

Legislative Assembly,*Thursday, 29th August, 1935.*

	PAGE
Questions: Railways: 1, Protection at dangerous crossings; 2, Second-hand fruit cases	437
Leave of absence	437
Motion: Bulk handling of wheat, consideration of Royal Commission's report	437
Bills: Bunbury Racecourse Railway Discontinuance, 3R., passed	437
Northern Australia Survey Agreement, 2R., Com. report	442
Brands Act Amendment, 2R.	449

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

QUESTIONS (2)—RAILWAYS.*Protection at dangerous crossings.*

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Has he learned of the decision of the Premier of New Zealand that in the next three years £360,000 is to be spent in unemployment relief, the work taking the form of eliminating some of the dangerous railway crossings? 2, Will he endeavour to institute similar action and thus reduce the menace of the railways to road users in this State?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, A Press report dealing with the matter has been brought under notice. 2, The matter is receiving consideration.

Second-hand Fruit-cases.

Mr. HAWKE asked the Minister for Agriculture: Will he give careful consideration to amending the regulation prohibiting the carriage of fruit on the railway system in second-hand cases, with a view to permitting such cases to be used when fruit is being carried to non-fruit growing districts, such as the goldfields?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: Yes. The regulation referred to received full consideration before gazettal and was brought into force at the urgent request of the W.A. Fruit-growers' Association, who represent all fruit-growers. This body is holding its annual conference next week, and possibly arrangements could be made for the matter to be discussed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Cover-

ley (Kimberley) on the ground of urgent public business.

BILL—BUNBURY RACECOURSE RAILWAY DISCONTINUANCE.

Read a third time and *passed*.

MOTION—BULK HANDLING OF WHEAT.

Consideration of Royal Commission's Report.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [4.34]: A motion on the Notice Paper in my name reads—

That the report of the Royal Commission on the bulk handling of wheat is deserving of the consideration of the House.

I do not think that the motion is in the form in which I moved it.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think it is in order.

Mr. SLEEMAN: What I moved was, "That consideration of the report be made an order of the day for the next sitting of the House." The motion on the Notice Paper infers that I think bulk handling deserving of the consideration of the House. As a matter of fact, I think it is deserving of fairly scant consideration.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is your motion, you know.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I hope that the report—

Point of Order.

Mr. Doney: On a point of order, if the hon. member is going to discuss the report, I submit that he cannot do so on this motion. It is plain that the question before the House, if you, Mr. Speaker, stick to the wording of the motion, restricts us to a consideration of whether the report is deserving of the consideration of the House. That is a different matter entirely from considering the report. I cannot see that the position has been advanced at all since yesterday; in fact, it is the same. The Minister for Lands then moved, "That the House take into consideration the report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the bulk handling of wheat," and to-day we have no advance whatever on that position. Under the terms of the motion, we can go no further than to debate whether the report deserves the consideration of the House. On those grounds I think it is plain that we cannot discuss the report.

Mr. Speaker: The position, as brought before the notice of the House, is quite right. As a matter of fact there has been some difficulty, after what happened yesterday, in framing a motion. I agree that the reference in the motion to the report being deserving of consideration should not be there; otherwise I would be in duty bound to keep members to the point whether the report was deserving of consideration or not. The motion carried yesterday was that the House take into consideration the report of the Commission. The House carried the motion, thus resolving that the report should be taken into consideration. I ruled yesterday that the matter could be considered as a report and as a report only. I will be quite candid by saying that I have been asked what motion will be submitted to the House. The position is that the House may consider the report, but there will be no motion. My ruling of yesterday still stands. I suggest that the member for Fremantle should not move the motion; otherwise the debate will be confined to whether the report is deserving of consideration or not.

Debate resumed.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Speaking on the report of the Bulk Handling Commission, I sincerely hope that the Government will not adopt it. I do not think it will benefit the State generally. It might possibly benefit the farmers, but I am satisfied that the whole of the farmers in this State do not desire bulk handling, especially in the form recommended by the Commission. I believe that the adoption of the report would mean throwing thousands of men out of work, and that the work of bulk handling will prove a very unhealthy occupation. I have seen bulk handling operations at Fremantle, and I believe that such work will prove to be nearly as unhealthy as is work in the gold mines, which, unfortunately, has sent thousands of men to an early grave. There is no doubt about that. I consider that members opposite should have gone to Fremantle to see bulk handling in operation. Whether they support it or not, they must agree that it will necessarily be a very unhealthy occupation to the men engaged in it, owing to the dust. I believe that men will become dusted through engaging in the occupation just as are men who work in the gold mines.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Are you going to move a motion?

