad seasons, and farmers, particularly wheat farmers, have experienced low prices and several bad seasons in a portion of the State usually the most productive. That portion of the State is in a very deplorable condition, but conditions must very soon be relieved. It is admitted that after the setbacks to which I have referred, some years will elapse before the crops and herds can be re-built to their former strength. During the last few years there has been passed important legislation which has operated to the advantage of the farmers. The Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act was amended and in conjunction with the Rural Relief Act it is conferring great benefits upon the farmers by relieving them of debt obligations. I have from time to time noticed comparisons in the Press by which an attempt has been made to show that legislation passed by this State is not giving the results achieved by similar legislation in the Eastern States. I have been able to secure returns from Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia and the information I have received indicates that in none of the other States have the same beneficial results been achieved as have been achieved in Western Australia. I propose to give the House some of the details. The number of cases dealt with by the Rural Relief trustees in Western Australia is 924, in South Australia 87, in New South Wales 106, and in Victoria 197. In Victoria 78

cases have been finalised and 200 are in course of finalisation. The number of farmers' applications dealt with here is nearly three times as many as in all the other States combined.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Can you account for that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not propose to. I am just giving results. I do not want to account for them.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I was wondering whether the farmers were better off there than they are here.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know. There have been only six or seven applications rejected here, but there have been over 200 rejected in Victoria. The rural relief trustees are only entitled to reject applications when they consider the farmer has no hope.

Mr. Patrick: Or does not require assistance.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They have rejected very few here. In Victoria 206 have been rejected.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They may have more reserve capital there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The total advancement in respect of debt adjustment from Commonwealth funds is £275,365 to Western Australia; £38,544 to South Australia; and £244,000 to New South Wales. South Australia, of which we have heard something in this House, has only been able to utilise £38,000 of Commonwealth money to adjust the debts of 87 settlers. In Western Australia we have utilised £275,000 of the Commonwealth funds to adjust the debts of 924 settlers. The proportion, therefore, is 87 to 924. New South Wales has utilised £244,761 of the Commonwealth funds to adjust the debts of 106 settlers. The average amount per settler is therefore as follows: Western Australia £298, South Australia £443, and New South Wales £2,309. In the major State of the Commonwealth the Government have adjusted the debts of only 106 settlers and we have adjusted the debts of 924 settlers. This money represents Commonwealth funds alone. In addition the Agricultural Bank Commissioners of Western Australia have to the 10th October last written off no less than £402,889 in the case of 310 applicants under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Are these active properties, or properties that the Bank is selling?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They are active properties, held by settlers from the Agricultural Bank. That institution has made adjustments under the Rural Relief Act with only one-third of the number of applications to the extent of £100,000 more than was provided by Commonwealth funds. I give this information because I think members opposite are entitled to it, and I hope they will give it the fullest publicity. The Agricultural Bank has written off an average of £1,302 per settler under the Rural Relief Act. That is not all. By the powers conferred on the Commissioners under Section 67 of the Agricultural Bank Act, £96,649 has been written off in the case of 165 farmers, who had their debts adjusted by that institution outside of the Rural Relief Act. The Bank has thus written off in those cases £500,000.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Would that include adjustments in the group areas?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. I shall probably stagger the member for Greenough, who the other night held up the Bank as robbers.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You wrote off what you could not recover.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. The land in this State has a different value compared with a good deal of that in the other States. I have received from Victoria a return showing what has been achieved in that State. The adjustments that are being made there would not have been considered as adjustments at all in this State. They regard their land as valuable over there. It is valuable compared with ours, not because it is more productive, but because there is a greater demand for it. Here our land is comparatively cheap. I have shown what the Bank has done within its own powers. Under Section 65 of the Agricultural Bank Act, and operating under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act and the Rural Relief Act, it has written off no less than £500,000. It will be agreed that by this legislation the State has accomplished much on behalf of the farmers, and, as I have shown, much more than has been achieved in all the other States put together. I remember when the Rural Relief Bill was before the House, and the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment Bill was before us, challenges were issued from the other side of the House that the Government had slammed the door in the face of the farmers. I have here a

cutting from the "Primary Producer" making the same statement just before the elections. They said that no one was making applications because the Government had slammed the door in their faces. The door is the same old door. It has never been slammed. Immediately the elections were over, our friends opposite said, "Go for your life, and get in quickly." There was one statement before the elections, and a contrary one immediately afterwards. At Pingleton one gentleman said, "Get in quickly and have your debts adjusted," A week before people were saying that the door had been slammed in their faces.

The Premier: It was almost too good to be true.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: To the end of September, 2,085 applications had been received, and were being received at the rate of approximately 60 per week. The State has paid the whole of the expense consequent upon the administration of the fund, and out of the Commonwealth moneys did not get one shilling. If there is any fairness in the minds of the farming community, they must appreciate what is now being done for them. We may be short of money very soon. For the current year, owing to the progress made in debt adjustment, the Commonwealth Government were requested to make a grant of £500,000 of the £1,000,000 which they provided for debt adjustment in this State. For the current year, however, they have allocated only £250,000.

Mr. Patrick: Was not the total of £1,000,000 to be spread over three years?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, there was no such condition. I never heard of that before. I attended a conference at Canberra when the proposal was agreed to, but there was never any talk of spreading the payment over three years. I have no record of it, and there is no record of it in any of the files of the Government departments. We have again requested that the grant be increased to £500,000. We asked that, if the other States did not expend their entire proportion of the Commonwealth money, the Federal Government should give us some of the unexpended portions allocated to those States. The matter is to be submitted by the Prime Minister to the Loan Council next month. However, I fear that unless we get £500,000, the trustees will be short of money and this

work cannot be continued during the current year. I do not say we shall not get the money. We shall probably get it when we show what we have achieved in this country. Speaking further with regard to legislation passed on behalf of the farmer, the Land Act Amendment Act gave power to the Government to revalue repurchased estates. The Act was amended two years ago at the instance of the present Government, and already quite a number of these estates have been revalued, particularly those which were made available for settlement since 1919 for repatriation purposes. The Government have not revalued the estate purchased 30 years ago, but most of the estates settled since repatriation began have been revalued. Up-to-date during this year the Government have relieved settlers on repurchased estates to the extent of £200,000; or rather, not £200,000, but £200,000 will do. I give these figures in the hope that members opposite, and also members on this side of the Chamber, will appreciate some of the advantages which have been given to the Western Australian farmers by the present Government. With the powers vested in the Minister under the Land Act, settlers have been given every consideration in regard to payment of land rents. The arrears of rent amount now to £963,000, and the payment of debts relative to conditional purchase leases has been extended from 25 to 30 years. As regards interest charged to settlers, previously the interest charged on repurchased estates was at the rate of 6 per cent., but the Government decided that as from the 1st July of this year such interest should be reduced to 5 per cent. The rate of interest charged soldier settlers was reduced to 4½ per cent more than 12 months ago. Settlers on repurchased estates also have been granted suspension of payment of arrears of rent for three years. The arrears have been capitalised, and payment has been suspended for three years. So that again the Committee will be able to understand how far the Government have met these people. In areas remote from railway communication, exemption from payment of rent has been granted for ten years. That was done by the Mitchell-Latham Government, and it has been further extended by the present Government. Regarding pastoral leases, hon. members know the provisions of the legislation introduced into the Chamber a few weeks ago, which is now the law of this country.

Under that measure the pastoralists will obtain benefits which will mean a substantial reduction in the revenue paid to the Treasury this year. The Agricultural Bank Act Amendment Act was proclaimed on the 18th March of last year, and since that date the Commissioners have been busily engaged in reviewing the scope of the Bank's activities. The Commissioners have finalised the valuation of 14,000 securities, which reveal a total indebtedness to the Bank of approximately £16,271,000. The Bank's revaluation of these properties is between £11,500,000 and £12,000,000. There will be a deficit of between £3,000,000 and £4,000,000. That may not happen, but that is the probability. The interest outstanding to the 30th June last amounted to £2,736,881; that is, after allowing for £576,339 written off group settlement.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That tells a very sad story of agriculture.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It may tell a sad story, but it ought also to tell very forcibly to the community that the Government are giving most generous consideration to the man on the land—

Hon. C. G. Latham: That he cannot pay those sums.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: —and that the Government are giving such consideration as no other Australian Governments are giving. That is so beyond comparison. Nowhere else in Australia is any Administration making the concessions that this Administration is making to settlers. Nor will such concessions be made elsewhere. At a conference held last year the Premiers stated that they would not make such concessions.

Hon. C. G. Latham: New South Wales has written £5,000,000 off its irrigation areas alone.

Mr. Patrick: And so has South Australia.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We also have written off. We have written £5,000,000 off group settlement alone.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is comparable with the irrigation areas in the Eastern States.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Grants Commission condemned us for that, and reduced our grant in consequence.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The Commission referred only to Southern Cross and Esperance.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They did not refer to those settlements at all. The hon. member must consider the interests of the State. He will have to consider the people who must bear the load. He cannot side-step that. The writing-off means not that the money is merely gone and lost sight of, but that some other section of the community has to bear the debt.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Will you tell me what alternative there is to writing-off? There is none.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The other States have said, "We are not going to write off; we will let it stand over. Conditions will right themselves again." And conditions will be right again in this country. I invite hon. members, when they go to the Lands Department, to look at the map showing the land fit for agriculture in Western Australia. It is a small strip. When people talk about a big area available for settlement, I ask, "Where is that big area?" We already have settlement in areas that are doubtful. Apart from the abandoned areas, we have only one small area near Geraldton and some elsewhere. Those are all we have. Have we arrived at this stage, that the possessors of the land, the only land available in Western Australia, will inherit something later on? That will be the position if land that is valuable in the East is not valuable in the West. When I look at the map it occurs to me that these men who are now getting the land of Western Australia will inherit it, and that the disinherited will pay for it. I can see that that is what is going to happen in this country. I know it will happen. It has happened everywhere else. But the Government are giving concessions at this time in the hope that those concessions will be appreciated and will encourage settlers to hang on and become successful. Members of the Government are just as sympathetic towards the agriculturists as are any other members of the Chamber. I can claim that I have as much sympathy with and understanding of farmers as anybody else in the House.

