

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 19th November, 1910

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

PETITION—COMMONWEALTH OIL REFINERIES, LTD.

Mr. FOX (South Fremantle) presented a petition from the Commonwealth Oil Refineries, Ltd., praying for the introduction of a Bill to provide powers for the storage and supply of oil, liquid fuel, petroleum spirits, kerosene and petroleum products, and for other purposes.

Petition received and the prayer of the petitioners granted.

BILL—COMMONWEALTH OIL REFINERIES, LTD. (PRIVATE).

Introduced by Mr. Fox, and read a first time.

Referred to Select Committee.

On motion by Mr. Fox, Bill referred to a select committee consisting of Messrs. Abbott, W. Hegney, Rodoreda, Watts and the mover, with power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned and to report on Thursday, the 21st November.

QUESTION—FIRE BRIGADES BOARD.

Election Ballot.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for the North-West: 1, Is it his intention to secure from the Under-Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, the file con-

taining correspondence regarding the ballot taken in 1936-37 to select the local government representative on the Fire Brigades Board? 2, If so, in view of the correspondence referred to, would it not be advisable to place the conduct of the ballot under the control of the Electoral Department?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied: 1, I have perused the file referred to. 2, No complaints whatever of the existing system have been lodged or are disclosed on the file, and there appears to be no reason why there should be any change from the present system.

BILL—NATIVE ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—LOTTERIES (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 14th November of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—FARMERS' DEBTS ADJUSTMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 13th November.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [4.46]: I understand the Government proposes to introduce a Bill later on to deal with the advances made from the grant provided by the Commonwealth Government for the assistance of necessitous farmers. I do not know whether the intention is also to introduce a Bill to amend further the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, although I believe that is the intention. In that event, I have no objection to the Bill now before the House. I want a clear understanding with the Government that the Act will not be used for the purpose of obtaining automatic liens

in respect of advances that may be made later on from the money made available by the Commonwealth Government. So long as I receive some such intimation, I shall not raise any objection to the present Bill. I presume legislation will be necessary later on to protect the advances that will be made. I do not know what conditions will attach to those advances and, so far, we have not any information on the point nor can we receive any until the Minister for Lands returns from the Eastern States. If the Acting Premier will give me an undertaking on the point I have raised, I shall not oppose the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—PROFITEERING PREVENTION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [4.50] in moving the second reading: The Profiteering Prevention Act has been operating for almost one year. Generally speaking, its operations have given satisfaction to all interests affected and the administration of its provisions has been reasonably effective. The Bill provides for the extension of the scope of the Act in connection with those things which may be controlled by the provisions of the Act, and also aims at providing more effective power to deal with offences, and to punish those responsible. The Act covers commodities of every description and also certain services provided by public utilities, including such services as the supply of heat, light and power. It does not, however, cover very many of the services that are rendered to the public. Many complaints have been received in recent months regarding increases that have been made by individuals and by groups of persons supplying services of one kind or another to the public. The complaints have been to the effect that the charges previously levied for such services have been unfairly raised. Complaints have been made in connection with parking, dental and laundry charges, and charges for a number of other services. The main amendment in the Bill brings a far greater number of services under the control of the Act than is

at present the case. The appropriate part of the Bill refers to—

Any service applied or carried on by any person or body of persons, whether corporate or unincorporate, engaged in an industrial or commercial enterprise or a profession which in the opinion of the Commissioner is essential to the life of the community or the physical well being and health of the members of the community, and which service is declared a commodity under the provisions of Section 6 of this Act.

If the Bill is passed, such services will come under the provisions of the Act and be subject to control so far as increases in the charges to be made for such services are concerned. Members will note that before any new service not covered by the Act can be brought under its provisions, it will be necessary for such service to be regarded by the Price-Fixing Commissioner as essential for certain purposes. That does not mean that the Commissioner will have the right to decide at any time that any particular service shall be brought under the provisions of the Act. It means that he will have the right to decide that a particular service shall be brought under the provisions of the Act. When he so decides, he will recommend to the Minister concerned that such service be declared a service for the purposes of the Act, and if the Executive Council finally declares that such services should be brought under the Act, a proclamation will be issued for that purpose. Thus, the particular part of the Bill dealing with the matter does not propose automatically to bring any new service under the Act. It merely gives to the Commissioner the right to recommend, through the Minister to the Government, that any particular service should be subject to control, in order that the charge to be made for such service shall be a charge considered reasonable and fair in all the circumstances.

The basis upon which charges for services rendered will be calculated will be the charges made for those services at the 31st August, 1939. That same principle operates in connection with prices to be charged for commodities. The charge levied at the 31st August, 1939, will be the basic charge, and no person or company supplying any declared service will be permitted to increase the charges beyond those operating at the date specified, unless the Price-Fixing Commissioner has first of all agreed that any proposed increase is permissible.

It will be agreed that legislation for the prevention of profiteering should have the widest scope possible and that if it is fair and proper and desirable that persons selling goods should be under control in connection with the prices they may charge for such goods, other persons supplying essential services to the public should also be under control in regard to the prices or fees they charge for rendering such services. The principle, in my judgment, is the same. Dealing with that aspect of the question, the Bill proposes to place all suppliers of goods and services on the same footing and, more important still, by doing that, proposes to give the public of Western Australia the same measure of protection against profiteering in connection with services as is now given against profiteering in connection with goods.

Mr. Watts: Has the Price Fixing Commissioner recommended this action?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Yes, the commissioner has recommended that the Act be amended along the lines now proposed. The definitions of the terms "prevailing price," "price," "sell" and "trader" will be amended by this Bill to make them more applicable to services, so that the administration of the Act as amended will be facilitated and so that the law will be more clearly understood and more easily enforceable than it would be if the present definitions were retained.

One other important amendment is proposed by the Bill. Under the Act, it is necessary for a prosecution to be launched within a period of six months from the time when the offence took place. Many of the investigations and inquiries carried out by the commissioner and those working with him are exceedingly involved and take a long time to complete. We have had several experiences recently of investigations carried out in connection with complaints made against certain firms that have taken much longer than six months to complete. They have been completed in such a way as to demonstrate beyond a shadow of doubt that the firms concerned had indulged in profiteering and in a very deliberate and flagrant manner but, because the offence in question had been committed more than six months before, it was not possible to institute action, and consequently those firms es-

caped the penalties which, in all justice, should have been imposed upon them.

Hon. N. Keenan: Did they stop profiteering?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: They certainly have ceased profiteering in the commodities that were the subject of investigation, but for all we know, they might be profiteering in other commodities being sold to the public. It might well be that tomorrow or next week other information will reach the commissioner necessitating the beginning of a new inquiry, and the completion of that inquiry might take six, seven or 12 months. If the inquiry occupies longer than six months, it is impossible to take action against the offenders, and they get off scot free. One of the investigations made by the commissioner disclosed that a firm had profiteered to the extent of more than £1,600. The profiteering activities in question covered the supply to the public of linoleum, blankets, parcels of manchester goods and furniture, including bedsteads and bedding. I assure members that some of the men in business are hard nuts to crack. They know every trick of the trade, so to speak; they know how to cover up their tracks and how to hide profiteering activities in such a way as to make it extremely difficult to develop a case for successful prosecution against them.

I think the evidence of profiteering is sufficiently serious to justify Parliament's wiping out this six months' restriction on the institution of prosecutions. Any person or firm profiteering against the community, especially in war time, should not be able to escape the penalties provided in our legislation. If we do not amend the law, then the worst type of man in the business world will continue to profiteer and escape the penalty, because he will be able so to cover up his actions as to prevent their being revealed and permit of a prosecution being instituted within the period of six months. Parliament can be asked with every confidence to agree to an alteration of the law in that direction. The Bill proposes to amend the appropriate part of the Act so that a prosecution may be launched within a period of six months after the commissioner has completed any inquiry or investigation into an alleged offence. This means that the commissioner and his officers will be given

all the time they require to investigate any complaint of profiteering. After the completion of the investigation, the commissioner will be permitted a period of six months within which to launch a prosecution against any individual or firm believed to have been indulging in profiteering in contravention of the provisions of the law.

There are thus two main amendments in the Bill. Both of them are desirable; both of them are necessary, and I feel sure Parliament will give them full support in order that these much-needed powers may be made available to the commissioner and the Government at the earliest possible moment. As soon as the additional powers are given, action will be taken that we cannot take to-day because the Act does not permit of our going as far as is necessary to meet the position. The provisions of the Act can be said to have operated very smoothly and satisfactorily during the 12 months or less that the measure has been on the statute-book. I commend the Bill to the careful consideration of members. I feel sure that after they have studied it, they will realise that it is worthy of support and will approve of its being passed on for consideration by the Legislative Council. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Watts, debate adjourned.

Mr. SPEAKER: In view of the fact that workmen have arrived to attend to a broken window in the Chamber, I will leave the Chair for a brief interval.

Sitting suspended from 5.11 to 5.53 p.m.

BILL—BUILDERS REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 30th October.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [5.53]: The object of the Bill is to rectify an omission in the principal Act, that being the failure to provide for the registration of companies. After the Act came into force, the Crown Law Department advised the Minister to frame certain regulations that would be applicable to companies. The Act, however, did not give any authority to do that. Regulations were framed and

they were challenged on the ground that they were ultra vires, which the Minister recognised and permitted them to be disallowed. So it has become necessary to amend the Act. The Bill now provides for the registration of companies but the provision as it is in the Bill is open to serious objections. The first is from the local point of view. If a company becomes registered, a director of a company and also the supervisor must be registered under the Act, and that is an imposition which would be a grievous burden on some of the local companies that are carrying on and have carried on the business of building in the State for a great number of years with success and credit to themselves. I know of two such companies, one of which has been established for 50 years, and as a result of the proposed legislation may have to employ, which the company does not do to-day, an additional person as supervisor. There seems to be no good ground for putting a company to that additional expense. A small concern should not be imposed upon in that manner. There is another objection. Nowadays in Western Australia work is being carried out, I regret to say to a large extent, by companies formed in the Eastern States. They have the opportunity of carrying on operations here largely because of the war and also for other reasons, and they are doing so, but the proposed new section would require the company to have two registered builders one of whom is a director and the other a supervisor. In such an instance the registration of one person should be sufficient. One large company is registered in Melbourne and if the amendment in the Bill is agreed to, it will be impossible for the directors to be registered. The companies can come here to carry on operations and the Commonwealth law permits them to do so. So they carry on business here to the extent that it is open for them to do so. These companies have no objection to their work being supervised, but it would be impossible for them to comply with the requirements to have one or more directors registered. I hope the hon. member will agree to an amendment when the Bill reaches the Committee stage. The amendment, however, will have to be made to another section of the Act.