Mr. SLEEMAN: No, I am discussing the report of the Commission.

Mr. Sampson: You cannot do that without moving a motion.

Point of Order.

Hon. C. G. Latham: On a point of order, may I ask if the hon. member proposes to move a motion at the end of his speech? Surely there can be nothing before the House unless a motion be moved.

Mr. Speaker: I have already ruled that it has been decided that the discussion of the report was before the House. The House has a perfect right to disagree with my ruling and upset what was done yesterday, if it so desires. I have already explained the position in which I was placed yesterday.

Mr. Sampson: The position would be very embarrassing if a motion were not moved, and I for one—

Mr. Speaker: Do you propose to disagree with my ruling?

Mr. Sampson: No.

Mr. Speaker: Then you cannot discuss it.

Mr. Doney: I move—

That the discussion of the report be made an order of the day for the next sitting of the House.

Mr. Speaker: That was done yesterday. The member for Fremantle may resume his speech.

Debate resumed.

Mr. SLEEMAN: In continuation of my remarks, let me say that it appears to me that the Commission gave very little consideration to the displacement of labour that the adoption of bulk handling will entail. It is true they made some reference to it on page 19 of the report, but they might have given greater consideration to the question of the displacement of labour throughout the State generally, at any rate, as much consideration as they gave to the probable benefit that would accrue to the wheat farmers of the State. Dealing with the displacement of labour, the Commission's report, on page 19, states—

At some of the sidings, under bag handling, from six to 10 men were engaged in carrying out the necessary physical handling of the wheat. During the past two years, at sidings where bulk handling facilities have been installed, the number of men employed by Co-

operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., has been from two to four. According to the information obtained by your Commissioners, very few, if any, additional men have been employed on the farms as a result of bulk handling.

I wish members to take particular notice of that statement. Though men will be put out of work at practically every siding in the country, no extra work will be provided by bulk handling. The report continues—

At the port of Fremantle a fairly large number of men have already been displaced in the partial change-over from the bag handling to the bulk handling system. Owing to the fact that bulk handling has now been in operation for two years, any further displacement of labour which may be brought about by the extension of the system should not be so seriously felt as would have been the case with a sudden change-over.

That is fairly obvious. Anyone would know that if the scheme had been in partial operation for some time, the completion of the scheme would not mean throwing so many men out of work as if the whole scheme had been installed at once. We are all familiar with the song which suggests that another little drink will not do us any harm, and it seems to me that the Commission concluded that the displacement of a few hundred or a few thousand extra men would not do us any harm. Because a system has been in partial operation for some time, they could not see any objection to its being extended throughout the State. The report further says—

Mr. Fox's statements show that approximately two-thirds less men are required to handle wheat in bulk than in bags.

If there is going to be a two-thirds displacement of labour, it is going to be a serious matter for the Government to provide for them.

This has been supported by the manager of the Fremantle Harbour Trust; Nichols & Co., Ltd., stevedores of Fremantle; and by Mr. John Thomson, joint secretary of Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd. Your Commissioners are of the opinion that a further reduction in the number of men required for the handling of wheat in bulk will take place with the erection of proper and more efficient terminal elevators.