Mr. Marshall: You ought to have. You have been long enough on the land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have not only been on the land, but I have been through those difficulties and troubles. When I hear people talk about obstacles, and want of charity, and want of understanding on

the part of the Government, I call to mind—

Hon. C. G. Latham: Where did you go through those difficulties?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In New South Wales.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And you left New South Wales. You knew when to get out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not want to advertise the fact but, in view of the interjection, I may inform members that a few days ago a copy of the "Sydney Morning Herald" was sent to me. The issue contained an interview with my mother, who is 94 years of age. She is the last remaining survivor of those who pioneered the north coast country of New South Wales. My mother stated in simple language that she had been left a widow with 10 children, the eldest of whom was 14 and the youngest 10 months old. She stated she had never received a shilling from anyone, and in those days flour was 25s. a cwt. and butter, when it could be obtained, cost 3s. per lb. The Leader of the Opposition states that I left New South Wales. I did. When I left, an elder brother said, "Don't leave this country, it will be worth something one day. Stay here and take advantage of it." I said, "If you were to give me the whole of the country, I would not have it."

The Minister for Agriculture: You were a bad judge.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. I went back there 10 years ago and land that was worth little when I was there had increased in value to £10, £30, £50, and, in the end, some of the land brought £150 an acre. It is the most productive area in Australia, and I left it because in those days I thought, as some people think to-day, that the value of the land would not increase.

Mr. Thorn: You were a poor old judge!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Members will pardon me for indulging in those personal reminiscences, but they show that I have had experience. I am sure that the productive qualities of the land in this State will again be apparent in the future, and members, in their hearts, know that perfectly well. I have been through the experiences of those who go on the land. I think I could tell a tale like other people of my age who have also had experience. I went off the land because I had had a sickener of it, but I returned to it.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Under far better conditions.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Oh, yes, they were.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was a client of the Agricultural Bank without a penny to my name.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You have never been without a penny in your life.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, I have, but I do not want to be encouraged to make any more confessions.

Hon. C. G. Latham: No, you had better not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I can say that I have had to borrow money in order to pay my rent.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We have all had to do that; that is nothing new.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: My relations with the Agricultural Bank were very satisfactory. The Bank treated me decently. I was never pressed, never victimised or coerced. My relations with the Bank were of the best. I tried to meet my commitments and the Bank extended consideration to me when I could not do so. That is the attitude the Bank has always adopted with regard to every settler in Western Australia. With reference to wire and wire netting advances, the Government have provided £96,069, and the State Government must accept responsibility for that expenditure. Under the wire netting agreement with the Commonwealth Government, the State Government are responsible for the payment of advances that the farmers cannot repay. To date the State Government have paid away under that heading £96,069 in excess of what we have received. During the year the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank approved of a reconstruction scheme in the Esperance area. A special examination was carried out in the lake country in the King, Carmody, and Camm areas and also the Holleton area, including Dulyalbin, East Narembreen, Mt. Hampton and the Gibb Rock districts. The Southern Cross-Bullfinch area is also under examination. I should say that the Esperance district has received the most thorough soil examination of any given area in the Commonwealth. For two years Dr. Teakle and his staff were engaged on that work and classified the whole area at considerable cost to the State. Now, under the reconstruction scheme, the Esperance settlers know particulars regarding the soil.

They have the advantage of knowing where it is safe to sow crops and where it is not safe. They have an advantage in that respect that no other settler in Western Australia, or any other State, possesses, so far as I am aware. I hope the result will be satisfactory, and that the Esperance settlers will enjoy better seasons. They have the benefit of larger areas now and with the advantage of mixed farming, the area will prove to be one of the most productive in the State. Mr. Charles Murray is the sheep and wool lecturer for the Agricultural Bank, and he is enthusiastic about the Esperance area as a sheep proposition. He is sanguine that if many people in the Eastern States knew of the possibilities of the Esperance area from the standpoint of sheep and wool production, the holdings would not long be idle. He regards the district as one of the finest sheep and wool producing areas in the Commonwealth.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I think you can sell a lot of better land as well.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If I may prophesy, I will predict that all the country between Kondinin and Esperance will prove profitable from the standpoint of sheep production, particularly the limestone country. I predict that that area will produce some of the finest flocks and wool in Western Australia. Mr. Murray has had a lot of experience and is thoroughly qualified to speak, particularly on the breeding of sheep and the production of wool. Whenever I have met him, he has been more enthusiastic about Esperance than about any other area I know of.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: He does not speak unless he knows.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He is not a man who will talk nonsense. He is a man of very few words, very blunt and very straight. The Agricultural Bank has written off a considerable amount this year. With regard to group settlements, since the early part of the year the Commissioners have written off £1,777,784. That, of course, does not include improvements made by the utilisation of the unemployed to create a further acreage of cleared country, the expenditure on which amounted to a considerable sum. There has been written off in respect of repurchased estates £200,000, and the Agricultural Bank Commissioners, under Section 65, have also written off £96,649. Under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act

£394,547 has been written off, and the Esperance writing off amounted to £442,000. In all, from the beginning of the year the Government have written off the indebtedness of farmers a total of £2,910,980. Those figures are absolutely startling, the more so when we find so little gratitude expressed for that action. I am frequently attacked because of supposed lack of sympathy. I am not lacking in sympathy and I hope I am not deficient in a sense of justice. When members realise that from the beginning of this year the Government have written down the debts of farmers by nearly £3,000,000, they will appreciate the fact that something is being done in this State that is not being attempted, let alone achieved, anywhere else. We shall be continuing this work. It is still going on. I do not know what the amount is, but when I think of some of the legislation that has been attempted I marvel at what further sacrifices will be required of us.

Mr. Patrick: It is the abandoned farms on your hands; going back to nature.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am often visited by people applying for land, people here from the Eastern States who come to me in my office asking about land. I send them along to the Agricultural Bank. The majority of them come back and tell me, "Yes, you have land vacant, but no good farms vacant."

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is a pretty bad advertisement for our State.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, it is not a bad advertisement at all. It means that in the boom period large areas of sandplain country were taken up and utilised. That was when wheat was 5s. a bushel. Those areas are no longer capable of profitable production. In consequence we have a large area of sandplain country going back to nature. There is some fine land at Bencubbin. But those Bencubbin areas have had a drought for the last two years, and so the visitors could not see Bencubbin. I did not send them there, because of the drought.

Hon. C. G. Latham: East of Narembreen there is a lot of land. You could get some good land there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, the hon. member owns some there.

Hon. C. G. Latham: No, I do not, or at all events the bank has nothing to do with it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: East of Naremben is one of the areas that the bank was investigating.

Hon. C. G. Latham: There have always been good crops east of Naremben.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think it will be all right when good seasons return. If we are to have any new settlers, except for the South-West they must go east, or else we must stop just where we are. Of course one could go to Dartmoor and get a little land.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Yes, but not much.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Or to Wongan, but again not much. I do not know of any more, except in the extreme eastern area.

Mr. Warner: There is any amount on the fringe of the northern wheat belt.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I want members to bear in mind that we have written off during the year nearly £3,000,000: I want members to bear that in mind when discussing legislation. The Leader of the Opposition, speaking on the Address-in-reply, said that the amount of £161,600 paid to necessitous farmers was contributed by other wheat farmers of this State. I do not propose to quarrel with that statement, because it is correct, but I do say that in the distribution of the money the State Government adopted the suggestion of the Commonwealth Government. The suggestion first came from the Commonwealth Government, and we adopted it.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Did not you ask for a scheme of distribution?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On the 12th December of last year Mr. Lyons, the Prime Minister, announced that the Federal Government intended to distribute £1,188,000 amongst the wheatgrowers of the Commonwealth, of which £253,803 was earmarked for drought relief in those States that had suffered serious crop failure. Of that amount Western Australia was to get £393,000, including £153,000 for the drought areas.