The Bill contains a new clause the object of which will be to compel every local authority in whose district the Act applies, within 14 days after the expiration of each and every month, to deliver to the board at its office a statement containing the names and addresses of all persons to whom building permits have been issued during the month, the dates of the issue of such permits, the nature of the buildings to be erected, the estimated cost, and so on. The local authorities have no objection to assisting the board to any extent it likes, provided they are not called upon to increase their staff for the purpose or keep a clerk specially employed, and so what the local authorities propose to ask the House to do with regard to the proposed new section is to make it possible for any servant or officer of the board appointed under the principal Act to inspect all books during business hours and take all the necessary information that the board may require, whatever that information may be. The local authorities would have no objection to that; on the contrary, they are quite willing to afford every possible facility to the board to obtain that information. Subject to these remarks I shall support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; Mr Needham in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of section 2:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to the definition of "Company":—"or which being a foreign company has complied with the provisions of Part 'A' of the said Act."

Companies registered under the State Act, whether foreign companies or otherwise, must be allowed to trade, provided they comply with the local legal conditions. Any endeavour to prevent them from doing so would be contrary to the Federal Constitution Act.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The definition of "company" already provides all that the member for Nedlands desires. I cannot see what

objection there can be to a foreign company being registered provided it possesses the necessary qualifications. The amendment is unnecessary.

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

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 4:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (d) be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—

(d) any company and any other body corporate whose building work is managed and/or supervised by a person registered under this Act or exempted from the necessity of obtaining registration under this Act.

An amendment of this kind is necessary because of the other provisions contained in this clause. The proposal is to exempt such people as members of the Institute of Engineers of Australia (Perth Division), members of the Australian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, and others. The difficulty that would thus be created will be obviated if we stipulate that a company shall be exempt provided it employs in the course of its building operations, and for the purpose of supervising those operations, a person who is registered under the Act.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I oppose the amendment. If it were carried, it would defeat the objects of the Bill. It was a difficulty that was experienced under the principal Act that led to the regulations dealing with this question being disallowed, and to the introduction of this Bill. The amendment would mean that certain companies would not be registered, and that, so long as they engaged persons who were registered, they could continue to carry on building operations. What is desired is to obtain proper control over all such companies, for the protection of all concerned. If the amendment were carried, the only remedy left in the case of a company that was carrying on its building operations in an unsatisfactory manner would be to de-register the person who was engaged in supervising the work. The company could then engage another registered person and carry on in the same way.

Mr. McDONALD: Registration will be prized by those who are engaged in the building trade, and there will be attracted to it men of ability and financial stability. Companies should be encouraged to engage in these operations. They nearly all repre-

sent financial stability, and are often the means of bringing capital into the country. The amendment provides that no company shall carry on this class of business unless its operations are supervised by a registered builder. That being so, why impose a second registration upon the company? If the Bill is proceeded with in its present form, the department concerned will have difficulty in administering the law.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. McDONALD: Under the principal Act certain people can carry on as builders without being registered and these are set out in Section 4. While they hold the qualifications specified, they may conduct building operations and, being exempt, need not be registered at all.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the hon. member that we are dealing with paragraph (d) only.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes, and my remarks are relevant to the paragraph and the amendment. By virtue of paragraph (d), it is proposed that if, and while, a company employs a registered person to supervise building operations, the company is exempt from the need to register. The man who supervises the building operations for the company is not exempt unless he is already exempt under the provisions of Section 4. The amendment proposed by the member for Nedlands means that if the company's building operations are supervised by a person who is already registered or is exempt from the need to register, then the company itself need not be registered. Similarly if the company at any time ceases to have in its employ as supervisor or manager, a person registered under the Act, then the company will not be exempt from the need to register and will have to cease its building operations until it obtains another registered man to act as supervisor in charge of the work. Under the terms of the amendment no company could carry on unless its building operations were controlled by a person already registered as a builder and could carry on only so long as it had in its employ a person registered as a builder under the Act. I cannot develop my argument satisfactorily, Mr. Chairman, unless I refer to the proposal of the member for Perth as embodied in the Bill. It provides that a company may be allowed to carry on as a builder in

one of two ways. In the first place, if all the shareholders of a company, except one, are already registered builders, the concern will be exempt from the need to register. In practice that would not be much help because many companies consist of people who became shareholders on account of their contributions of capital. Thus, for example, companies from the Eastern States and also other concerns that obtain capital from people by means of the disposal of shares, would not be able to take advantage of the provisions for exemption from registration, because they would not be companies consisting of shareholders all of whom, except one, were registered builders. Therefore, the Bill, in so far as it seeks to facilitate the conduct of building operations, would, in practice, not have that result. The measure provides a second means by which companies may carry on the business, and that is by the companies themselves registering. In order to do so, a company, to qualify for registration, must have as its officials at least two men who are already registered builders. If it does, then the company itself becomes qualified for registration as a builder, and will remain so for so long as it continues to have as its employees two people registered under the Act. What happens then? The moment one of the registered officers ceases to be registered as a builder, then the company's registration automatically ceases. The company may have two registered officers, one a director and the other a supervisor. Should the supervisor, because of pique or some other cause, walk off the job, then the company's registration immediately ceases and its operations must stop. Work cannot be resumed on the job until it again has two officers registered under the Act in its employ and is itself again registered. The job may be on a work such as the Perth Hospital, where hundreds of men are employed. In such circumstances a company would be in an extremely vulnerable position. Should such a company lose one of its registered officers, which necessitates the employment of another duly registered man, the company must then go through all the formalities in order once more to secure registration for itself. That procedure will have to be followed again and again each time it loses one of its registered officers. The board may meet once a month. Work will be held up. Men will be out of employment, and the company itself will be

occasioned much trouble. Economic losses will be sustained not only by the company, but by the employees. Important works may be held up and companies exposed to heavy penalties through delays in the completion of undertakings. That is the reason why the amendment is not included in the provision dealing with the registration of companies, but is to apply to the paragraph dealing with exemptions from registration. The amendment will enable the company to start work again without the necessity to go through the form of registration immediately it replaces the supervisor who has left the job. In practice the amendment will give the public all the protection that is required, will be more workable and will prevent dislocation of business.

Mr. NEEDHAM: This is the first time since I have had the pleasure of listening to the hon. member that I have heard him give such rein to his imagination. He spoke of the dire consequences which would follow the passage of this legislation and pictured workmen unemployed because of a certain procedure having to be adopted. I direct the attention of the member for Nedlands, who is the author of the alternative to this Bill—

Hon. N. Keenan: One of the alternatives.

Mr. NEEDHAM: —to paragraph (b) of proposed new Subsection (2). That contains no objection to a partnership being exempt from registration. Paragraph (d), which the hon. member seeks to delete, refers to the exemption of any company and any other body corporate in which there is not more than one shareholder or member as the case may be who is not registered under the Act. The amendment proposes to exempt companies or bodies corporate whose building work is managed and/or supervised by a person registered under the Act or exempted from the necessity for obtaining registration. That is exactly the opposite of what is in the Bill. The clause is designed to ensure that men who are members of a company and qualified builders are registered as such so that proper work will be done. If the amendment is agreed to the Bill will be rendered useless. I have not heard from either the member for Nedlands or the member for West Perth any argument to induce support for the amendment.

Hon. N. KEENAN: So far from making the Bill useless, the amendment will render

the Bill useful. Surely the desire behind the Act is that building work should be carried out under the direction of some competent person as supervisor or foreman or whatever he may be called. That is what is provided for in the amendment. As the Act stands and as it would be if the Bill were agreed to in its present form, so long as a company for the time being complied with the provisions of this very peculiar section, it would be under no obligation to employ a supervisor who knew something about building. A company is an entirely different proposition from a partnership. Laws applicable to the one are not applicable to the other. As the member for West Perth has reminded the Committee, a company is formed by two or three people who have a knowledge of building and one of whom might be qualified to act as a supervisor, getting together some other people to provide the capital necessary to conduct the enterprise. A partnership is nearly always based on equal or relatively equal knowledge of the subject-matter by the partners. The amendment deals only with a company and provides what, I think, is the essence of the Bill, that a company should be entitled to operate under the Act if its operations are carried out under the direction of a registered person.

Mr. Needham: That is provided for in Clause 4.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The amendment provides that a company will be entitled to carry on the business of building only if its work is managed by a person registered under the Act.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It appears to me that the amendment is being made to the wrong clause. To make the Act acceptable in the first instance, members of various bodies such as the Royal Institute of Architects, the Institution of Engineers, the Australian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy and competent officers of the Crown and local governing bodies, were exempted from registration. We are now dealing with the exemption of any company or body corporate in which there is not more than one shareholder or member not registered under the Act. The member for Perth has endeavoured to intimate that what the member for Nedlands desires to achieve is provided for later in the Bill. Why should anyone be entitled to registration without paying fees?

Hon. N. Keenan: The person registered—the supervisor—would have to pay fees.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: All these people referred to are exempt.

Hon. N. Keenan: The amendment would make the supervisor pay.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: These are "clean-skins" who need not register at all; but the biggest builder and contractor has to register and pay fees. He cannot get exemption, under the Act, but the hon. member proposes that people who build only occasionally, shall have a privilege over and above that enjoyed by the genuine master-builders of the State. We are anxious that genuine companies should be allowed to operate. The Master Builders' Association was anxious that they should be so entitled. It is because the association realised that it was unfair that a firm like the Structural Steel Company, which, I believe, was responsible for the steel work of the Perth Hospital, should not be allowed to operate that a provision was inserted in the Bill permitting it to do so. I suggest that the hon. member should move his amendment to the proper clause. This is the exemption clause, dealing with those who do not need to register. If the safeguard the hon. member seeks is not provided in the Bill, it could certainly be inserted in a more appropriate portion.