At a time like the present we should be seeking means to place more men in employment, instead of throwing men out of work. It would be a bad thing for the State if many men throughout the country were thrown out of work. Unless bulk handling is going to be of benefit to

the State generally, it should not be brought into operation by the Government. The displacing of men will apply not only to Fremantle, but throughout the country. Geraldton will be affected seriously, and Bunbury and Albany to a lesser extent. Up to date I have not seen a statement of what the approximate saving to the farmers will be from bulk handling. I have only run through the Royal Commission's report, and therefore I do not say that this information does not appear in it. However, I have not had much time to examine the document. Hon. members opposite may be able to state the amount of the saving to the farmers. In my opinion bulk handling will displace at least 1,000 workers. Taking them at an average of only £2 per week, the amount involved is large. Moreover, the average of £2 per week is low. Still, even that means a loss of over £100,000 annually in wages. What is to happen to the men displaced and their families? Are the Government prepared to find £100,000 to meet the situation? If so, they will be hard put to it to find the money in order to provide a doubtful benefit to the farmers. The farmers themselves are dubious as to the benefits of bulk handling, and numbers of them do not favour the system recommended by the Royal Commission. I welcome the introduction of any labour-saving machinery if the workers are to share in the benefits therefrom; but time after time we see such machinery installed without any benefit whatever to the workers engaged in the particular industry. We should take stock of the situation and declare that if labour-saving appliances are to be installed either in the wheat or any other of our industries, the workers must receive their share of the benefits. The time has arrived when simultaneously with the introduction of such machinery into an industry the hours of labour of the workers engaged in that industry must be reduced considerably, and provision made for the compensation of workers displaced. Further, those who remain in an industry such as bulk handling, which will prove highly unhealthy, should be compensated out of the profits resulting. The mining industry has cost Western Australia a great deal of money in respect of men disabled by that industry, which so far has contributed nothing towards the support of men broken by it. The tax imposed last year will help to maintain the men disabled in the pursuit of mining. I find that on page 9 of the

Royal Commission's report the profits from bulk handling are stated—

During the wheat season 1933-34 the amount raised by way of the toll referred to was £28,749 5s. 8d. After deducting therefrom interest on debentures, depreciation on country and port buildings and plant, and allowing for other items both debit and credit, which will be more particularly referred to by your Commissioners under Clause 5 (b) of the terms of reference, Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., showed a surplus of £20,676 7s. 6d. on the season's operations.

Therefore I claim that if bulk handling of part of the harvest showed such a profit, something must be done to protect and care for the men who will be ruined in health by the handling of bulk wheat, especially at the terminals. Let some of the profits be taken from the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., which corporations are practically identical, to provide for men broken in the industry. Some of those men will go to an early grave or else be disabled for life. The Opposition should acknowledge the reasonableness of providing for such men and their dependants. Bulk handling will not prove entirely profitable; it involves a loss to which serious consideration has not yet been given. In every shipment of 8,000 tons of wheat, bulk handling involves a loss of 800 tons.

Mr. Patrick: The farmers get a bigger price for bulk wheat.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Not so.

Mr. Patrick: I have the figures here.

Mr. SLEEMAN: It has been proved that bagged wheat shows a gain of 800 tons in a shipment of 8,000 tons, whereas a similar shipment of bulk wheat involves a loss of 800 tons. Again, there is the extra cost to the country of the bulk handling system. The Commissioner of Railways stated last year that 200 four-wheeled trucks had been specially ordered to carry bulk wheat, and that the loss on the railage of bulk wheat, as against bagged wheat, amounted to £17,000 for the year, and this was after taking into consideration the £11,187 additional revenue resulting from the toll of 9d. per ton on bulk wheat. Practically the Railway Department of this country is down £17,000 on partial bulk handling only, even after taking into account the toll of 9d. per ton. The toll is what the advocates of bulk handling are up against. They are prepared to accept everything that is advantageous to them, but they are disturbed at the proposal of the Commissioner of Railways regarding the 9d. toll.

Then comes the question, if we are satisfied that bulk handling will prove a benefit to the State, are we prepared to compensate the men displaced? I fail to see how the Royal Commission's recommendations can possibly be accepted unless provision is made for the men who will be displaced and the men who will be disabled by the bulk handling system. It is all very well for the farmers to say that they accept those of the Royal Commission's recommendations which suit them and that they reject the remainder. The Co-operative Bulk Handling people should be made to pay a fair and reasonable charge for the transport of bulk wheat. Then again, we cannot possibly agree to hand over the control of bulk handling to a monopoly such as recommended by the Royal Commission. Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., I say again, is only another name for the Westralian Farmers Ltd. By the Royal Commission's report I see that nine out of the ten leading men in Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. are also heads of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. Therefore I see no great difference between handing the bulk handling system over to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. and handing it over to the Westralian Farmers Ltd. Most members, at all events on this side of the Chamber, will agree that we should not stand for monopoly. If bulk handling is to be installed, it should be brought about by the appointment of a Government board, on which every section of the community would have due representation. On page 20 of the Commission's report appears the following:—