Hon. C. G. Latham: He said that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, Mr. Lyons made that statement.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Where did he make it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He published that statement in the Press. In the "West Australian" of the 12th December last the Leader of the Opposition is re-

ported to have said that he would have paid the farmer 3s. 3d. per acre. When Mr. Thorby, the Assistant Minister for Commerce, was over here he claimed that the Commonwealth Government had provided 3s. 3d. per acre for the farmer in Western Australia. That, notwithstanding the published statement of Mr. Lyons.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What he did say was that you had asked for authority to distribute this, and that you nominated the Agricultural Bank.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am coming to that. The State Government adopted the suggestion of the Commonwealth Government and it is now claimed that the Commonwealth Government intended to provide 3s. 3d. per acre for every farmer. If so they did not intend a shilling for necessitous farmers. They cannot have it both ways. If they intended that every farmer should get 3s. 3d. per acre instead of 1s. 10d. per acre, they did not intend to assist the necessitous farmers.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I do not think they intended it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They cannot have it both ways. Mr. Thorby made that statement. He was here and he saw the evidences of the drought. Yet he did not contribute one penny, notwithstanding the statement that the farmers should have got 3s. 3d. per acre.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They may get something yet.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Referring to the Commonwealth grants, I wish to say that the grants to the wheat farmers in this State were distributed on the conditions laid down by the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I say they were agreed to by the Commonwealth Government, but laid down by the State Government.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Last year a select committee was appointed by another place to inquire into Commonwealth grants. The chairman was Mr. Holmes, and I think he had four or five other members sitting with him. They brought in a report criticising the manner in which these votes were distributed. But that report is not worth much now, because it was not satisfactorily based. That committee brought in a report that one grant was for the farmer in adverse financial

circumstances or who had suffered losses: such a man was entitled to some of the money. That committee knew they were evading the truth in that reference. The Act states that the persons who are entitled to assistance are those in adverse financial circumstances and who have suffered losses; they must be subject to both conditions. But this precious committee substituted the word "or" for the word "and." They could not have done anything more despicable than that. By the substitution of that word they conveyed to the community that a farmer who was in adverse financial circumstances was entitled to the money and one who had suffered losses was entitled to it, whereas the Commonwealth provision was that the farmer must be subject to the two conditions. I do not wonder that there was no more credence attached to the select committee's report. It caused me considerable irritation at the time, but truth prevails—sooner this time than later—and the report has no further credence in this country. The State Government have always distributed these grants on the conditions laid down by the Commonwealth Government. The evasion of their responsibilities by Commonwealth Ministers and members of Parliament is one of the features of grants such as this. Commonwealth members of Parliament have a habit of telling farmers' organisations that they should get this and that, and conveying the impression that the State Government are not administering the funds properly. That is not playing the game. The State Government have suggested that the Commonwealth should distribute their own funds in their own way and accept full responsibility for the distribution. The State Government do not want to distribute these funds; let the Commonwealth do it. If there is any inequitable distribution, it is entirely the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government who lay down the conditions. The Agricultural Bank is the authority for the Minister for Commerce, and not for the State Government, in the distribution of the grants. The Agricultural Bank could not administer the funds in the way that has been done but for the approval of the Commonwealth Government: yet Mr. Thorby tells us it is all wrong and that farmers should have received 3s. 3d. a bushel. No such thing! At the present time the Agricultural Bank is the authority administer-

ing the funds for the Commonwealth Minister for Commerce, and the Agricultural Bank takes instructions from the Commonwealth Government and not from the State Government. Mr. Thorby has not played the game in making the statement he did in Western Australia. Even if farmers had been paid that 3s. 3d., they would still have received much less than the Victorian farmers received. It was the duty of members opposite, instead of apologising to the Federal Minister, to stand up and state the facts to him. They did not do so. Because of political considerations, they toured him round the country instead of telling him what his responsibility was. I have always resented the attitude of Federal Ministers and members in evading their responsibilities and hiding behind the State Government. All Ministers have to say and do unpopular things at times; why should not they? Last year the State Government advanced £295,471 in assistance to settlers, made up of Treasury advance £48,000; refunds of interest, £21,657; new advances, £237,964, and wheat cartage subsidy, £7,850. In addition, £716,768 was provided in interest charges on revenue to meet charges on moneys expended in agricultural development. Where do the Commonwealth Government come in? The Commonwealth received from the flour tax £1,750,000. They advanced to farmers in all the States £1,880,000; that is, from their own money they advanced only £50,000 more than they received from the flour tax. And yet Federal members have the impertinence to come here and criticise the State Government who found nearly £1,000,000 in one year. An idea is entertained by members of the Commonwealth Parliament that in all these calamities the Federal Government are not concerned. In a recent telegram the Prime Minister stated that the seasonal calamity was not their business, but that it was the business of the State Government. I have read of a seasonal calamity in South Australia and in New South Wales which was regarded as the business of the Commonwealth, but a seasonal calamity in Western Australia is not regarded as their business at all. Let us consider who are the people affected by a seasonal calamity. They are taxpayers not only of the State Government but of the Federal Government. The State Government might get nothing; in fact, we have got very little, as members will see from

the figures. An amount of about £4,000,000 is owing for rents and interest, and so the State Government cannot be getting anything worth speaking of directly. The Commonwealth Government, on the other hand, cannot fail to get something. If a farmer buys a packet of cigarettes he pays taxation; if he buys a glass of beer he pays taxation to the Commonwealth Government. Farmers and others paid to the Commonwealth Government in sales tax last year a sum of £9,000,000, and in Customs duties £34,000,000. When all the expenditure was being incurred on group settlement in the South-West, the Commonwealth Government received hundreds of thousands of pounds of revenue from it. But when any disaster overtakes Western Australia, it is not the business of the Commonwealth at all.

Mr. Boyle: Are you making a secession speech?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, not even a secession speech. I am explaining to members and the country the real trouble between the State and Federal Government. I am telling members and the country just what our disabilities are. I repeat what I have always maintained, that our trouble is not with Federation at all. The trouble arises from the system by which the Federal Government administer the Commonwealth without regard to the needs of the various States and their disabilities. Under a just administration that would not happen. The builders of Federation must have builded better than they knew because most of them were candidates for the Federal Parliament. They certainly created no difficulties for the Federal Parliament. Almost every year the Commonwealth Government show a very good surplus; they have plenty of money at all times. They are able to show surpluses while the States, burdened with all the responsibilities, are impoverished. Yet when a calamity occurs like that at present being experienced in Western Australia, the Commonwealth Government say, "It is none of our business." Such a calamity must be the responsibility of both State and Federal Governments. The farmers are just as much taxpayers of the Commonwealth Government as of the State Government, if not more so. The amount which farmers now owe the State Government by way of wire-netting instalments, water rates, Agricultural Bank interest, and land rents totals no less than

£3,224,000. I wish to tell my friend, the member for Nelson (Mr. Doust) that his little lot for group settlement is not included in that sum.

Mr. Marshall: His little lot is to come!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No land rent is forthcoming from the groups, because we made a free gift of the land to the settlers. With the exception of Sir John Forrest who received a large area of land for his remarkable services, the group settlers are the only people I know of in this State who received land as a free gift.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: And they do not thank you for it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We do not look for much in the way of thanks nowadays. The group settlers do not owe the Commonwealth Government a solitary shilling. The Commonwealth Government have not invested a shilling in group settlement, except that they made a concession in interest, which did not amount to much, especially as compared with the hundreds of thousands of pounds of revenue they received as a result of the expenditure of borrowed money. Now let me pass to a more pleasant subject. As to bulk handling, approval has been given to applications by Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., for the installation of facilities at the following places:—Fremantle, zone—Beverley, Mt. Kokeby, Brookton, Pingelly, Greenhills, Balkuling, Narembeen, Waddering, Wogarl, Cramphorne, Milng, Kalannie, Ejanding, Moonijin, Manmanning, Cadoux, Woolundra, South Kumminin, Aldersyde and Burakin; Geraldton zone—Wubin, Buntine, Maya, Latham, Bunjil, Caron, Perenjori, Bowgada, Koolanooka, Morawa, Pintharuka, Gutha, Canna, Tardun, Wilroy, Mullewa, Ardingly, Tenindewa, Northampton, Binu and Yuna. Approval has also been given for the erection of bulk installations at nominated stations and sidings along the Midland Railway line as follows:—Marchagee, Coorow, Winchester, Carnamah, Three Springs, Arrino, Yandanooka and Mingenew. There is an idea abroad that Bulk Handling Ltd. are not permitted to erect bulk handling facilities at some sidings because of Government objections. I wish to assure members and the country that that is not so.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The bulk handling company have never put that forward.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, but it is believed by some people.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is believed by a lot of people.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Farmers have written asking the Government to remove their objections. The Act provides that applications to instal bulk handling equipment must be made by the company to the Minister, but in no instance has an application been refused. The Minister is not entitled to force the company to provide facilities unreasonably. It is taken for granted that the company are getting on with the job as quickly as it is possible to finance operations, and the Government will place no obstacle in the company's way to meet farmers' requirements.

Mr. Patrick: The company are putting in the equipment rapidly.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I agree; they are doing the work very expeditiously. Regarding departmental activities, during the year ended 30th June last 612 applications were received for 407,533 acres of conditional purchase land. Certain people publish statements to the effect that thousands of farmers are leaving the land. This year we had 612 new applications for land.

Mr. Patrick: They may have been received from present holders of land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some of them were, but not many. That shows that attention is being paid to agricultural lands in Western Australia, and I think will be paid in the future. Pastoral applicants numbered 110 for an area of 4,804,325 acres. In both cases the figures show an increase over the previous year. New settlers numbered 273, which is also an increase over the previous year. The total revenue of the department last year was £227,496, a decrease of £43,000, compared with the previous year. The decrease in revenue would have been very much greater but for the sale of land on the goldfields. This has been a turn-up for the department. Altogether 1,011 blocks were sold on the goldfields, realising a sum of £24,336.

Mr. Patrick: Mostly new townships, I suppose.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In some instances, but there was also a great demand for land in existing townships. One of the departmental activities of interest is the survey of the 129th meridian to fix a boundary between the Kimberley Division

and the Northern Territory. This was initiated last year, and is being continued this year with the approval of the Commonwealth Government, which is bearing half the cost. It is anticipated that the work will be finished next year. There will be a balance of 75 miles remaining on the northerly section, and I hope that, too, will be completed next year. The survey will definitely fix the boundary line between Western Australia and the Territory. It will meet the wishes of a large body of pastoralists in the East Kimberley, who are handicapped at present because they are unable to determine their boundary lines.