Mr. McDONALD: We all agree that some provision must be made to meet the case of a company, and it is a question of where that provision should be inserted. My feeling is that it should appear where the member for Nedlands suggests. To take a case in point: Mr. Arnott, who is a contractor in a large way and of high standing, is no doubt a registered builder. If he got four other people to become shareholders in a company, he to supervise the building operations, there would need to be double registration. Mr. Arnott would still be supervising the building operations for the company, but because he happened to be associated with a company, he would have to register not only himself but also the company. The whole idea of the amendment is that once the person supervising the building is registered, if he supervises for a company, the double registration should not be necessary. With double registration a company might have to be applying continually for registration because, unless there was a surplus of registered

people in the company, every time the number fell below the requisite figure, registration would be lost and the whole rigmarole of getting fresh registration would have to be gone through. The point is, do we want double registration or is it sufficient if a company's operations are supervised by a registered man?

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

Ayes	15
Noes	19

Majority against . . . 4

AYES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Boyle	Mr. Seward
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Warner
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Watts
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Willmott
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Doney
Mr. North	

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Berry	Mr. Millington
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Needham
Mr. Cross	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Fox	Mr. Pantom
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Holman	Mr. Triat
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Withers
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Leahy	

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Latham	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Mann	Mr. Collier
Mr. Patrick	Mr. Wise
Mr. J. H. Smith	Mr. Sivants
Mr. Stubbs	Mr. Tonkin

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 10; Repeal and new section:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That sub-paragraph (ii) of paragraph (b) of proposed new Subsection 2 be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

If the sub-paragraph is struck out, I propose to insert the words "his building work is managed or supervised by a person duly registered under this Act shall be exempt from the necessity of obtaining registration under the Act." The amendment will make it possible for a company to carry on building operations under the supervision of a person duly registered under the Act. The objection will remain that if the supervisor walks off the job, the company will become de-registered, but in view of the decision of the Committee, that cannot now be

avoided. The amendment will get rid of the cumbersome and impossible condition of requiring one director to be registered, which could not possibly be complied with by more than one company having directors in the Eastern States. To require an understudy would impose an undue burden on a company.

Mr. NEEDHAM: According to the notice paper, the hon. member intended to delete the proposed new Subsection 2, but now he has reduced his amendment to proposing the deletion of sub-paragraph (ii) with a view to substituting other words. Evidently he now sees some virtue in the first part of the proposed new subsection. If I grasped the purport of the words to be inserted, they are merely a repetition of the amendment we have just rejected. It seems the members for Nedlands and West Perth wanted exemption from supervision where there was a manager who had the necessary skill. During the course of their speeches I interjected that this matter was provided for in the succeeding clause, namely, the clause now under consideration. The words "to manage and supervise" are words which the members for Nedlands and West Perth desired to insert in the previous clause. Now the member for Nedlands wants those same words deleted from this clause. If there is to be proper control, it is essential that the board of directors shall include at least one person who is skilled in the business of building. The member for West Perth painted a picture of difficulties that would arise in the case of a company comprising one person skilled in building and four persons not so skilled. The reason for asking that another member or employee be registered is to ensure that in the absence of the one registered person there should be someone available with a knowledge of building to direct the company's operations. The member for West Perth suggested that there would be a continuous process of registration; but the clause provides against all the difficulties which the two members raised on the previous clause, and I ask that the amendment be not carried.

Mr. McDONALD: The member for Perth has displayed all the qualities which are important in the hour of conflict. I pay him that compliment. However, the Bill says that if a company has two or more

directors who are registered under the Builders Registration Act, then the company may register; but if the company has only one director registered under that Act, it cannot register unless it also employs a supervisor who is registered. The amendment which the member for Nedlands has kindly moved on my behalf goes right to the root of the question, and says that the real thing which matters is that the company shall have a person who is qualified to supervise building work—it does not matter about the director. Say a company includes two gentlemen who are qualified and are entitled to register. They consequently register. Then they live their lives and pay their annual fees to the Builders Board, whereupon the company's building operations can be carried on by any Tom, Dick or Harry. There is nothing to say that a person registered under the Builders Registration Act loses his registration if he leaves the State. The two registered directors can leave the State, and so long as they continue their registration by paying their registration fees the company can carry on building operations without having any qualified person associated with it at all. Under the Bill, if a company has only one registered director, it must employ a supervisor who is a registered man; but if it has two registered directors, it need not have any person supervising the work at all, and the two directors need not even be in the State. If my reading of the Bill is right—

The Minister for Mines: I cannot read your argument into it. Would not there need to be a registered supervisor as well?

Mr. McDONALD: No. The Bill requires a supervisor only if there are not two registered directors.

The Minister for Mines: What about Clause 2?

Mr. McDONALD: If more than one director or more than one member of the board of management is registered, then the company need have no supervisor at all. I repeat, there is nothing in the Bill to say that the registered director shall be in the State. The amendment of the member for Nedlands will give all the protection required by the public and at the same time give a more workable basis for the companies themselves.

Mr. ABBOTT: I support the amendment not only for the reasons given by the member for West Perth but because I do not consider it necessary that a director should be registered at all. The object of the Act, as I understand it, is to ensure that building work is carried out under trained supervision. Why should not a company make itself responsible to erect buildings so long as it employs skilled workers? It may have to employ bricklayers and carpenters belonging to the respective unions, and surely it can employ an architect or supervisor registered with the relevant associations. Why should not any company enter into contracts to erect buildings so long as it employs properly skilled men?

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

Ayes	15
Noes	20
Majority against .. .	5

AYES.

Mr. Abbott
Mr. Boyle
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver
Mr. Hill
Mr. Keenan
Mr. McDonald
Mr. McLarty
Mr. North

Mr. Sampson
Mr. Seward
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Warner
Mr. Watts
Mr. Willmott
Mr. Doney

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Berry
Mr. Coverley
Mr. Cross
Mr. Fox
Mr. Hawke
Mr. W. Hegney
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Lambert
Mr. Leahy
Mr. Millington

Mr. Needham
Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Panton
Mr. Raphael
Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Triat
Mr. Wilson
Mr. Withers
Mr. J. Hegney

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.
Mr. Latham
Mr. Mann
Mr. Patrick
Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Stubbs

NOES.
Mr. Willcock
Mr. Collier
Mr. Wise
Mr. Styants
Mr. Tonkin

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—New section. Local authority to furnish information to the board:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That Subsection (1) of the proposed new Section 16a be struck out.

I explained to members on the second reading debate that local authorities take no exception to giving all the information which their books contain to the board

appointed under the Act; but they take the strongest possible exception to carrying out the clerical work that would be entailed. Local authorities consider the board should be quite satisfied to obtain the information itself, provided it is made compulsory by statute for the local authorities to furnish it.

Mr. SAMPSON: I hope the Committee will pass the amendment. Already local authorities are burdened with much honorary work. The member for Perth is now seeking to impose additional work upon them, and penalties are provided if a mass of details is not forwarded each month to the Builders' Registration Board. No justification exists for this provision. When is this unnecessary honorary work on the part of local authorities to cease? Who is to determine what is the estimated value of the buildings to be erected? That information is not always available to local authorities, although it might be to the City of Perth.

Mr. NEEDHAM: This provision was inserted in the Bill with a view to seeking the assistance of local authorities in the policing of the Act, as to which there has been some difficulty. The funds available to the board are limited and it would be beyond the financial capacity of the board to employ a person specially to wait upon the local authority and extract the desired information from its records. I am advised that the cost to the local authorities would be infinitesimal. Already, under the Scaffolding Act, they must supply the information, so all that would be necessary would be to take a carbon copy of the information which must be supplied under that Act and send it to the board. The Perth City Council and the Perth Road Board are already furnishing the information sought to be obtained by this clause. The member for Swan accuses me of attempting to heap work on local authorities; but this would be no burden to such authorities either from the point of view of labour or of cost. If the local authorities were put to expense in this connection, then the Builders' Registration Board would be prepared to defray it.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 16a be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

On motions by Hon. N. Keenan, clause further amended by striking out in lines 1, 2 and 3 of proposed Subsection 3 the words "Where a local authority refuses or neglects in any respect to comply with its obligations under this section," by striking out the word "the" in line 6 and inserting the word "any" in lieu thereof; and by striking out after the word "which" in line 13 the words "the local authority has refused or neglected to supply contrary to the requirements of Subsection (2) of this section," and inserting in lieu thereof the words "the board requires."

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 6—agreed to.

New clause:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move—

That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 6:—

6. (1) Any applicant under section four of this Act whose application has been refused by the Board shall be entitled, on demand, to be furnished in writing with the reason or reasons for such refusal.

(2) Within fourteen days of receipt by the applicant of such reasons, he or it may appeal to the magistrate of the nearest local court against the decision of the Board by notice in writing of his or its intention so to do, at a day not less than ten days after service of such notice on the Board.

(3) The magistrate of the local court may allow such appeal or dismiss same, and, in the event of allowing such appeal, may direct the Board to register the appellant under this Act, in accordance with the provisions thereof.

(4) The magistrate of the local court may award costs to the successful party.

(5) The appellant may adduce all such evidence at the hearing of the appeal of which he has given the Board seven days' notice before the date fixed for the hearing, but not further or otherwise.

The principal Act makes provision for appeals against decisions of the board. The clause is much more detailed, more simple, and more effective than the existing section. For instance, the principal Act contains no provision for the board to give in writing to an applicant the reasons for refusal to register him, for the applicant to give notice of his intention to appeal, or for the magistrate to direct the board to register a successful applicant, etc.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The principal Act, as indicated by the hon. member, provides for an appeal by an aggrieved person. The clause is much more detailed than the pro-

vision in the Act, though I have heard it said that the more you define the more you limit. Up to date the board has given an opportunity to aggrieved persons for the re-hearing of their cases. It has not been harsh. While I recognise that the principal Act already provides for appeals and that the decision of the stipendiary magistrate is final, I do not see any valid objection to the amendment, if it will make the path to the magistrate a bit easier. I like to see the paths to the various courts made as easy as possible to the litigants, and it is somewhat refreshing to have our friends of the legal profession moving in that direction. I have no objection to the amendment.