Had it not been for the foregoing relevant and material considerations already existing with regard to the bulk handling of wheat in Western Australia, your Commissioners would have favoured the vesting of the control of all operations connected with bulk handling in a board somewhat similar to that constituted under the Victorian Grain Elevators Act, No. 4270 of 1934, Section 5.

That is to say, had it not been for the fact that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. were already in possession of numerous places, the Royal Commissioners would have made that recommendation. In passing may I say that on page 6 of the report it is shown how the Victorian Grain Elevators Board is constituted. The relevant passage of the report is as follows:—

The scheme is managed by a wheat commissioner, who is a Government officer, under the

jurisdiction of the Director of Agriculture, and the bulk handling is conducted as a sub-department of the Department of Agriculture. In Victoria investigations into the question of introducing bulk handling in that State have been made by a grain elevators board, constituted by an Act of Parliament to inquire into and instal the system of bulk handling best suited to the conditions applicable in that State. Of the members of the board—(a) one shall be a person (not being an officer of the public service or the railway service) having business training and experience, who shall be chairman; (b) one shall be an officer of the Victorian Railways Commissioners or of the Railway Construction Branch of the Board of Land and Works selected by the Minister from a panel consisting of not less than three such officers furnished to the Minister by the Victorian Railways Commissioners; and (c) one shall be a person nominated as representing the wheatgrowers of Victoria by the Minister, who, before nominating such person, shall have regard to the recommendations (if any) in that behalf of any body or bodies representative in the opinion of the Minister of the interests of the said wheatgrowers.

Thus we see that but for the previous Government having gone behind the back of Parliament, having, I may add, in defiance of the previous Parliament granted sites to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. on the eve of a general election, a very different recommendation would have been made by the Royal Commission. Those grants, having been made on the eve of a general election, were undoubtedly a political sop. But for that political sop the Royal Commission would undoubtedly have advocated that the control of bulk handling in Western Australia should be vested not in Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. but in a board constituted on the lines of the Victorian board. On page 24 of their report the Commissioners write—

(5) The granting of those leases precludes the economic possibility of anyone else competing with Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., in the bulk handling of wheat at those sidings. This bears out my previous statement that because of the fact of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. having got possession of various sites previous to the last general election, it is not worth while now to advocate what the Commissioners consider the better method: namely, the Victorian method. Now let me refer to the Commission's final recommendations—

(1) That Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., be permitted to extend and carry out their proposals for a State-wide scheme relating to the bulk handling of wheat at country sidings.

I declare emphatically that if bulk handling is to be adopted, Co-operative Bulk

Handling Ltd. should not be permitted to control the system in this State. I think we stand for a board of control vastly different from Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. The further recommendations of the Royal Commission read—

(2) That it is imperative for up-to-date orthodox concrete terminal silos of 1,500,000 bushels capacity to be erected as soon as possible at the port of Fremantle, and controlled by the Commissioners of the Fremantle Harbour Trust.

(3) That up-to-date orthodox concrete terminal silos of 500,000-bushels capacity should then be erected at Geraldton, and controlled by the Commissioner of Railways.

(4) That the equipment of the various zones should be carried out in the following order:—Fremantle, Geraldton, Bunbury, and Albany, and that until the terminal facilities to serve these zones have been completed, the construction of the necessary additional bins at railway sidings to make the scheme State-wide should only proceed according to the ability of the Commissioner of Railways to transport the wheat in bulk.

(5) That legislation should be enacted to provide for the protection of those vitally interested in wheat handled in bulk.