MR. BOYLE (Avon) [9.17]: I listened with a great deal of interest to the agricultural survey of the State given by the Minister. I merely rise to analyse some of the benefits which have accrued to the farmers as a result of the Acts which have been put on the statute-book. I have already in this Chamber expressed my appreciation of the work done by the Trustees under the Agricultural Bank Act. In connection with the Federal Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, the member for Greenough interjected that he thought payment was going to be made over three years.

Mr. Patrick: That was stated in the Press.

Mr. BOYLE: It is not in the Federal Act, and was never a portion of the contract. Subsection 6 of Section 6 of the Federal Act states that the moneys payable to any State in pursuance of the Act shall be payable in such instalments and at such times as the Minister thinks fit. It is unfortunate for this State that the Minister has not thought fit to give it more than £250,000 this year. That sum will not provide for more than 800 farmers on the basis of an average of £292 per farmer. Evidently the Minister traversed the Acts in the Eastern States to contrast them with the working of the Western Australian Rural Relief Act. The circumstances are different. I contend, from observations on the spot, that the Victorian Act and its administration are the best in Australia. That Act tackles a problem that is untouched in Western Australia or South Australia. The Minister told us that the average in Victoria is £1,309 per settler. A certain number are protected under the Act by adjustment. The Minister did not tell

us the number of settlers in that State who were protected under stay orders.

The Minister for Lands: I have the facts here; you will be surprised when you see them.

Mr. BOYLE: In Victoria the position is tackled differently from what it is in this State. There the authorities have a fund of about £700,000 which is advanced by the State bank. The Victorians have taken the bull by the horns in adjusting the secured debts of the farmers. That is not attempted in Western Australia. It is a very serious thing for us. The farmers' secured debts in Western Australia would represent a proportion of 28 to 32 of the entire debt. Out of every £32 that a farmer in this State owes, £28 is secured, and that £28 is not touched under our Rural Relief Act. The Minister pointed out that the writings-down had amounted to £2,900,000 of a total debt of £34,000,000, or 9 per cent. of the whole. Thus, the mountain laboured and brought forth a mouse. It does not represent a wonderful relief for our farmers. It must be borne in mind that in the amount written down there is included interest and interest compounded. Several millions are represented in interest and interest compounded in the total amount of debts owed by the farmers.

The Premier: That £34,000,000 is not all owing to the Government. The Minister only gave the figures which affect the Government.

Mr. BOYLE: A sum of £14,000,000, or £16,000,000 the latest figure, is owing to the Agricultural Bank. If we took the whole lot, it would not reach 20 per cent. by any means. The work, of course, is not yet completed. I regret the Federal Government are holding up the money and doling it out this year. The Commissioners believe that the money available will come to an end inside of four months. That is what the great gift of the Federal Government amounts to, a sum sufficient to last four months! In Victoria the adjustments are made on a different basis from ours. In the Act in that State there is a suspension clause operating for five years. The suspension clause in our legislation is useless, because the Associated Banks refuse to recognise it. They will not write-down anything, or have anything to do with the Commissioners so far as the administration of the Act is concerned. Under the Vic-

torian suspension clause the trustees can suspend the secured debts for five years, and they are in a position to finance the farmer on his seasonal operations. The result of that is a suspension of the secured debt for five years, with a prospect of another five years' suspension, and then indefinitely. I may add that at the end of five years the Commissioners under the Victorian Act will review the debt with a prospect of its being totally written off. The Western Australian suspension section is a waste of time, being impossible to administer, as the trustees have not the necessary fund to provide seasonal credit. Cranwell's, Ltd., the liquidators of the Primary Producers' Bank, are the only people with secured debts who are compounding. The amount is 6s. 8d. in the pound. However, they bought the Primary Producers' Bank cheaply, and they can afford to sell the debts cheaply. They are the only people with perhaps a limited section of secured debts who have written down. Mention was made by the Minister to Mr. Thorby's visit. Mr. Thorby came into my electorate. I met him at Nungarin, and I can assure hon. members that Mr. Thorby spoke very sympathetically and that we were satisfied that proper representations would be made. When a Federal Minister of the Crown makes certain statements, we should be discourteous itself to attack those statements, which tell us that the Minister will report to the Federal Government "favourably." I think he used that word, or at least it was "sympathetically." He added that the matter would rest with the Federal Government. So that the charge against Western Australian members of this party of not attacking Mr. Thorby has certainly not much merit to commend it. I saw Mr. Thorby on the night he left Merredin; and as far as I knew, Mr. Thorby was about to report favourably and sympathetically to the Commonwealth Government. There are elements in the Commonwealth Government that will never give Western Australia a fair spin—I care not whether the Government be Labour or National-Country Party. In another capacity I met the Scullin Government. I interviewed Mr. Scullin in the Federal House on more than one occasion, and he received me most courteously. I will say for the Labour Government of that time that they put up a Compulsory Pool Act which was a model of its type. But as

regards any special consideration for Western Australia from a Federal Government, it simply is not to be obtained, because the Eastern States population will not permit it. I do not want to talk about secession, because that is a horse of another colour.

The Minister for Lands: Is there not such a thing as elementary justice in a Government?

Mr. BOYLE: In a Federal Government, yes, justice to the Eastern States. My own experience, after visiting the East once or twice a year as a suppliant on behalf of West Australian farmers, did not fill me with any admiration for any Federal Government, of whatever political colour. Very little justice indeed is meted out to the State of Western Australia. We have had examples of that in other directions than that of the farmer's affairs. As regards the Farmers' Relief Act of New South Wales, the Minister presumably is aware, but it did not occur to him to mention, that the Act has been in operation since 1930. The Farmers' Relief Act of New South Wales was doing from 1930 onwards the work that the Rural Relief Act of Western Australia did not begin until 1935. That is why there are not so many applications in New South Wales as there are in other States. In South Australia the corresponding Act is a dead letter. Recently the applications under it numbered less than 100. The amount allotted by the Commonwealth to South Australia was £1,880,000, and that State has not used a fraction of it. When I was in South Australia it was confidently predicted that 75 per cent. of the large sums given to South Australia for debt adjustment would be sent back to the Federal Treasury.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Queensland has not used a penny yet.

Mr. BOYLE: Queensland has not passed the necessary enabling legislation.

The Minister for Lands: As a matter of fact, Queensland farmers are not badly off.

Mr. BOYLE: Why should they be badly off?

Hon. C. G. Latham: Queensland cattle men are very badly off.

Mr. BOYLE: Queensland has 15 compulsory pools operating. Queensland growers control the marketing of their own produce. If that were so in Western Australia or any other State, there would be no reason for

the producers with other than seasonal debts to have any debt at all.

The Minister for Lands: We have no sugar agreement.

Mr. BOYLE: The trouble commences when the marketing gets into the hands of other people and prices are fixed against the producer. Queensland has, in the sugar agreement, an advantage which levies no less than £1,000,000 a year from the population of Australia. Western Australia's sugar bill is near £600,000 a year.

The Minister for Lands: Everything in Queensland is subsidised—maize, sugar, cotton, and even peanuts.

Mr. BOYLE: And so is every secondary industry in Australia subsidised. The tariff subsidises all the secondary industries. Our complaint is that neither wheat nor wool is subsidised. Queensland has 15 pools operating, in addition to the sugar agreement. Substantially, the whole of Queensland's production is subsidised. Therefore, Queensland to-day is in the happy position of not wanting any assistance. In Queensland sugar permits are as valuable to the Queensland sugar grower as a hotel license in a new district is valuable to a Western Australian. There are 8,000 sugar permits, and no more are being issued. It means that Queensland sugar lands are worth on the average £150 per acre, as against similar country in this State which can be bought at from £2 per acre. That is the position as I found it; I do not think the Minister for Lands meant to convey that the farmers of Western Australia are spoon-fed and that everything in the garden is lovely for them, because that is not the position. The writing-down, as I pointed out, does not extend to the whole of the debt, because unsecured creditors are not writing down. Thus the writing-down applies to about nine per cent. of the whole. I would not like it to go abroad that we are perfectly satisfied with the laws as they are. I admit that they are a step in the right direction, but only a step.

HON. P. D. FERGUSON (Irwin-Moore) [9.33]: I listened with close attention to the Minister's remarks. One cannot fail to appreciate the wonderful grasp which the hon. gentleman has of the work of his department. The Minister made passing reference to the disastrous season which we are

experiencing, both in our pastoral and in our agricultural areas. During his remarks I was not quite certain whether he was introducing the Estimates for the Lands Department or those for the Agricultural Department.

The Minister for Lands: They are very mixed up.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Yes, and always must be, since land settlement and production from that settlement are more or less indissoluble. But the fact that we are experiencing a disastrous season in the country from Wyndham to Esperance is one that must occasion profound regret to all interested in the welfare of Western Australia. It is, of course, an act of God, and one for which neither the Federal nor the State Government can be held responsible. It is not worth while to try to apportion the blame between the two Governments. Suffice it to say that both Governments will have to do a fair thing by Western Australian producers if we are to maintain our agricultural and our pastoral industries. In the interests of the State as a whole we cannot allow those industries to be further depleted. The State cannot afford any increase in abandoned farms, running now into fully 2,000. It is gratifying to know that there have been several hundred new applications for land. I hope that in addition to applications for new land, there will be applications to re-occupy and again bring into production numbers of the abandoned farms mentioned by the Minister. The Minister referred to the fact that in some of the outer areas we have stretched our settlement into doubtful districts. As a Western Australian who has unbounded faith in the absolute certainty, as a general rule, of our seasons, I join issue with the Minister and say that not one doubtful acre has been settled. I mention "doubtful" from the standpoint of the seasons. There may have been some land of a doubtful description settled from the standpoint of alkali or some other consideration, but not one acre has been settled in an agricultural area that is too dry.