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with amendments.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1940-41.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 13th November; Mr. Withers in the Chair.

Vote—Mines, £139,541:

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [8.55]: In introducing the Mines Estimates, I am pleased to say that the gold mining industry is still running smoothly and is in a very flourishing condition. It is probably a change for hon. members to hear a statement of that kind after the doleful story we have had to listen to concerning many of our other industries. During 1939 4,095,259 tons of ore were crushed for 1,133,286 fine ozs. of gold, valued at £11,594,221. I might add that at the end of October the position had improved to the extent of 8,000 fine ozs. for the same period this year. The dividends declared for 1939 totalled £1,377,111, and for the first six months of 1940, £423,222, making the total distribution by gold mining companies to the 30th June last £37,034,736. The number of men reported engaged in the industry at present is 14,096.

Most of the principal producing mines reported the treatment of increased tonnages and some new substantial producers

came into being. In this regard I would specially mention Consolidated Gold Areas at Hampton Plains, which so far this year has treated 18,000 tons of ore; Phoenix Gold Mines, Ltd. (Bayley's) at Kalgoorlie, which has reported 9,000 tons to date, and other large producers such as Messrs. Ridge Bros. at Evanston, and Norseman Associated Gold Mines at Norseman. Unfortunately one large producer (the Lancefield) recently closed down. One very pleasing feature is the establishment by a company at Ravensthorpe of a plant capable of treating refractory ore at that centre. That is one centre which had for a long time been hanging fire. I recently made a visit there with the Government Geologist and State Mining Engineer. We obtained samples and sent them to the School of Mines in Kalgoorlie to find out if it were possible and practicable to erect some sort of plant at a reasonable cost with a view to treating the ore from Ravensthorpe. However, the company had already established a plant for that purpose and is now employing 35 men. In four months' time the plant will be completed and development will be in full swing, and the company will then have approximately 90 men at work. We hope that as a result of the company having proved the capability of the plant to treat refractory ore, it or some other company will endeavour to deal with quite a large body of ore existing in Ravensthorpe in mines that have been lying idle for years owing to lack of proper methods of treatment.

A few months ago I made an intensive tour of the northern goldfields, principally Pilbara and Kimberley. Not only was it a very enjoyable tour but it was also educational. I was astounded at the possibilities of the North-West from a mining point of view. With the exception of the Comet mine and perhaps the Blue Spec mine, which is suffering from want of water, I do not know that I saw any room for any big companies there but I am quite satisfied that with suitable facilities, and particularly water supply, the Nullagine district itself should carry 250 to 300 men prospecting on anything from 8 to 10 dwt. shows. It was my intention to recommend to the Government on my return that a sufficient sum of money be set aside for the engage-

ment of a first-class hydraulic engineer to go North, to test the possibilities of obtaining a water supply. The war, however, developed so quickly that it was not much good talking about spending considerable sums of money there. I hope as soon as things have settled down, however, that the North-West will be given the necessary opportunity for development. I am satisfied it is only a question of obtaining a reasonable supply of water, and providing facilities for crushing, to be able to open up a big mining centre in that part of the State, and especially to enable prospectors thoroughly to overhaul the country. I met a fine body of prospectors on the occasion of my tour. They put me in mind of the men spoken of by the present Agent General as "The men of the Murchison of 40 years ago." They are undoubtedly a fine type of people. They make no complaints, they ask for practically nothing, and yet are doing their best to promote the welfare of the State by the production of gold.

It is pleasant to be able to record that Western Australia received £111,000 as a grant from the Commonwealth Government for assistance to the goldmining industry. I had the unique experience of going to the Eastern States last January with a view to obtaining £250,000. I am pleased we were successful in getting £111,000, after all the strenuous efforts that had been put forward by the Government to obtain a substantial grant. The money is being used to assist mining companies which are already producing by increasing their plants, and I hope by that means to assist them to double their output. I am satisfied that under the scheme now in operation they should be able to increase their output of gold from 90,000 to 100,000 ounces per annum in the near future. Last year the Commonwealth Government imposed a gold tax on every ounce produced. As a result of the efforts of this Parliament and Government and other bodies, some relief with regard to low grade mines and prospectors was obtained.

Since the inception of the prospecting scheme in July, 1933, assisted prospectors, while on the scheme, have crushed 69,162 tons of ore for 34,555 fine ounces of gold. To date 8,478 men have been assisted and 600 are still receiving assistance. Of the 8,478 men, a large section has been absorbed

into the goldmining industry. Before they went out on the Government scheme, the men probably had no thought of entering the industry, because they had had no experience of it, but having gained experience, they have become accustomed to the handling of tools, and have picked up the technicalities of mining, and now are absorbed in the industry. Some outstanding crushings amongst the yields of prospectors are interesting. For instance, G. P. Newton, of Cue, crushed eight tons for 96 ounces; Griffiths & Davies, of Kalgoorlie, crushed five tons for 31 ounces; J. J. Smith, Meekatharra, crushed 70 tons for 170 ounces; Barnett & Hart, Meekatharra, crushed 26 tons for 82 ounces; F. J. Swift, Meekatharra (by Berdan pan) 118 ounces; C. Stone, Cue, crushed 43 tons for 83 ounces; Thompson and Beaton, Laverton, crushed 17 tons for 58 ounces; Anderson & Gissing, Southern Cross, crushed 11 tons for 51 ounces; W. Kinnane, Coolgardie, crushed 15 tons for 14 ounces, 20 tons for 18 ounces, and 22 tons for 22 ounces; J. & K. Robinson, Wiluna, crushed 16 tons for 21 ounces and 10 tons for 14 ounces. It will be seen, therefore, that the scheme is as successful as ever and that these crushings have come from practically all parts of the goldfields.

I wish now to deal with State batteries. At the close of 1939 there were 24 plants in commission. These treated during that year 101,443 tons of ore for 53,141 ounces of bullion, estimated to yield 44,995 fine ounces of gold. At Marble Bar and Boogardie, the mills were increased to 10-head, and at other plants many improvements have been effected. A great deal has been said about the cost of treatment at batteries. It is just as well the Committee should know what these batteries have actually cost. I have here the figures dating from the inception of these undertakings to the 31st December, 1939—

	£	s.	d.
Expenditure	2,461,000	14	0
Depreciation	416,004	14	2
Interest	555,154	0	0
Sinking fund	127,947	14	6
	£3,560,107	2	8
Less revenue	£2,369,780	1	7
	£1,190,327	1	1
Total capital expenditure	£536,795	1	0

The particulars for the year ended 31st December last are as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Expenditure	110,690	3	11
Depreciation	2,912	8	2
Interest	19,890	0	0
Sinking fund	999	0	0
	£134,491	12	1
Less revenue	121,107	17	6
Loss	£13,383	14	7

Cartage subsidy, £12,615 5s. 8d.

Capital expenditure, £12,297 15s. 9d.

Members will find the reference to the carting subsidy in Item 9 of the Loan Development Vote.

Dealing with minerals generally, the work at Koolan Island—where the iron deposits are—which was being carried out by a company with funds provided by the Commonwealth Government, has now ceased. The Commonwealth Government has not lifted the embargo on export, and the company has been unable to obtain an Australian market. The work done has revealed a very large high-grade deposit, and it is most regrettable that in a time like this such ore cannot be utilised. The war has resulted in the stoppage of imports of certain essential mineral supplies to Australia, and some activity is being shown in our deposits of alunite (a source of potash); pyrite (a source of sulphuric acid); vermiculite (a heat insulator); phosphates (for manures); and other minerals. Everything possible is being done by the Government to stimulate such activity. With regard to the search for oil, the Frenay Company's bore is still operating in the Kimberleys. During my recent trip to the North, I visited the site of the bore which was then down to a depth of 2,139 feet. Since then it has gone down considerably further. The overhead steel tower is approximately 150 feet in height. It is interesting to see the residential area that has sprung up in this isolated country about 4½ miles from the bore itself. The Leader of the Opposition asked certain questions about the search for oil in this State. I am very anxious there should be no misunderstanding about the matter.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I would like still more information on the subject.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: And I propose to give it. We have nothing to hide. We desire that the Leader of the

Opposition and everyone should know all there is to know about the subject. The Government brought down a Bill to amend the Petroleum Act for one purpose, which I stated at the time, namely, to induce capital to come to this State with a view to prospecting for oil. There is no doubt about the reason for the Bill in question.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It was quite a sound idea.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The representatives of various oil companies had many discussions with me in Perth, and during my visit to Melbourne last January. Under the original Act, two companies applied for and were granted leases. Oil Search Ltd. had 10,000 square miles of lease in this State. Some years ago this concern conducted a geological survey in the North-West, but beyond taking up two licenses to prospect, it engaged in no further activities throughout the period. There is no doubt now that this license was recently disposed of to the Caltex Co. The Freney Co. has done all the work it could in the North with its limited finance, and is now boring on one of its three licenses of 550 square miles. The other licenses taken up by the Freney Co. are one of 225 square miles and one of 100 square miles, making a total of 550 square miles. The company at present is only boring and working on one lease of 225 square miles.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Is that not included in the Caltex Co.'s lease?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. I could not give one company a lease already given to another.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It looked like it from the map.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The 550 square mile area is segregated from the Caltex Co.'s area. The Freney Company's bore is being financed by the Commonwealth and State Governments, each putting £30,000 into the undertaking. The Freney Company originally took up 102,000 square miles, but after exploring the area geologically, it discarded all except its three present licenses to prospect. A great deal of the area discarded by Freney's has now been taken up by the Caltex Oil Co. Under the amended Act there have been three applications for permits to explore. The Caltex Oil Co. applied for 133,000 square miles. The Freney Company applied for 4,602

square miles. This was on the same ground that the Caltex Co. had applied for, but which it had already dropped when it took up 560 square miles. Oil search which had taken up 10,000 square miles and held for ten years, sold out or gave an option to the Caltex Oil Co., but applied for 11,000 square miles two days after the Caltex Oil Co. had got its permit. When dealing with the three applications, I could come to only one reasonable conclusion, namely, that two of the leases were applied for with a view to passing them on to the Caltex Oil Co. Members will agree that as we have passed legislation with a view to inducing capital to come to the State, it is not our job to assist people to take up country for speculative purposes. That was the suspicion I had in the matter.