If the control of the scheme is to be handed over to Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd, that method will not give satisfaction, and certainly will not provide for the protection of those vitally interested in wheat handled in bulk. This matter was discussed at the recent conference of the Primary Producers' Association, and mention was made of the fact that the Wheatgrowers' Union desired some other means of control to be instituted. I am safe in saying that the Wheatgrowers' Union does not comprise merely half-a-dozen farmers but has a very large membership. They are not satisfied that the present method of control is proper. The Primary Producers' Conference also opposed the proposal. If the interests of all concerned are to be protected, the only way will be by the establishment of a board of control similar to that adopted in Victoria. I claim that it should be a Government board, the members of which could be relied upon to look after the interests of all concerned.

(6) That the doubt which exists as to the effectiveness of a warehouse receipt in conveying title to the quantity of wheat shown in that receipt should, in the interests of all parties, be removed by Act of Parliament.

(7) That serious consideration be given to the proposals of Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., to provide bulk handling facilities at Bunbury and Albany.

(8) That permanent bins to provide for storage facilities equivalent to at least 75 per cent. of receipts at country sidings are necessary.

With regard to the seventh recommendation of the Royal Commission, I have nothing to do with Bunbury and Albany and representatives of those ports can speak for themselves. I predict, however, that it will be many years before either Bunbury or Albany will see the bulk handling of wheat. While, in my opinion, Fremantle and Geraldton will not derive any benefit from the installation of the bulk handling scheme, Bunbury and Albany will be worse off still, for they will not see any bulk wheat at those ports. That is my opinion. There is another recommendation that the Royal Commission forgot and they should have included a ninth, setting out that all wheat cargoes should be certificated. In the past, wheat has been exported that was of a type calculated to spoil the reputation of Western Australia as a wheatgrowing State. On several occasions I have pointed out in this House that wheat that was in a bad condition, had been loaded into ships at Fremantle. Everyone who frequents the port must know that that has been done. The Royal Commission could have made that additional recommendation, in the interests of the reputation of the State and the wheatgrowers themselves. In 1932 a Bulk Handling of Wheat Bill was introduced by the Mitchell Government and when leave was moved to introduce the Bill, the then member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) proposed an amendment to the motion as follows:—

That the following words be added:—“and to provide for the securing and financing in employment of those who lose their positions through the establishment of such system.”

Labour members supported the amendment to the best of their ability, and, on this occasion, I hope that, before the Government adopt the recommendations of the Royal Commission, they will give effect to what was proposed in 1932 by Mr. McCallum. It is not right to displace men in industry unless steps are taken adequately to compensate them or provide for their future. When a number of coal miners were displaced from their employment in New South Wales, they were compensated adequately. The Government of Western Australia should also take steps, before accepting the Royal Commission's recommendations, to see that something is done to safeguard the

health of the men who will be employed in the industry, and provide for them when their health is broken down, or when they are displaced from employment.

On motion by Mr. Fox, debate adjourned.

BILL—NORTHERN AUSTRALIA SURVEY AGREEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [5.7]: While I cannot give whole-hearted support to the Bill, I shall not oppose it. I know what the position is; most of the money to be spent on this work has already been expended. I, in common with other members of the House, cannot shirk my responsibilities in connection with this expenditure, because it will be recognised that we were aware of what was proposed. We were informed of the matter last year, when the Estimates were submitted. While the House ought not to reject a proposal such as that embodied in the Bill, we can only say that we were acquainted with what was to take place. The Bill provides for certain activities and will commit the State to the expenditure of £37,500. I have pointed out repeatedly that this House has no control over the finances of the State, and the present legislation clearly demonstrates that fact. Ministers control the finances of the State, and, after they have incurred expenditure, they come to the House and ask for the necessary authorisations.

Mr. Marshall: Then this is no exception to the rule.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Proposals for expenditure should be submitted to the House before the actual expenditure takes place.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: How could you work on a monthly budget?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is not a question of a monthly budget; it is merely a matter of the Estimates being placed before members at an earlier stage of the session. The money to meet the expenditure of £37,500, which is what the Bill provides for, must come from revenue or loan funds. No doubt it will be derived from loan funds, and we will be asked to authorise the provision of the money when the Loan Estimates are placed before us later in the session.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: If we were forced to wait until the Loan Estimates were before us, we could not function.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If this expenditure is to be provided for in the Loan Estimates, it simply means that we have no control over it, in the circumstances I have indicated, and that is what I am protesting against. The amount involved is considerable.