The Premier: But they have had a rather rough spin during the last few years.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Of course; and they will have a rough spin again.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That has been the experience in every wheatgrowing country in the world.

The Premier: That is so.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: If there are particular areas in the far eastern and northern districts that are too dry for wheatgrowing, then about two-thirds of the agricultural areas of South Australia should have been abandoned years ago. There is no doubt that the land on the eastern fringe of the agricultural areas although a bit dry on occasions and may produce nine crops only out of ten, nevertheless when the farmers there do experience a normal average season with a reasonable rainfall, those areas are capable of producing bumper crops, because the land is really of a higher class than that in most of the other agricultural areas of the State. I hope it will not be allowed to go forth that we have settled any large extent of doubtful country. In my opinion, we have not done so. The Minister mentioned that £96,000 had been paid by the State Government to the Federal Government on account of unpaid instalments of interest and capital in connection with wire netting purchases. That is only to be expected in view of the disastrous seasons we have had during the last year or two. The Minister should not be downhearted because, had that money not been advanced to the settlers, they would have been still further unable to meet their obligations to the Lands Department. The very fact that rabbit-proof netting has been erected will enable the farmers to make repayments to the department all the sooner when normal seasons return. It is money well spent. Every mile of rabbit netting erected with the expenditure of that money represents the very best investment the Government could undertake at the present juncture. I urge the Minister to use every mile of netting, for the purchase of which he can procure funds. I know of no more useful purpose to which the State and Commonwealth Governments can devote their funds than to the purchase of additional supplies of netting for the farmers. The Minister mentioned that during the last 12 months the Government had reduced interest and instanced the position of returned soldiers, whose interest rate during the last 12 months had, he said, been reduced to

4½ per cent. I interjected at the time that that had been done previously.

The Minister for Lands: It was done in our time.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I have before me the report of the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank for the year ended the 30th June, 1936, and I will read to the Minister an extract appearing on page 27 of that report. Under the heading of "interest rates" there appears the following:—

During the past five years the maximum rates of interest charged to settlers have shown a downward trend, as evidenced by the following:— Discharged soldier settlement: 5½ per cent. as from 1st January, 1931; 4½ per cent. as from 1st August, 1931.

I quote that extract from the report because of the Minister's statement.

The Minister for Lands: That is not so.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I know very well the reduction was made before the present Government took office. The interest to returned soldiers was reduced to 4½ per cent. in my time, and here is the latest report of the Agricultural Bank Commissioners that bears out my statement.

The Minister for Lands: There is some mistake there.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: No, there is no mistake. I am prepared to trust my own memory which indicates to me that the step was taken by the Mitchell-Latham Government.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: And interest to others was reduced to 5 per cent.

The Minister for Lands: I would be sorry to take credit from you, but I think there is a mistake.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Minister said there was such a thing as elementary justice as between members of different Ministries.

The Minister for Lands: If you are right and I am wrong, I will make the amende honourable.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I do not want an apology by the Minister, but merely a correction.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [9.41]: I listened attentively to the remarks by the Minister for Lands, and during the course of his statement I interjected that it was a sorry tale. So it was. There is no doubt the necessity to write off the large sum the Minister mentioned arose simply because of

the fact that the industry could not meet the payments. There was no other reason. I know the Minister is a shrewd enough business man to know that if there were any possibility of collecting the amounts in two or three years' time, he would not have written down the indebtedness. The action of the Government will convey to the public how important this industry is, how the Government view it, and their idea as to the best manner in which relief can be afforded. I have no fault to find with the Minister in that respect, and we have not criticised the attitude of the Government in granting that relief. It will serve a useful purpose in years to come. It will give the farmers an opportunity to continue operations, but there is one still more important factor, namely, the necessity to keep the farmers on the land until they can recover their position. That is a point on which the Minister did not inform the Committee. I presume it is intended to use loan funds to assist the farmers in future, but this year apparently it is not the intention of the Federal Government to render assistance. In years gone by, when prices were low, the Commonwealth Government assisted the farmers by making advances. The Minister claimed that the State Government had no say at all in the distribution of that money, and asserted that the Federal Government insisted that £162,000 was being made available to necessitous farmers and the balance was to be spread amongst all farmers. At the outset, the whole of the money was for necessitous farmers because the industry could not cover the cost of production and the advance was for the purpose of relieving the situation. When I asked a question, the Minister said that the information he gave to members appeared in the "West Australian" of the 12th December, 1935. As a matter of fact, it did not.

The Minister for Lands: The statement about the necessitous grant?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It appeared in the issue of the 13th December.

The Minister for Lands: It appeared as a telegram from Canberra, and was dated the 12th December.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: This is what the Prime Minister said—

The Prime Minister, Mr. Lyons, announced to-day that the Federal Cabinet had agreed to distribute £1,880,000 among the wheatgrowers of the Commonwealth this financial year. The

amount would be disbursed by the States. It is expected that most of the amount will be provided by collections from the sales tax of £2 12s. 6d. a ton on flour, the period of currency on which has been extended for an unspecified time after January 7th next, on which date the tax was to have expired. The amount to be distributed among the growers will represent 1s. a bushel on wheat used for human consumption within the Commonwealth, plus a sum of £268,803 as special drought relief.

The money was to be taken from Consolidated revenue to make up that amount of £1,880,000.

The Minister for Lands: The sum from the sales tax will be considerably more than that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: He does not say so. He said the balance was £268,803 from a special grant the bulk of which would go to Western Australia, £162,000, with South Australia £69,896, and New South Wales £31,764. The information that was given to me, which I believe to be accurate, was that the Prime Minister communicated with the Premier of this State, and asked him to nominate an authority that would distribute this grant.

The Minister for Lands: That was many months afterwards.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, it was not. Let us understand what led up to it. A great deal of agitation took place, especially by the organisation of the wheatgrowers, for assistance to wheatgrowers. They worried the Federal Government, and that Government eventually announced that they would distribute in Western Australia £162,000 out of money that would be provided for assistance to wheatgrowers. Subsequently they got in touch with the Premier of this State, and asked him to nominate an authority for the distribution. The Premier nominated the Agricultural Bank Commissioners. The Federal Government then communicated with the Agricultural Bank Commissioners, and asked how they proposed to distribute the fund. They said it would be on a basis that was set down. The Commonwealth Government agreed to that. It was left entirely to the authority nominated by the Premier of this State. If the amount of money that was available for distribution had been distributed in this State in the same way as it was in every other State, it would have meant 3s. 3d. per acre. That was the amount of the distribution in every other State.

The Minister for Lands: It was not. In Victoria the amount was 3s. 9d. per acre.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I think the Minister had better check his figures. In Victoria, it was 3s. 2d. per acre.

The Minister for Lands: No, it was 3s. 9d.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Of course the Minister knows all these things. One has to follow him so closely to keep him on the straight and narrow path. Anyhow, that is all past, and what we are worrying about to-day is that presently we shall have no more to distribute. The excuse always offered is that the Federal Government should do this or do that. I do not know that the Federal Government have power to distribute money on the basis suggested by the Minister. The Prime Minister says they have not; that if they have any money to distribute it must be distributed amongst all the States.

The Minister for Lands: I gave you the exact figures, but you would not take them.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The trouble is that the Minister handles figures rather awkwardly. I am anxious to see what can be done. We have the assurance of the Premier that next month those payments will be continued as they have been during the last few months. I thought the Minister would tell us about what it is proposed to do.

The Minister for Lands: I have showed you what we have done.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, but what is the use of holding post mortems? You wrote off what you could not possibly get.

The Minister for Lands: We will get it in time.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is of no use talking like that. Agriculture these days is so unattractive, while mining is so very attractive that the settlers are leaving their blocks to go on the goldfields, just as the Minister himself did in years gone by. The Minister when a young man was so hopelessly sick of the land that he left it and came over here, attracted by the gold. He came all the way from New South Wales, whereas the settlers who are here to-day can get to the goldfields without much trouble. We should endeavour to keep the men on the land. Some of them are prepared to stick to the land, but they cannot do that without having

something to eat and something to wear. So it is of no use talking about amounts of money already written off. The industry had got into such a parlous condition that the money had to be written off. We are not complaining about the writing off. If the Minister had not done it we would have to do it when we get back to office. It took the Minister three years after coming into office to do it.

The Minister for Lands: But we have done it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It took the Minister three years to do it. The Minister goes about the country telling people how wonderfully they are treating the settlers on repurchased estates. The Minister has been at the Lands Department for six solid years. This is his seventh year, and he was Minister for Agriculture for three years. These repurchased estates have been a bugbear for a long time. The Minister gives a little encouragement. He says they have reduced the interest rate on repurchased estates for soldier settlers. That is pleasing news. When we take over office again I hope we do not say, "Why did not the last Government do this or that?" One can only do a full day's work when he is in office. The Minister has been extraordinarily pleasant during this session, and I suppose it is now about up to him to get annoyed.

The Minister for Lands: I am not annoyed.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, but the Minister is moving up to that stage. I hope he will give consideration to the carrying-on of the industry. We have to keep on the land the men who are there to-day. I know of some of their problems, and I wish the Minister would get out into the agricultural areas and have a look around.

The Minister for Lands: You accused me of going about and boasting of what we have done for the men on the repurchased estates.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Only in your own electorate. I was thinking of Yandanooka. I believe the Minister was entertained there when they were having a celebration.

The Minister for Lands: I did not go there.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Well, I am sorry if I was mistaken.