I am pleased to say that yesterday I signed a permit for a company called the Phoenix, which was recommended by James and Darbyshire on behalf of solicitors in Sydney. That company has taken up 6,000 square miles in the south, from Albany to Esperance and then north. As I said, under the amended Act there have been three applications. I was assured that if the parent Act was amended in the requisite direction, it would be the means of bringing it into line with the legislation of other countries and that big companies would be interested in the search for oil in this State. That has already been dealt with and already we have the operations by the Caltex Company, as well as the other company I have mentioned. In addition Mr. W. S. Robinson and Sir Colin Fraser were in my office yesterday, and they are to send an oil expert within the next week or so to discuss another section of Western Australia that no one else has so far bothered about. It is interesting also to note that the Shell Oil Co. has been granted 136,000 square miles in Queensland under an Act similar to ours, and in that State the company is engaged in boring and other operations. The Caltex Company has already been granted a permit to explore under the old Act and has made an aerial survey. It has now in Australia, for the purpose of commencing exploratory work, three American geologists with extensive experience regarding the oilfields of America, Mexico, Columbia, Trinidad, Java, Sumatra and Dutch New Guinea. They

have been provided with the latest type of precision theodolites, and plane table equipment. Those three geologists are at present operating on the other side of the Fitzroy River and have the benefit of new motor cars of a type and design similar to that used in the exploration of the Arabian Desert. Portable wireless equipment has also been provided so that the field parties may communicate with headquarters. In all these circumstances, members will agree that the passing of legislation has brought this State into line with other countries regarding the search for oil.

The Schools of Mines at Kalgoorlie, Wiluna and Norseman have continued operations on a satisfactory basis and in addition to providing trained men for the industry, have helped to tutor youths in trades that have fitted them for the Air Force. The inspection of mines, machinery and industrial explosives has continued, and the very few accidents experienced speak well for the efficiency of the inspectors. Unfortunately during the last 12 months a perusal of the evidence regarding the causes of some accidents disclosed that they were due to sheer carelessness on the part of either employer or employee. In at least half a dozen instances the department has had to launch prosecutions against both employer and employee on charges of breaking regulations because through their actions the accidents may have been made possible. I shall continue to adopt that procedure until we can ensure that those engaged in the industry will cease such carelessness and will adhere to a more rigid observance of regulations.

With regard to miner's phthisis, the regular examinations of men have been continued, including those employed in the Marble Bar district. I have pleasure in recording that the incidence of the disease continues to decrease. I am hopeful later of being able to have some of the affected men treated by modern medicine methods and at the present moment I have an expert inquiring into that phase.

Generally speaking, the industry is operating very satisfactorily, and the gold produced is proving of great value to Australia in this critical period. We anticipate that the current year's output will be greater than that of 1938-39, which was a record up

to the end of that period. There is undoubtedly greater interest in minerals at the present juncture although production has not yet been greatly affected. Mining commodities, while much increased in price, have not, as was feared at one stage, become unobtainable. The department, with the assistance of the Customs Department, has been able to ensure a continuance of supplies from various sources. If the theatre of war is further enlarged we may, of course, yet experience difficulty in this regard. However, it has been very pleasing to the department that mining requisites have not been so scarce as was expected at the beginning of the war.

The recent passing of Mr. Harry Gregory, M.H.R., signalled the death of one who became the third Minister for Mines in this State. The first was Sir Edward Wittenoom, who was followed by Sir Henry Le-froy and later by Mr. Gregory.

Mr. Patrick: Mr. Gregory was a very good Minister for Mines.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The Mines Department has been most fortunate in that all the Ministers have proved their worth.

Hon. N. Keenan: Mr. Marmion was the first Minister for Mines.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There are in my office ten photographs of Ministers for Mines, and Mr. Marmion's is not among them.

Hon. N. Keenan: He held other offices as well.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The late John Scaddan held various offices, but his photograph is included. However, the matter is worthy of inquiry and I shall look into it. Mr. Gregory had a fairly long career as Minister for Mines. Members will be interested to note that in the 48 years since Sir Edward Wittenoom was Minister for Mines there have been ten holders of that portfolio, including myself. They will agree that that is a fair record—ten Ministers in 48 years.

Mr. Patrick: Did not Mr. Gregory first establish State batteries here?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot say for certain. I wish to pay tribute to the late Mr. Gregory, who proved himself so capable in his capacity as Minister for Mines. Much of the work upon which the department is engaged to-day originated

during that gentlemen's tenure of office. I have pleasure in submitting the Vote to the Committee.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [9.21]: I wish to comment briefly on the Minister's introduction of his Estimates. I am sorry he did not make some mention of the position arising out of the adverse publicity in England accorded the goldmining industry, which seemingly is calculated to do unlimited damage to the interests of this State. If there is one commodity that will provide credit during a crisis such as the present, it is gold. Anything that is detrimental to the progress of the mining industry should be countered by every means at our disposal. The Government should be up and doing regarding this matter in view of the fact that little capital from abroad is being invested in the industry, which should be most profitable having regard to the present-day value of gold.

The Minister for Mines: Is not the department doing something?

MR. MARSHALL: I do not know whether the Government or the department has taken much cognisance of happenings in the Old Land. Because there is adverse criticism, all of which may not be quite correct, much harm may be done to the industry. We should endeavour to rectify the position so that investors will look more favourably upon the industry. Unless something is done quickly, having regard to other avenues of investment, people may not be inclined to place their money in mining ventures in this State. Probably one means the Government could adopt may appeal to the Minister. At one time when there was no real occasion for him to do so, the then Minister for Mines paid a visit to England. At that time the industry was booming. Considering all the circumstances, there might to-day be some occasion for the Government to take cognisance of what has happened because the industry is not booming at present.

The Minister for Mines: You are suggesting that I should be sent to London at this juncture?

MR. MARSHALL: Perhaps the Minister could be sent to England to the advantage of Western Australia—not in the sense that the Minister seemingly accepts my remark. From the point of view of the welfare of the goldmining industry, something must be done immediately. The Minister has ac-

cepted his share of Empire responsibility on two previous occasions without undue harm to himself, and in the circumstances, I do not think he would hesitate to take a war risk at this juncture. However, I am convinced that if we do not do something immediately with the object of restoring the confidence of investors, the gold mining industry of this State must decline. I am afraid that some of the large mines, fortunately not many, are petering out and unless we take action to encourage further investment the mining industry will experience a lean time in the course of the next few years.

Mr. Doney: Do you think money would be available in the Old Country if the Minister went for it?

MR. MARSHALL: No, but I am afraid that if we refrain from rebutting adverse criticism, people will hesitate to invest in the mining industry.

Mr. Doney: Quite so.

MR. MARSHALL: Some of the big mines have been operating for 50 years and although they have paid millions in dividends, their operations will be adversely affected if present-day criticism is allowed to go unanswered. I do not say that any deliberate attempt has been made to do any wrongful action, but we should be prepared to meet the criticism and explain to English investors that the auriferous belts of Western Australia have really not been more than scratched so far. Irrespective of past dividends, Western Australia will not experience prosperous times if gold does not retain its international value. If it fails to retain that value, I am afraid the development of the industry in the future will show a decline. I am not much concerned about what has happened in the past, but the Government ought to do everything possible to bring before the notice of investors that we have much to offer in Western Australia with regard to the development of gold mining. The Minister should give some consideration to that phase.

Mr. Patrick. That is the main point.

MR. MARSHALL: I do not know what could be done.

The Minister for Mines: We may take power under the legislation to amend the Companies Act.

Mr. MARSHALL: I hope that is true.

The Minister for Mines: At any rate we are not allowed to discuss legislation at this stage.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am not discussing legislation; it is a matter of administration. I do not know what legislation is required to deal with it, but, some assurance should be given to investors that their interests will be conserved. We should see that prospectuses issued are not misleading and that someone should be made liable to a penalty if that course is pursued. Members will agree it is not fair to expect investors to continue operating unless they can be assured that propositions put on the market are not wild cats.

The Minister for Mines. We are trying to overcome that.

Mr. MARSHALL: I shall be prepared to support anything that can be done along those lines whether it be by amending the Companies Act or by means of other legislation. The Minister referred to the treatment of refractory ore at a mine at Ravenshorpe. I think it is one of the mines known as the Claude de Bernales group, where experiments are being made with a plant similar to one I was informed a few weeks ago was operating at Mt. Sir Samuel. The trouble there is the presence of copper in the ore, and although we have metallurgists who claim to have solved the problem of securing a satisfactory extraction, so far they have failed dismally. I join with the Minister in hoping that these experimental plants will be successful. If we can treat the copper-laden ore efficiently and get a satisfactory extraction, we need have no worry about Ravenshorpe. We have some fine pockets of ore throughout the Murchison and in other parts of the State where, if these plants prove successful, there will be a revival of mining to an extensive degree. I refer particularly to the Belleview and Mt. Fraser mines and to other large lodes, including those at Gabanintha, containing a high percentage of gold, but which cannot be worked because of the copper content of the ore. If the plants prove successful the company should certainly be congratulated. It has been very consistent in its efforts and has spent much money in the attempt to solve the problem of getting a sufficient extraction from this type of ore.

If success is achieved, something very valuable will have been done for the gold mining industry of this State.

Mr. Sampson: Does it pay to go after the copper?

Mr. MARSHALL: There is one matter that I have been endeavouring to get Ministers for Mines to take into consideration. I really think the Ministers and the department have been somewhat neglectful in this respect. They do not seem to have any enthusiasm in regard to the health of miners, apart from the requirements under the Mines Regulation Act.

Mr. Sampson: Due to the weight of years?

The Minister for Mines: The conditions are better now than ever they were.