The Minister for Lands: I refused to go.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: When Parliament is in recess it would be worth the Minister's while to go up and see what can be done in the north-eastern area. It is a most attractive proposition, and it can produce feed. Of course, with the grasshopper pest up there I do not know what is to be the future of that area. I am worried about the chances of this pest going right through the agricultural areas down to the Great Southern. The Minister, I admit, has dealt pretty exhaustively with the whole of his Estimates, and as the member for Irwin-Moore (Hon. P. D. Ferguson) says, he has also given us some entertaining figures regarding the industry. But as I said before, the introduction of these Estimates told a pitiable story. The public ought to realise how much we depend on the industry, and the big sacrifice that has been made. While we have written off large sums of money, many of the people on the land have lost their all and have walked off penniless. Probably if and when the goldfields become less attractive those men will come back to the land. The main idea is to keep on the land the men who are on the land to-day.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—Farmers' Debts Adjustment, £9,303; Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board and Soldiers' Land Settlement, £108,527—agreed to.

Department of Minister for Mines (Hon. S. W. Munsie, Minister).

Vote—Mines, £150,528:

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans) [9.56]: In introducing these Estimates last year, I predicted that the output of gold for 1935 would not reach the output of 1934, chiefly on account of the stoppage that took place on most of the principal mines throughout Western Australia for a period of six weeks. That prediction was, unfortunately, correct, with the result that we produced, in 1935, 2,283 fine ounces less than in 1934. I do not think there was anything to be pessimistic about even in that because, generally speaking, the mining industry was certainly more prosperous in 1935 than in 1934, and the reduction was due solely to the six weeks' stoppage of work on the principal mines. The mean average of the output for 1935 was 54,087½ fine ounces per month, so that

the total decline in 1935 was 1/23rd of a single month's contribution, which was not too bad, after all. For this year I am pleased to be able to forecast that we shall considerably increase the output. During the eight months—the latest for which I have figures—the total output was 532,750 fine ounces of a value of £4,624,974. In January the output was 58,833 fine ounces; in July it was 77,386; and in August, 74,226. The mean average per month for this year has increased from 54,087 fine ounces, in 1935, to 66,593. Taking the average output for the first eight months of the year as a basis, it is anticipated that we will reach an output of 799,125 fine ounces this year. Personally, on the last month's report, I am positive that if something unforeseen does not happen, we will exceed that total considerably. The reason I anticipate that the increase for the last four months will be better than the average for the first eight months is to be found in the reconditioning of old mines, and the coming into production of new ones. I confidently expect that, by the end of this year, the value of the output of gold in Western Australia will reach at least £7,000,000. Members know that the year 1903 was our peak period. In that year the production was 2,064,801 fine ounces, of a value of £8,770,719. In that year gold was valued at approximately £4 5s. an ounce. At the end of this year I am confident we will come very close to reaching our peak period, not in actual production but in the value of the gold produced. The most pleasing feature of the mining industry is the increase in the number of men employed. When I say men employed, I do not mean only the men on the wages sheets, but also men employed in working for themselves. During 1935 the number increased by 2,185. In 1934 there were 12,523 men engaged, and in December, 1935, 14,708. This increase is being steadily maintained and during the first six months of this year the number employed in gold mining aggregated 15,670, or an increase of 962. Including men engaged in mining for minerals other than gold, the number increased from 15,557 to 16,577, or an increase of 1,020. Another interesting feature is the opening up again of the lead mining district of Northampton, not for the value of export lead, but because of the fact that the Wiluna gold mines have altered their method of

treatment and, instead of roasting their concentrates, are smelting them. To do that they have to use lead and of course they are looking for lead in Western Australia. They are opening up some of the old mines around Northampton. I hope that the new method of treatment will be successful and that they will require larger quantities than they anticipate at the moment. I must refer to the prospecting scheme. Last year when I introduced the Mines Estimates there were 752 men on the State prospecting scheme. To-day there are only 190. Considering the number of men engaged in mining generally, to which I have already referred, evidence of the success of the scheme is to be found, not in the number of men engaged in it at present, but in the number who have been able to find permanent employment in the mining industry. That is the best feature of the scheme. Hundreds of young men from the metropolitan area and towns, who accepted the offer of 15s. a week and went prospecting, though they had had no previous experience in mining, are to-day receiving full wages in the industry.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Your colleague, the Minister for Lands, said that half of them are Eastern States men.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Never mind what he might say. Hundreds of young men from the metropolitan area and from other towns have obtained permanent employment in the mining industry because of their having participated in the prospecting scheme. I am sorry to say that the scheme is still open and that there are still hundreds of men—young fellows of 18 to 21—in the metropolitan area who will not accept the opportunity to make a living for themselves. Why they do not accept it, I cannot understand.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Could you increase the amount of 15s. to £1?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, I could not. When I could not get work at wages I did a good deal of battling, as thousands of other men did. We went out looking for gold and did not get any Government assistance. We had to go out on our own account. The men under the prospecting scheme were provided with fares to the nearest railway station and with tools.

Mr. North: How many vacancies are there?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: A thousand, if the men were forthcoming to-morrow.

The Minister for Employment: The Perth Town Hall clock is a marvellous attraction.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I wish to give the results of the scheme since its inception. It was inaugurated on the 1st July, 1933, and the total cost to the State to date has been £86,660. That includes sustenance, supervision, tools, explosives and fares. The total number of men assisted is 2,820; the number still on the scheme is 190. The ore produced by those men and treated is 21,126 tons for a yield of 9,461 ounces of gold valued at £75,688. They have repaid to the State £13,737. We also have records of a number of men who have found profitable gold, repaid all their sustenance money and are now producing gold for themselves. This is not a complete record by any means, because there are dozens of men who, having left the scheme, are still working in the industry and producing gold, but are having the ore treated at private batteries instead of at State batteries. Men who have left the scheme have produced 12,000 tons of ore for 4,900 ounces of gold valued at £39,200. That is what those men have got for themselves after repaying all they borrowed from the Government. The net results of the State scheme may be stated thus:—

	£
Cost of scheme	86,660
Less refunds	13,737
Net cost to the State ..	72,923
Gold recovered	114,888
Actual benefit to the State generally, but not to the Treasury	41,965

If ever a scheme justified itself, this one has, not only for the opportunity it has afforded men to make a living for themselves and in many instances something more than a living, but in actual results from a financial point of view and in relief of unemployment.

Mr. North: At a very difficult time, too.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. This State did so well during the first 18 months of the scheme that a conference of State Ministers was convened by the Commonwealth Government. We explained the scheme and the results achieved, and the Commonwealth agreed to subsidise the State on that scheme. The Commonwealth scheme was inaugurated

on the 1st January, 1935, and the total cost has been £34,964, which amount includes sustenance, supervision, fares, explosives, petrol and equipment. The number of men assisted is 2,202 and the number of men still operating 620. The gold recovered by assisted men and crushed totals 6,119 tons for 2,911 ounces valued at £23,300. Those men have refunded £4,082. The net cost of the Commonwealth scheme has been £30,882 and the total cost of both State and Commonwealth schemes £103,805, while the value of the gold won has been £138,188 or £34,373 more than the total cost. On those figures the prospecting scheme has certainly justified itself.

Mr. Patrick: What is the total number of men out now?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The total number is 810.

Mr. Patrick: There are still some vacancies.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I could not take 2,000. I shall be leaving for Melbourne on Saturday to attend the annual conference. I do not know what amount of money the Commonwealth will make available. We have been told that only £8,000 will be provided, but we have also been informed that we could use the unexpended balance from the previous year. After we had the last conference, this State received £39,000. Although it has been indicated to us we will only get £8,000 this time, I hope in the end we shall get the larger amount.

Mr. McDonald: Is there any age limit for the prospectors?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. We have accepted lads as young as 16, knowing they were going out with reliable and experienced older men. We would not send two or three young men of that age together, unless they were with experienced men. At the other extreme, we have had three or four men going out from the Old Men's Home, and one of them has done well, I am pleased to say. There is no limit to the age, downwards or upwards, so long as the people concerned are willing to try. The State batteries have been in heavy demand in an attempt to cope with the increased tonnage from prospectors and small leaseholders. The expenditure to the 30th June last was £19,193 on the completion of a comprehensive rebuilding and reconditioning programme. The Coolgardie battery was practically rebuilt, and converted from a

costly steam plant to a modern gas-producer. At Laverton a complete and up-to-date 10-head battery has been installed. At Cue an old frame has been replaced by a modern one. At Kalgoorlie there is now a 20-head battery. It is the biggest plant in the system and is now capable of crushing 2,000 tons of ore a month. At Yarri there is now a 50-h.p. National engine producer plant, and the whole battery has been remodelled. Over the last run the battery crushed 4,799 tons of ore which yielded 3,889 ounces of gold. At Meekatharra the old plant was scrapped and has been superseded by a crude oil engine as the prime mover, at a cost of £1,005. Owing to the abnormally dry season, new wells had to be put down at Bamboo Creek and Peak Hill as subsidiary supplies. Suitable designs for dwellings for the leading hands at State batteries have been prepared and the sum of £3,000 is asked for in this year's Estimates for the completion of the buildings. At one period we had eight more batteries than we have now. During 1935 the State batteries crushed 108,000 tons of ore. This was a record for the system. It may surprise members to know that the State battery system represents the fifth biggest producer of gold in Western Australia. They come fifth on the list, in that there are only four mining companies in the State producing more gold than they do. The State battery system is, therefore, an institution of some magnitude. Despite the fact that three of our largest plants were idle for reconstruction purposes, the year's treatment to the end of August last totalled 67,326 tons, and the July tonnage was 10,578. This year shows the highest monthly totals in the history of the system. With four months to go, we anticipate crushing approximately the same tonnage of ore as was crushed last year, although four of the biggest plants were idle for four months for reconditioning. Whilst the batteries were closed down, the opportunity was taken to get our tailings as nearly up to date as possible. During the period we treated 73,142 tons of tailings. At Marble Bar a tailings plant was erected for the first time, and the greater part of the tailings there is now being treated. For a period of 12 months the prospectors there received £7,103 on that account. It was as a result of experiments that a cyanide plant was erected there. For years the battery ran

without any anticipation of the tailings being cyanided. Under the old conditions they were not amenable to cyanide treatment, but by segregating the tailings and by experiments we have been able to treat a fair quantity of the tailings. At Mt. Ida, where there is a considerable amount of copper in the ore, there is a chance that the tailings will also be treated. Experiments have been carried out and a small plant erected. From that plant good results were obtained. Experiments are now being made with a larger plant. The South Australians who are interested in that mine have been experimenting for some years in the treatment of gold-bearing ores containing copper. They are making experiments with a larger plant. I hope their efforts will prove successful. If they are, prospectors there will get thousands of pounds out of the tailings, whereas they will not get anything if some treatment system is not discovered. I have had a good deal of discussion and some argument with regard to the cartage subsidy. I have also had a good deal of discussion and some rather heated arguments as to the stoppage of 2 dwts. 8 grns. In July of this year an invitation was sent to every prospectors' association and to all the State managers to discuss a proposal for an alteration to the cartage subsidy. I believe the majority of the prospectors' associations have turned it down because they do not understand it. The secretary of the Joint Prospectors' Association was in Perth recently, and we discussed the matter with him. His own organisation has not yet turned down the proposal. I believe that with a little publicity and some organisation on the part of the secretary, the prospectors' associations will eventually accept the new scheme. If they do accept it, I am prepared to consider some alleviation from the charge of 2 dwts. 8 grs. The new proposal as to cartage subsidy cut out all subsidy to any prospector, irrespective of distance, if his dirt went 15 dwts. over the plates without regard to what might be in the sands. With gold at £8 per ounce, I do not feel disposed to pay a man cartage subsidy on dirt that goes more than 15dwts. over the plates.

Mr. Marshall: But 15 dwts. over the plates does not necessarily indicate a profitable crushing, nor does 15 ounces.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It may not. But the lode could be an inch wide, and of the most solid diorite in Western Australia, and one could make a good living out of it if it went 15 ounces over the plates. Where a man has a small show and it is exceptionally rich, he necessarily pays less for cartage, owing to his having only a small tonnage. I wish to emphasise the point that the majority of high crushings at the State batteries were where the crushing was on dirt crushing and the average costs went 5s. And yet we paid the maximum cartage subsidy. That system ought to be altered. There is no reason why we should continue to pay a man subsidy on ore going 4 ounces to the ton over the plates. He can get it crushed at the minimum of 5s. per ton, and we pay him 12s. per ton cartage subsidy if he is the maximum distance away. There ought to be some change in that respect. Unless cartage subsidy is reduced largely—last year it cost the Government over £20,000—we cannot give any further consideration to prospectors as regards the 2 dwts. 8 grs. Next, with regard to mining generally, let me again point out that in 1929 the value of our gold yield was £1,600,000, and that we anticipate this year, even on the eight months' average, a value of £6,800,000. Indeed, I expect that figure to be increased considerably. With respect to new finds, one of the brightest of the late discoveries is at 42 miles north-east of Laverton, now known as Cox's Find. This discovery was made by Messrs. Cox and Escreet. During the first three weeks a crushing of 120 tons, consisting mostly of floaters, gave a return of approximately 30 dwts. to the ton. The Western Mining Corporation exercised an option over the show. They have driven on the lode 300 feet. It averages 15 feet in width, for the most part carrying good values. A 10-head battery has been erected, and in July ore totalling 778 tons was crushed for a return of 715.91 fine ounces. So there is one new discovery that has now a 10-head mill on it and will be a constant producer for the rest of the year. It started only last month. I am prepared to admit that the industry is at present suffering from a slight re-action. The goldmining industry always does suffer after a boom.

Mr. Patrick: That is as regards new capital.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. Unquestionably we had a boom period, and naturally—irrespective of what was accomplished—some companies did float mines, or supposed mines, that had not a possible hope. I know that with respect to this there has been criticism of the Government, and that the question has been asked why the Government did not stop that kind of thing. I have asked a good number of people who should know to submit some scheme or method by which the Government could prevent that sort of thing, without, however, stopping mining investment altogether. Up to date I have had only two suggestions. One is that officers of the Department of Mines should visit every show before it is submitted to the public for subscription. That is to say officers of the Department of Mines of Western Australia should guarantee the mine before it is submitted to the public. That is an impossible proposition. No Government could allow its officers to do anything of the kind. Any Government would be extremely unwise in asking the officers to do such a thing. As a matter of fact, a show is found on the surface and its value cannot be estimated, little work having been done on it. A Government officer comes along and says to the prospectors, "I am not prepared to give you a favourable report unless you do more work." If he gives an unfavourable report, that may prevent the show from being floated, and yet the show might turn out one of the best mines in Western Australia. I could not agree to such a method.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I see the Lady Gladys Mine closed during the year.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know that the Lady Gladys ever opened.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It was worked for a while.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I saw you with some specimens.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. The hon. gentleman saw me with some specimens from another show, which was not the Lady Gladys. They were from Kozul and Mullins' show. That show was eventually taken over by Mr. Brophy, and finally put into the Lady Gladys Mine, which has never turned a wheel from that day to this.

Hon. C. G. Latham: On page 6 of the Mines Department report it says that the Lady Gladys at Mulline ceased operations.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It was worked, and the option money was paid from gold won from the mine, and a good deal more besides.

Mr. Patrick: That show might have been approved by the Mines Department, but it would have been no good to a company.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is so. The departmental officers might have boosted it if they had seen the rich stone at the start. With capital to develop it, that mine might prove successful even yet. The top of it, where the rich stuff was got, is to all intents and purposes similar to the saddlebag reefs of Victoria. As a matter of fact, the company sank 15 feet in the centre of the old reef and struck another reef, 9 feet deep, underneath, of exactly the same formation. So that there are possibilities even for that mine. I wish also to say that a good deal has been done by the Government to assist individuals in the mining industry. For the erection of batteries and treatment plants £14,700 was spent from the Commonwealth grant. Disbursements and commitments are as follow:—

1935-36.	Grants.	Spent to date.
	£	£ s. d.
Jacoletti ..	1,000	1,000 0 0
King, E. J. ..	1,000	684 11 8
Wilson, A. D. ..	3,000	3,000 0 0
Mt. Monger bat- tery ..	700	567 19 7
Simpson, Geo. ..	3,250	3,250 0 0
Simpson, Geo. ..	750	327 9 3
Simpson, Geo. ..	1,000	599 10 1
Smith, Downing & Mullins ..	1,000	
Weerianna ..	3,000	1,017 8 10
	14,700	

1936-37.		
Hill 50 Gold Mines	5,000	5,000 0 0

We also loaned to Hill 50 Gold Mines £5,000. The expenditure from General Loan Funds for the development of mining during 1935-36 shows that the department spent £16,634 2s. 4d., the principal items being, loans £3,415 14s. 7d. and prospecting £12,330 18s. 8d. From the Commonwealth Grant we have spent £45,445, the principal items being loan £7,975, batteries £5,959, and prospecting £29,102. For the first two months of the present financial year, £3,217 has been expended from Commonwealth funds and £17,990 from Loan Funds. In addition to that, the Government have provided various guarantees and provision was made for the Celebration Mine, including the Golden Hope, to a total

of £25,000. These amounts were guaranteed so that development might proceed concurrently with milling operations and thus make continuous operations possible. I need not mention the fact that the Government also intend to spend £60,000 on the construction of a railway from Cue to the Big Bell mine. I would like to draw the attention of the Committee to the position regarding some new mines that have come into production recently. At Yellowdine the July output was 3,199 tons, which yielded 1,501 fine ounces, the untreated tailings averaging 8.5 dwts. per ton, making the total value 18.1 dwts. per ton. At Cox's Find the July output was 778 tons for 715.91 fine ounces, an average of 18.4 dwts. per ton.

Mr. Marshall: Is there any treatment plant at Yellowdine?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, but not a cyanide plant. They intended at first, after testing the tailings, to have them roasted, but they have since ascertained that they can be treated by direct cyanidisation, and they are putting in a cyanide plant now. Another new mine is Halley's Comet, from which two crushings were put through the State battery. During all the years that people have been prospecting in the Pilbara district, the majority went there to search for reefs. Very few, if any, lodes were found, but quite recently three prospectors did discover a lode and two crushings have been put through. The first comprised 71½ tons that yielded a total of 7 ounces 16 dwts. 23 grains per ton. The second crushing comprised 71 tons and yielded 8 ounces 4 dwts. 14 grains per ton. That represents a new mine in absolutely new country. Yet we hear people say that all gold to be discovered on the surface has been found!

Mr. Warner: Is that a large lode?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: In places the lode is 12ft. wide. The two crushings have been taken out of the lode and I am informed that the deepest hole is only 7ft. 9ins.

Mr. Welsh: They have 200 tons more of that ore at grass.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I understand an option has been taken over the find for which the prospectors received £20,000, but I do not know whether that is correct.