Mr. MARSHALL: I admit that the supervision of the mines has improved out of all recognition in my time, but this is not to say that we have reached the maximum possible of attainment. In my opinion our gold mines should be classified. Consider the older mines that have gone down to a depth of 2,000, 3,000, 4,000 or 5,000 ft. In them it is too late to do anything of material advantage towards improving the ventilation. It would be so expensive that I am doubtful whether the companies would undertake to spend the requisite money to ventilate those mines properly. Probably the mines of the Golden Mile are better situated than are some of the other sections of the mining industry because the fact of having groups of mines operating along the one belt enables them to link up and get their up and down drafts and ventilation much better than is possible in a mine operating under the conditions of the Wiluna or the Big Bell. The Minister should ask his departmental officers to consider whether it would not be possible when large companies are operating on big deposits of ore, such as the two I have mentioned, to submit a plan of proposed ventilation side by side with the plan for stoping the ore and carrying on mining development generally.

When a great depth has been reached and the heat becomes intense, the silica heavy and the ventilation bad, the inspectors do all they can, but it is then too late to accomplish anything of value. The cost would be too great. There was never a better opportunity than the present time when the price of gold is high to ask companies to prepare, side by side with their plans for development, a plan of their proposals to

keep their mines thoroughly ventilated. The Minister and other members with goldfields experience know what dreadful sacrifices have been made by men following the occupation of mining. They know of the agonising death thousands of those men have suffered because of the effects of silica and the generally unhealthy nature of the work. Good and all as the supervision is to-day, there is still room for improvement. The figures given by the Minister are no doubt correct, but there is a reason for the favourable indications they convey. Only a few years ago we commenced to clean up the gold mining industry of all the men suffering from t.b. and other lung complaints. Such men have been gradually weeded out and their places have been taken by new men, young and healthy. Obviously, as time goes on and up to a certain point, the figures will show an improvement, but I warn the Minister that if we do not insist upon better sanitation and ventilation in the mines, there will certainly be a ghastly repetition of past experience. The Minister is enthusiastic and willing; he has witnessed the tragedy in the past, and I ask him to be alive to this need and ascertain what can be done. We have mining engineers and other departmental experts whose experience and capacity as scientists should enable them to do something more than is being done to protect the health of the men in this industry.

I give the Minister credit for the action taken against those who commit breaches of the Mines Regulation Act. It is of little use our trying to protect men by law if the law is disobeyed. A miner might, through neglect to comply with the regulations, commit what is tantamount to suicide, but that is not the worst that can happen as a result of negligence. Such a man may be the means of probably several of his mates losing their lives also. That is the tragic part of it, and I agree with the Minister that, wherever a breach of the regulations is committed, there should be a prosecution. We have taken great pains to devise means to protect the health and lives of the men and they should be obliged to comply with the regulations.

There is another matter the Minister should consider. I do not know whether it is one that can be dealt with by administrative act. I take strong exception to tenures granted under the Act being held up and

kept out of production. Members with goldfields experience know there is a hesitancy on the part of individuals to apply for the forfeiture of a tenure under the Act. They dislike the idea of taking this action. A few years ago when a man applied for the forfeiture of a couple of leases, he was nicknamed "a professional jumper."

The Minister for Mines: There has been any number of forfeitures of leases in the last couple of years.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, but there would be many more if my suggestion were adopted. The old prospector particularly does not like to claim land that is held by someone else. Let me offer the Minister a simple solution. Why Ministers do not adopt it, I cannot understand. Anyone with mining experience can say whether a lease is being worked or not. If no work is being done, it is the easiest thing imaginable to detect the fact. I suggest that if the inspector of mines were permitted to call a lessee before the court to show cause why his lease should not be forfeited for non-compliance with the Mining Act, the difficulty would be overcome. Then, instead of an individual having to apply for the forfeiture of a lease, he could report to the inspector that the lease was not being worked and the covenants were not being complied with, and the inspector could visit the lease, satisfy himself of the facts, and call upon the lessee to justify in the court his right to continue holding the lease.

I have received a remarkable piece of information and should like to know whether it is correct because, if it is, a hardship is being imposed upon a number of prospectors, and this without any real justification. I think this is a remedy recommended to the Minister by his departmental officers in order to protect the interests of the Mines Department, but they seem to overlook the fact that by so acting they are doing the industry an injury. Only recently while at Peak Hill, 70 miles north of Meekatharra, my attention was called to the fact that a man wishing to crush ore at the Peak Hill State battery had first to get permission from the registrar in Meekatharra. Such a requirement is positively stupid. Some of the men had travelled from Labouchere, 45 miles west of Peak Hill, and had to go right to Meekatharra and apply for a permit to crush. The position seems to be that the Government has granted a number of prospectors weekly payments to assist them

in their prospecting. They are State-assisted prospectors. When they obtain assistance from the Government, they are under an obligation to repay the money out of their first crushing. That is where the trouble arises. In order to ensure that they will repay the money, I understand they have to get permission to crush, so that the registrar may inform the manager of the State battery to see that the prospector concerned pays his dues. That is all right. I do not mind the department doing that. But in order to get those individuals—of whom there can be only a few: all the men being assisted by the State would not deliberately evade their responsibilities—

The Minister for Mines: Certainly not. They have paid back £32,000.

Mr. MARSHALL: Under this system they cannot be missed, because they cannot crush without permission. Charge is taken of the gold until payment has been made. I do not complain about that. But observe what is done to those who do not try to evade their responsibilities. They have to go from Peak Hill right down to Meekatharra to get permits to crush. The departmental officers thought this was an easy way to prevent an individual from evading his responsibility, but little did they realise the disability they were imposing upon honest men. The system applies only to prospecting areas, worked by men who are assisted by the State; but by it the department is retarding the efforts of valuable men. I suggest giving some consideration to an alteration of that policy. Certainly where a prospector is successful, he should pay back. Only recently I wrote to the Minister in regard to a demand for payment from an individual previously assisted by the State, but unsuccessful in his prospecting venture. That man found a job at wages, whereupon the Government stepped in saying, "You got £20 or £25 from the State to go prospecting: now that you are working, we expect you to repay the amount." I do not think that is fair. If such a man volunteers to repay, I advise the Minister not to refuse to take the money; but the Minister ought not to press for it.

The Minister for Mines: No man has yet been pressed.

Mr. MARSHALL: Many of these men go to work on wages only for the purpose of accumulating a few pounds which will enable them to go prospecting again. If the Minister's attitude is only such as he has described, I have no complaint to make. The Minister says to a prospector, "I will assist you to the extent of £1 per week; if you are successful, you pay back; if you are unsuccessful, you go free." The prospector's labour at £1 per week is fairly cheap labour; the Minister is getting a really good deal. He backs himself fifty-fifty with the prospector. I hope the Minister will adhere to his statement of to-night and not press such men. I am greatly concerned about two points; the welfare of the industry, and the adverse criticism to which it is being subjected, unduly and unfairly, where we look for investors to give us a fair deal. Further, I feel much concerned about the health of the miners, seeing that my own father and several uncles are lying in Kalgoorlie cemetery. I admit that there has been much improvement in the working conditions of mining. In fact, I have told the young miners down below that they are in a paradise compared with what we experienced. However, the state of the mines should never be neglected, especially as we know to what depths men will go below. There can be no better opportunity for seeing to those matters than the present, when gold is bringing a good price and dividends are fair and the prospects of the industry indicate fair returns. We have wonderful possibilities, almost unlimited possibilities, in the production of gold. If gold is to remain an international unit of value, then its price will never decline to a point where goldmining will become impossible in Western Australia, especially having regard to the improvements in treatment. The prospects of the industry are wonderful.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [9.52]: Before the Vote is put I should like to congratulate the Minister on his generous references to the late Mr. Gregory. I was a colleague of Mr. Gregory's in a Ministry, and I know he was a man who had a most extraordinary love for and knowledge of mining. I fear I am astray in my recollection of who were the various Ministers for Mines in Western Australia, because when

I came here first, I understand, the Minister for Mines was a gentleman named Mr. Marmion.

Mr. Patrick: Was that before responsible government?

Hon. N. KEENAN: No; under responsible government.

The Minister for Mines: You may be right.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not know that Mr. Marmion had the title. I think his title was Minister for Crown Lands. However, he actually was the man, so far as my recollection goes, who gave the first goldmining leases in Western Australia, somewhere up in the far North. The two prospectors of Coolgardie, Bayley and his friend Ford, had been prospecting in the far North and had found payable gold in various places there; but unfortunately the gold they found had not been very permanent. But still they had taken up leases, and Mr. Marmion was the Minister under responsible government who granted them leases. However, that may be, it is a matter of no further importance, but it is gratifying that the Minister should recognise Mr. Gregory's services. Further it is gratifying that the Minister should pay tribute to the prospectors who, particularly in those days, opened up Western Australia. I suppose I am one of the very few men in this Chamber who knew those prospectors. There was a man called Jerry McAuliffe and a man named Deimel whom I suppose no other member of the House ever heard of, but who found the Cosmopolitan Mine.

The Minister for Mines: And there was Tom Doyle.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes, though I do not know what particular mine he found. However, they were the most extraordinarily enterprising men, and in that way differed very much from the men one meets nowadays. Those men asked for nothing except the right to go and search for gold. Troubles galore met them, but they faced those troubles. Kanowna, which was known as White Feather, got its name because the first man who went out prospecting that country found it exceptionally dry—no water hole could be discovered anywhere. They abandoned the country, and were coming in when Jerry McAuliffe and his small party were going

out with camels and met them, and were told that it was impossible country. They went on in spite of all the warnings, and found the White Feather Main Reef and the White Feather Reward. They gave the name White Feather to those mines because the other men ran away.

The men who made Western Australia by daring everything were the prospectors. It was a marvellous thing to live in those days in tents without anything ever being stolen until, unfortunately, in the wake of prosperity, various additions came to the population, and then we yearned for the police to arrive, or if there were no police we used to have a roll-up and let the gentlemen know what would happen if they stayed any longer. But it was a marvellous thing to appreciate that those men, fighting as they had to fight against everything that Nature could produce to oppose them, when they did get anything no question was raised as to who was entitled to it, but they always obeyed the law. There was no such thing as an attempt at force. I remember being at a lake near Menzies, at the Ninety-Mile, and there was then, as very often happened, some cross-pegging of the ground, perfectly honestly, in the bush, and everyone was certain, of course, that he was the first man to put pegs in and that he was the only man who had made his trenches and everything right. They all came down to Coolgardie, which was then the only place in existence, and Warden Finnerty listened to the whole lot and then put his finger down and said, "That lease belongs to so-and-so." The men always took it without a murmur. They were the most astonishingly law-abiding people. So one cannot be too generous in one's references to them and their discoveries. I am glad indeed to hear them praised by the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: Such men are about Nullagine and Pilbara now.

Hon. N. KEENAN: They were men that we have a right to be proud of. And I can always recall how I lived with them, sometimes under most extraordinary conditions. I remember on one occasion when I was extremely ill from the bad water that we drank, one of those old fellows had an unbounded belief in chlorodine, holding that it cured everything, no matter what the trouble was. If you had a bad ankle or a

broken arm, or internal trouble, the cure was chlorodine. The extraordinary thing was that it did work; it was against all the rules of the medical profession, but certainly in my case it proved effective. I pass away from the subject, but I do not pass away from it except with extremely grateful recollections of those men and the hope that their successors will find the reward which some, though only a few, of them found.

I wish to refer to a matter which to me has always been a burning question. It is that some steps should be taken to protect the public in investments in gold mining speculation. There is no gamble in the world more attractive than is goldmining under certain conditions; but there are times when the public go quite mad about goldmining. In 1895 and 1896 land was taken up that could not possibly contain gold, except for the reason that it was on a goldfield. That was about the only recommendation it had. Yet such properties were floated successfully for large sums not only in London, where the ignorant Englishman dwelt, but in Adelaide, where the bright South Australian lives and from where the Minister for Labour came.

The Minister for Labour: Quite right.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It seems to me that almost all those rigs or wild cats, or what ever one cares to call them, would have failed had the public but known the price paid for the property to the first gentleman who became possessed of it. I have known options given over and over again for one shilling. That is all that was paid. The option was properly registered in the Mines Department on a gold mining lease or application for a gold mining lease; and, of course, the man who held that worthless piece of land was only too glad to pass it on for 1s. because he was highly interested in the option which he had granted. There was the possibility that the man to whom the option was granted would sell it to another person and that finally it would reach the stage of being accepted by the public. Then everybody right down the line, to the man who originally took up the land, would be paid. If the public had only known that the first option was granted for one shilling, and that the registration of caveats and other necessary documents was affected to prevent double crossing and not for any

bona fide reason, then in 99 cases out of 100 the flotation never could have been successful. Why on earth should the public come forward and subscribe £50,000 for a property which the documents showed had passed from hand to hand and had started at the price of one shilling? It might be said that that could not be done, but it has been done and done only too often. I have on previous occasions drawn the attention of Parliament to the fact that it could be prevented. Declarations could have been required to be filed showing the nature of the transactions between the various parties and the original holder of the land. The Mines Department, however, has always been satisfied to accept a transfer, and of course, to accept the fees, which are considerable, and not to ask any questions whatever about intermediate transactions. By being dumb, we have enabled the most dreadful swindles to be perpetrated in the name of this gold-mining industry.

The Minister for Mines: Is not the Mines Department governed by the law? Has it the right to make such conditions?

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Mines Department can make any conditions it thinks fit.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think you are right there.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Mines Department can impose on parties to a transfer of a gold mining lease such conditions as it thinks fit. The Companies Act would not touch the people to whom I have referred, because a company would only come into the matter at the termination of the transaction, that is, on the flotation of the property. I noticed in an English paper recently a reference to some propositions that were put before the British public by a certain gentleman. An officer of the Board of Trade in England was appointed to inquire into the value of those properties and he found that the value was grossly overstated. In fact, in one particular instance he said there was no justification whatever for the flotation, as no report had been obtained from any reputable mining engineer.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But the milk was spilt before the report appeared.

Hon. N. KEENAN: This milk was not spilt, it was swallowed. The report followed on action taken by the committee of the Stock Exchange in London. The committee refused to allow any further dealings in the shares

of certain companies, and thereupon those controlling the companies appealed. The result of the appeal was that an investigation was made by an officer of the Board of Trade, who was specially appointed for the purpose, and his report fully justified the action of the Stock Exchange.

Mr. Patrick: It was common knowledge in this State years ago.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The report showed that those propositions were not only worthless, but that they were represented in such a manner as to come as close as possible to the criminal law. For example, the Board of Trade officer said that in one instance no work had ever been done on the lease by the company, but yet the lease had been sold to the public. It had been worked on one occasion, but the person who worked it had thrown it up, as he had not been successful. I do not say for a moment that that would mean the lease was worthless, because in many cases those who take up such leases did not have sufficient technical knowledge.

The Minister for Mines: Quite a number of those leases are being worked to-day.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The men were beaten in the early days by water.

The Minister for Mines: That is so.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Of course; and, there is the great increase in the price of gold. Leases which in my early days were not worth taking up can now be worked profitably; but the price of gold now is £10 an ounce as against £4 an ounce in those days. I certainly welcome any attempt to protect the genuine speculator from being—as he is to-day—fleeced by sharks who attach themselves to the industry. Unfortunately, in boom times anything on earth—no matter how bad it is—can be sold; but at other times the very best mining proposition cannot find necessary support. One can go to Adelaide, which is the home of the speculator—especially the speculator who intends to stick to as much boodle as he can—and even if one has a really excellent proposition, I doubt whether to-day any backing could be found for it, even had the Federal Treasurer given his consent. That is because for the moment mining is unpopular. That belief is sufficient to prevent financiers from even examining a genuine proposition.

I do not want to add anything further, because we shall have an opportunity, if necessary, to discuss the items. I have no reason at all to deprecate our other indus-

tries, but the one industry that has made Western Australia and the one industry that still keeps Western Australia on the map, is the mining industry.

Members: Hear, hear!

MR. LEAHY (Hannans) [10.12]: At the outset, I desire to congratulate the Minister, his staff and officials for the efficient way in which the work of the department has been carried on since the present Minister has occupied his responsible position. Many people seem to be convinced that the prosperity of the goldmining industry at present is wholly and solely due to the increase in the price of gold. Personally, I do not share that view. I believe its prosperity to be due to improved methods in the treatment of low-grade ores, methods which are the result of many years of investigation and experiment. Unquestionably, the mining industry is prosperous to-day. We have heard it said that several mines have closed down, but that occurs in all mining centres. A mine will not live for ever. The industry fluctuates. Some mines peter out quickly, while others continue, as in Kalgoorlie and other places. These mines appear to have a long life before them. I was delighted to hear the remarks of the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan). It pleases me to know that we have a member who still has a kind word for our gallant old battlers. To illustrate how deeply mining enters into the blood and spirit of those men, I may relate a story. One of the older-timers, used to hard living and hard work in the back country, lost his health and came to Perth. He could not be cured and so died. Like all good prospectors, he went straight to Heaven. When he got to the gates, St. Peter asked him where he came from. He said, "From the out-back," and St. Peter asked, "What out-back?" The reply was, "Out-back in Western Australia." Said St. Peter, "What were you doing there?" to which he replied, "I was prospecting." Thereupon St. Peter said, "I am awfully sorry, but Heaven is already full of prospectors, and we have not any more room. We cannot admit any more." "That is bad luck," replied the prospector. "After having battled all my life in the wilderness, I come here and find that the heavenly sphere in which I have looked forward to living my new life is full and I cannot get in." "I cannot help that," said

St. Peter, "but I will tell you what I will do. If you can discover a way of getting one or two of the prospectors out, I will try to get you in." The prospector thought for a while, and then said, "You haven't an old piece of stick and a dish, have you?" "I think we can find some," replied St. Peter. The articles were found and the prospector mounted a stump on the edge of one of the clouds, and began to heat the dish. When he did so, prospectors came from everywhere. They ran around all the corners, and did not seem to be able to get there quickly enough. Some even came without their haloes. They said to him "What have you found?" He replied, "A very rich alluvial patch has been discovered in the other place." Before he had time to give them any further information, there was a general stampede. They were jammed in the gates. As the last of them was disappearing through the gates, the prospector jumped off the stump and followed them. "Hold on," said St. Peter, "where are you going?" The prospector replied, "I'm going with them; it might be true!"

I desire to touch briefly on the improvement in conditions that has taken place in the mining industry, improvements which have made the work in the industry safer than in any period of its history in this State. Safety committees have been continually at work. Members of a central committee, composed of representatives of all types of workers, at all times attend to small matters that crop up, and make every endeavour to improve existing conditions. After the loss of life from premature explosions and deadly fumes that has occurred over many years, what may be regarded as the finest system of firing the world has known has been introduced in Western Australia. I refer to what is termed the firing cartridge. When there are 24 or 25 holes to load with a piece of fraeteur, a considerable quantity of fumes is inhaled, and there is also a danger from running fuses. Tragedies occurred from those causes, but under the new system they are almost impossible. Seven fuses are put into a safety cartridge to which is attached a 6 ft. master fuse. When the time comes, the master fuse is fired, and that fires the other fuses. If 21 holes have to be fired, only three master fuses need to be used. Since the system has been introduced there has not, to my

knowledge, been one fatal accident. There have been a few premature explosions, but in those instances the cartridge system was not in operation. Thus miners responsible for firing are assured that by the use of the cartridge system they are not exposed to a sudden end from an explosion. Safety hats, belts and boots have also been introduced.

Another important improvement has been a shortening of the hours of labour. There is now a break of 48 minutes between shifts. The importance of that will be realised. The time allows the mine to clear so that the ingoing shift will not meet with fumes. Consequently the health of miners is preserved for a longer period than would be the case under ordinary conditions. Under the old system a man could fire at any time. He fired when he liked and did not advise his mates. The Mines Regulation Act has prevented that and compelled men to fire at certain periods, namely, at mid-day and knock-off time, at crib-time in the afternoon shift, and again at knock-off time; and in addition there is the 48 minutes off between shifts.