Mr. Fox: If that is so, they sold it very cheaply.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

Mr. Patrick: Is that one that de Bernales has floated?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It has not been floated, but I believe he has an option over it. It has been taken over by the Great Boulder and Finance Company, which is a developmental company, and that company has sold a third of its interest to the Commonwealth Mining and Finance Company. I saw that announcement in the "West Australian" to-day, and that is all the information I have on the point. There were some crushings at State batteries that are worthy of note. The Forrest Belle at Mt. Ida, after remaining idle for some time, has been re-opened and last July a crushing of 315 tons was put through for 18 dwts. per ton over the plates and 5 dwts. 2 grains in the sands. From the Jubilee mine at Wiluna, H. E. Joyner treated 184 tons in March for a return by amalgamation of 13 dwts. 3 grains per ton and the tailings went 3 dwts. 4 grains or a total of 16 dwts. 7 grains per ton. In April 176 tons were put through for 11 dwts. 4 grains by amalgamation and 2 dwts. 14 grains in the tailings, or a total of 13 dwts. 18 grains per ton. The Great Boulder is treating an average of 13,500 tons per month at its new plant and for the last six months has produced 42,577.75 fine ounces of gold. The Triton at Reedys in July treated 6,965 tons for a yield of 2,364.68 fine ounces of gold. The Norseman Gold Mines in July treated 5,817 tons of ore for 1,850 fine ounces of gold and during the present year have treated in all 37,025 tons for 12,930 fine ounces, which is more than the whole field produced for a number of years previously. The Lancefield, which was idle for many years, is again an active producer and during July treated 10,134 tons for 3,445 fine ounces, or an average return of 6 dwts. 8 grains. As an instance of a low-grade proposition that has become productive, there is the Marvel Loch Gold Development Company which in June crushed 3,008 tons for 574.55 fine ounces, or a little under 3½ dwts. per ton.

Mr. Patrick: Does that pay?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, it more than pays expenses. When the Big Bell mine is established I believe it will be the largest low-grade proposition that has ever been worked in Australia, let alone Western Australia. Before I conclude, I

want to give some figures in connection with those two despised companies respecting which I have received so much criticism with reference to reservations. As I stated previously, each month the companies supply me with details of their monthly costs, the number of men employed, the amount paid in wages, and so forth. The latest report I have from the Western Mining Corporation shows that during July their expenditure amounted to £25,182, and their total expenditure from the inception to the 31st July, 1936, represents £1,278,567. The number of men employed by the Corporation is 726. With regard to the de Bernales group, the expenditure for the nine months of this year to the 30th September amounted to £572,565, and the number of men employed totalled 898. These figures show that the two companies have 1,624 men in permanent employment to-day, and with the exception of about 100, not one of them would have been employed in the mining industry had it not been for the granting of the reservations.

Mr. Marshall: Why do you make that statement?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Because no one without capital could have worked those mines.

Mr. Marshall: Capital would have come in from elsewhere.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We had no guarantee of that.

Mr. Marshall: It came to Wiluna long before reservations were considered by you or by anyone else—it came to the extent of 1½ millions.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: And there has been a lot more than 1½ millions expended on the reservations.

Mr. Marshall: It is just a farce; the whole lot of it. To put up an argument like that is to evade the actual issue.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is the hon. member's opinion and he is entitled to it, but I am entitled to mine. I do not care how forcibly the hon. member may express his opinion, but he is not going to ram that opinion down my throat.

Mr. Marshall: And you are not going to ram your opinion down my throat.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not want to, but I want to express my opinion, and I am going to do it. That is all there is about it.

Mr. Marshall: They should never have been granted; not any of them.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I can just see again a little square piece of newspaper with a nice rim about it, a little space in the "Sunday Times." It contains a letter from a prospector—anonymous of course—a letter wanting the Mines Department to do certain things in connection with these reservations. The writer of the letter says there are two classes of reservation, one of enormous size on which, he admitted, the prospector had a right to go, but when he found anything he had to give the company the first chance of purchase if he wanted to sell. The other was a close reservation. For the last 15 months, as I said here when introducing these Estimates last year, there has not been one of these open reservations in existence. Every one of them was cancelled. Still, even in the latest issue of the "Sunday Times" they were dragging up the same old argument again about the disadvantage the prospector was at on these open reservations. There is not such a thing in existence at present nor has there been for the last 15 months.

Mr. Marshall: You will remember the answer that was given to my question.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They have all been closed.

Mr. Marshall: They cannot all be closed.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, they are.

Mr. Marshall: It is a scandal. There was not a single reservation until the price of gold went up.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, there was.

Mr. Marshall: Well, we agree to differ.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I want to tell the hon. member that the man whom he criticised most and who had 26 of those reservations—in one year 28 of them—took up those reservations when gold was only £4 4s. 11d. per fine ounce. There was not a penny piece increase in the price of gold when he took up those reservations. I am referring to Mr. W. S. Robertson, of the Western Mining Corporation. Now I want to say a word or two on the other side. There is not the slightest doubt that early this year there was an abnormal number of fatal accidents and an abnormal number of serious accidents in the gold mining industry. So long

as mining continues there will be accidents. But everything that can be done should be done to minimise the number of those accidents. There are many things perhaps that can still be done to minimise them, but we have not sat down and done nothing. When the accidents became so frequent at the latter end of last year and the beginning of this year, instructions were issued to all mining inspectors strictly to enforce from a safety point of view the Mines Regulations Act. And with one exception, whenever there has been a recommendation for prosecution, the employer or the worker who had broken the regulations was prosecuted. One prosecution was recommended with which I did not agree. I think I did the right thing in not agreeing to it. I am not going to deal with that now, but in every other instance where prosecution was recommended the offender was prosecuted. It has had a beneficial effect. More inspectors have been appointed, both workmen's and Government. Also we have a new regulation, and a new device for firing, namely the cartridge system, has been introduced. A good number of the earlier accidents at the latter end of last year were due to what was frequently termed in the Press premature explosions or running fuses. I admit that there were probably premature explosions, but as to running fuses, no! I do not think any man who has worked in a mine for the last 15 years, if he has been firing 100 holes per day, has ever seen a running fuse at any time during the last 15 years. It is impossible under the method now used and the system of manufacture. But certainly a considerable number of accidents happened through premature explosions. The device of cartridge firing was introduced in order to minimise the number of accidents. Certainly it will minimise them, because one can fire eight holes with one cartridge and it is necessary to lay only one fuse; and instead of having six feet of fuse, there is now 12ft. of fuse. It makes a vast difference and it ought to eliminate many of the accidents by premature explosions. Since the introduction of the system there has not been one accident from a premature explosion. The mining industry, increasing as it has been, has given the State Mining Engineer's office more work than one man can do, with the result that we have just agreed to the appointment of an assistant mining engineer. Personally I think the appoint-

ment is long overdue. The State Mining Engineer has been overworked for some time past, but we have not had the money to employ an assistant. We are now calling for applications for the position. If the State Mining Engineer had had more time to attend to the work of his office and still get out to inspect mines and look after the interests and safety of the mines generally, and give advice to mining companies on safety lines, probably a great number of the accidents might have been avoided. Now that he will have an assistant I hope he will be able to do a great deal more of that necessary work. In regard to the machinery branch of the Mines Department, the work has increased considerably. To the 30th June last there was an increase of 17 per cent. over the 1935 figures and 32 per cent. over the figures for 1934. The regulations regarding engine-drivers were amended to reduce the necessary time for qualification for a winding certificate from a minimum of 42 to 27 months. Last year and the year before I drew the attention of the mining companies to the present position with regard to winding-engine drivers. Every month I sign dozens of permits only one or two mines on the Golden Mile where it is possible to teach a man to be a winding-engine driver. It is not because the men do not want to be taught, but because the opportunities are not there. I have stressed that each year, and the time has come—indeed it is here now—when there is an absolute scarcity of winding-engine drivers. Every month I sign dozens of permits to enable men to drive without a certificate. I want again to warn the mining companies that unless they make more provision for the training of these engine-drivers they will see the day come, if mining continues to progress as it has done in the last eight months, when, if they have a winding-engine they will not be able to get a driver for it. The time is not far distant when something definite will have to be done. In conclusion I want to point out that the Geological Department has done wonderfully good work in the last 12 months. I am pleased to be able to announce that we have a geological staff of four. I would like to see it at least half as big again. This State should be employing at least eight, but I would be satisfied to get the number up to six. I do not know why a great number of people fail to value the work of the geologists, and their reports. Unquestionably

those interested in mining do value them. Quite recently one of the geologists of the department made a survey of the southern Yilgarn district, but unfortunately I was not able to get sufficient money to have his report published. It was, however, typed. After hearing that the report had been completed a gentleman called at the office and asked to have a look at it. He was given a copy to take with him. He studied it and then wrote to a friend. They have invested £25,000 to test out part of the area surveyed. If it will stand the test they are making—and he says he believes it will—they are prepared to find half a million of capital for a big low-grade proposition there. Without that geological report, that place would not have been looked at by any mining company. When results like that can be achieved from the work of the geologists, that work should be encouraged. People ask why the State geologists do not report on some of the shows being floated. That is not their job, although the mining companies have appreciated the work of the geologists who have given them advice concerning existing mines. In view of the number of commendatory letters we have received from various mines, thanking us for the work of the geologists, and pointing out the advantage it has been to them, the State could easily and profitably employ six geologists. There would be full-time work for all of them. Were the money available to print the reports of their geological survey work the State would be repaid ten times for the salaries of the men employed. The geological bulletins issued by the department are sold for not less than 2s. 6d. a copy. To-day if you wanted one and offered £1,000 you could not get it in the Mines Department, for there is not one left.

Hon. C. G. Latham: If they are so profitable, why not get more printed?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We cannot get the money to do so.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What do you do with the half-crowns?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They go into the Treasury.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You ought to save a few.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am hoping to get more of the reports printed. If that is possible, they will sell like hot cakes.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.