More supervisors have been appointed. The position is such that we will soon have as many supervisors as miners. The system of examining supervisors is, to my mind, too expensive, and it would be better to bring the supervisors to certain centres rather than have examinations conducted at every centre where one or two men have to be tested. If we have any more supervisors, however, I do not know what will happen. We have enough now to last the goldmining industry for all time.

Reference was made by the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) to the ventilation of mines. I am afraid the hon. member has not been very closely associated with underground mining in recent years. If he had been, he would know perfectly well that there is no comparison between the system now in operation and that which existed seven or eight years ago. Where conditions such as he mentioned exist, if it is too expensive to put another shaft down to take the foul air out of the mine, it is possible to have a system of blowers, which makes a wonderful difference. What has been done at the Sons of Gwalia and the Lancefield mines is an example of what is possible when an honest attempt is made

to improve ventilation. Neither of those mines was fit to work in until the system was introduced. At the 3,700 ft. level of the Lake View and Star Mine the air is quite fresh, showing what an improvement has been effected by the use of the modern system. We know that mining can never be made perfectly safe, but a man who has not worked in a mine for ten years or so would hardly know where he was if he went underground to-day. Although shorter hours are being worked, there is a greater output per man, so that the reduced hours have proved a benefit both to the miner and the mine-owner. Yet when we appealed for a reduction of hours we were told that the granting of the request would mean the end of the mining industry. The fact that more is being produced per man speaks volumes in favour of the shorter working week.

Another important feature of mining to-day is the more extensive use of cheap power. Electricity is being used to such an extent that the cost of mining has been considerably reduced and that in turn is leading to a still further use of this source of power. Air compressors, winding engines, and machinery of all sorts are being driven by electricity, which is also being used to transport ore underground. New systems of treatment of ore have been introduced, resulting in a better extraction, at a lessened cost. Previous to the introduction of these cheaper methods, lower-grade ores were left in the ground. Other improvements have been made, such as the flotation process, which has led to considerable saving in the cost of fuel. The same system is adopted as is practised in Wiluna in regard to the smelting of concentrates. All these improvements, together with good inspection and the oversight of a reasonably good Minister, have tended to make mining what it ought to be. A final suggestion I would like to make to the Minister is that an inspector should be appointed to Norseman, that is, a man who can be continually on the job. The cost would not be very great, and the Minister would be well rewarded.

MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet) [10.29]: I listened to the remarks of the Minister with considerable gratification. However, I still find considerable room for criticism of the

treatment of ore by the State batteries. Some time ago the suggestion was made that the method adopted is obsolete and there is no question about that. To prove that facilities provided by the State batteries, good as they may be, are not all that they could be, I will refer to the Mt. Magnet district. A new 5-head mill was erected there last year, making that a better area so far as milling is concerned. As time went on it was found that the mining company had not sufficient ore with which to keep going. It was then decided to start off on prospectors' ore. The Hill 60 mine is equipped with the most up-to-date method of treating ore. The Mines Department said that the idea of making slimes of that ore was not satisfactory. When the mine itself opened up, we found that it was able to treat 4-dwt. ore at a profit. There is now in Mt. Magnet no 4-dwt. ore that cannot be treated at a profit at the Hill 60 mine, whereas it is impossible to treat it at a profit at the State battery. The State battery department could with advantage take up the question of installing a slimes plant at certain major centres where low grade ore could be treated successfully. Battery facilities are required in other parts of the goldfields such as at Evanston. That particular field has been opened up for only two years, but already £120,000 worth of gold have been taken from the only mine in the district. There are no facilities for treating prospectors' dirt there, with the result that the ore has to be carted 124 miles for treatment. For cartage alone the cost is £2 10s. per ton, and at the other end the ore has to be treated at a private battery. Since the present Minister assumed office, we have been successful in having the price of sands increased from £4 5s. an ounce to £7 an ounce. Those men who get the difference are paying interest at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. during the time the money is advanced to them. In many instances the men complain about the length of time between the first advance and the final payments when the dam is cleaned out. Occasionally the money is held up for over six weeks. If a dam is cleaned out on the 15th of the month, it is reasonable to expect that payment should be made about the 30th of the month. Unfortunately, as much as six weeks have elapsed before the final payment is made

for the sands. It should be easy to arrange that the sands are paid for within 14 days after the completion of the dam.

I support the remarks of the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) on the question of ventilation in the mines. I remember in the early days at Wiluna, when that mine was considered one of the biggest in the back country. The dust trouble was so terrific there that the Chief Inspector of Mines was of opinion that healthy men could only endure work on the mine for three years before being incapacitated as a result of the dust. Dust grains on the slides could not be counted by means of a microscope, so thickly did it lie. There is no doubt that the mine was not ventilated as it was developed. The member for Murchison pointed out that ventilation and development should always occur together. The Mines Department could then check the activities of the company, and there would be no danger of such things occurring. It is easy to look to the ventilation of a mine in the early stages of development, and to carry on that ventilation as the development occurs. Once a mine gets down to 1,000 ft. it becomes a costly matter to make provision for the necessary ventilation. The modern methods of opening up mines, plus the efficient staff now centred in Kalgoorlie, provides a big check on bad ventilation. The management of the Lancefield mine was told that unless an adequate shaft for ventilation was put in, the mine would be closed down. The company immediately set about installing the necessary ventilation. The Government should also see that mine managers do not deplete their ore reserves to the detriment of the mine. Here again I would quote the Lancefield. That is an old mine, one that had been working for many years. It was worked on the open system and pillars of stone were left to support the roof and back. When the new company took over the property, the management decided to salvage the pillars that had been left and treat them. As a result of that policy the mine became dangerous and finally had to be closed down. It is closed to-day because the mine management was permitted to destroy the props and pillars that had been left. It will never be opened again, with the result that the ore at the bottom will be left untouched. I trust the department will keep a close

watch on companies that are prepared to extract the last ounce of ore from the mine and allow it to fall in. If they want to pick out such ore, let them do so by filling in behind and providing adequate support for the roof, etc. No mine should have to be abandoned because the ground has become too dangerous.

I believe that the mining industry is the backbone of the country, as it has been for many years. We all regret the position with regard to some other industries that are not so flourishing as is the goldmining industry. I have just recently completed a trip of about 1,400 miles through the goldfields. I have seen many good shows that are opening up and have an excellent prospect of being successful. The Evanston mine, to which I have already referred, has already produced £120,000 worth of gold during the last two years and the deepest level is only 70 ft. With the existing plant it should be able to recover 2,000 ounces of gold every month. The mine is worked by prospectors who four years ago were farmers and knew nothing about goldmining. They took a chance, however, and were fortunate enough to get hold of this particular show. They should never have to go back to farming. All the old prospectors are not in the North-West, for there are many in the Murchison electorate as well as in my own. I have met men who have been prospecting for 40 years, and who are just as keen on getting gold as they were in the beginning. Some of them told me that the Fuel Control Board had allowed them only 3 gallons of petrol a month although they had to cart water 84 miles. These men have no facilities and are battling away in the back blocks, and that is how they are treated. They have to cart their own material, their water and their stores, and are expected to do that on an allowance of 3 gallons a month. I told them I would call the attention of the Petrol Rationing Board to their difficulties and endeavour to get their allowance increased. They said if they could get 10 gallons a month that would be sufficient for them. I know of people in the city who are receiving 30 gallons a month merely for pleasure purposes. I am not blaming the Fuel Control Board, but I do feel that some people fail to understand the situation that confronts the man outback. The men in the back blocks are en-

deavouring to make a living for themselves, and in the cases that I have cited they certainly will have great difficulty in doing so on the petrol allowance that is given them.

I congratulate the Minister and the officers of the department on the efficient manner in which they have carried out their duties. I look upon that department as the most courteous in the Government service. Nothing is too much trouble for the officers concerned. I have a lot to do with them and appreciate the treatment accorded to me. I trust that when next year's Estimates come before us I shall have just as much occasion to praise them as I have had this evening.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [10.38]: I wish to touch briefly on one phase of the goldmining industry. Once or twice I have had occasion to ask the Minister whether there was a field for the expansion of the industry through the opening up of some of the abandoned shows that have been referred to, whether perhaps a small advance to approved prospectors might enable certain mines to be unwatered and the industry extended.

The Minister for Mines: We are doing that every day.

Mr. McDONALD: No doubt. My interest in the matter has been stimulated by a letter which appeared in to-day's paper. I have never met Mr. Robertson, but he, the writer, referred to the possibility of expanding the industry on a greater scale. I am not expert enough to say how far that could be accomplished. In to-day's paper also is a reference by an American writer to England's capacity to finance the war. That may be a grave problem before long. There is one substance which can be utilised for international finance still, and that is gold. There is a further consideration, that up to 1939 Western Australia had produced in something like 50 years gold to a total of £227,000,000 Australian. That works out at an average price of about £5 per ounce. At to-day's Australian price the same quantity of gold would be worth about £450,000,000 Australian. Gold is the one commodity which, as the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall)

says, still remains in great quantities to be explored. In view of the price, which is phenomenal, and in view of the markets, about which we have no worry, would the Minister and his expert officers consider whether we might not solve our problems to some extent by making some tremendous advance in the expansion of our gold production? Might we not be able to get by way of the Commonwealth something of the excess in the price of gold due to war conditions? I think that is not impossible. If we could do that, and if we could expand our gold production, we might go a long way towards alleviating the financial position of Western Australia. After all, in 50 years we produced gold to a value of £450,000,000, and our total State debt is not yet £100,000,000. This State has yielded £37,000,000 in dividends, reckoning gold at £5 per ounce. At £10 per ounce, the dividends would represent £75,000,000. If we had received those dividends in the last 50 years, we would now have no State debt; everything would have been paid for. All this may be merely visionary, but what I do want the Minister to address his mind to once again—no doubt he has done so already—is this: have we not to-day in Western Australia in our gold industry the most marvellous chance ever offered to any country in the world not only to assist our war effort but to lift our State out of its financial difficulties?

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.45 p.m.