Mr. Marshall: There was no secrecy about it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I know the House was acquainted with what was proposed. I do not want the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) to inform me of something I have already stated to the House. I have already mentioned that the House was informed of what was proposed when the Estimates were discussed last year.

Mr. Marshall: You did not protest.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No. I accept my responsibility equally with other members of the House. At the same time, if I had entered a protest, I could not have proceeded beyond that mere statement of my opinion. Nor can I go beyond a protest on this occasion. We have been informed that the expenditure of the £37,500 represents portion of £150,000, of which the Commonwealth Government are to provide half. I believe that the bulk of the money will be spent on aerial survey work, which will provide employment for members of the Royal Air Force. If that is so, then the Commonwealth Government should have provided all the funds for that work.

Mr. Marshall: I do not think that is quite right.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: They should have found the money necessary for these operations. According to the Minister's statement, I understand the survey will be undertaken in the Marble Bar and Nullagine areas. Most of that country is easily accessible to prospectors and geologists. If the survey were to be undertaken in the Hall's Creek area, which is more difficult from a prospecting point of view, some benefit might have been derived from the undertaking. As it is, I doubt very much whether the survey will be of much practical value. The country around Marble Bar is similar to that about Hall's Creek. It is very undulating, with stiff hills and almost entirely covered with spinifex. It

is extremely doubtful whether, under those conditions, any information of value will be obtained. It is well for members to know what it is proposed to do. The Minister informed us that it was intended to pay for geological and geophysical survey, as well as the aerial survey. Who of us knows anything about the science of geophysics? I doubt if the Minister himself really knows what the science is. I have asked a number of people, and they have not been able to inform me.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Did you ask the member for Murchison?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I believe the member for Murchison talked about the science.

Mr. Marshall: No, I did not.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: In order to enlighten myself, I looked up the latest edition of Webster's Dictionary, and I found that the definition of geophysics was—

The physics of the earth, or the science treating of the agencies which modify the earth, including dynamical geology and physical geography; especially, the causes which bring about the movements and warpings of the surface of the lithosphere.

That may enlighten members, but I doubt if, in view of the inclusion of the word "lithosphere," they will really be fully aware of the meaning. To complete my knowledge, I looked up that scientific term, and I found that it means the solid part of the earth.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Now we understand the position.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I hope I appreciate the fact that I live at a time when science can materially assist us in the work that we are called upon to undertake. But I am doubtful whether the application of this particular science, of which so little is known, will be of much avail. Apart from those who have held the position of Minister for Mines and a few of the departmental officials, I am sure very little is known of what has been done in connection with surveys already made and reported upon. A few years ago a geophysical survey was made in the Northampton district. What was done about that survey? Was there any result at all from it? We have heard of nothing. Had anything been found as a result of that survey, no doubt we should have been told of it. It seems that by the use of this science, we are led to believe there are no mineral values

in that part of the State. But I believe this science is much the same as that which was used at one time for locating water. I should like to give my own personal experience of that. A gentleman came along with a most elaborate machine, offering to locate water in certain agricultural areas, and a road board with which I was connected engaged him to do so. He set up his elaborate instrument and covered it with an umbrella in order to protect it from the rays of the sun. After he had been employed on this search for a period, and after we had paid him for his services, he left the State. Subsequently he wrote to us from a foreign country informing us that he did not think it advisable that we should sink wells in the area he had examined, because his scientific instrument was not entirely reliable. At all events, he was honest about that—after he had left the State.

Mr. Sleeman: Did he charge you for his services?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, and we paid him. We were allowed to believe that this was a science on which we might rely. On the other hand, we are given to understand that the present geophysical survey is quite a new science. Still, whatever benefit it may have to bestow, the examination or investigation should be confined to a smaller area than that proposed. In this State it is proposed to investigate 10,000 square miles.

Mr. Marshall: And in each of the areas to be examined—Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: At all events it is to be 10,000 square miles in this State. We are to find £37,500, and no doubt it will cost more than that, because only a very small portion of the Commonwealth contribution will be spent in this State. I wonder how much benefit we are to receive from it? I suggest to members representing mining areas that if this £37,500 were made available to them for surveys by practical geologists, and prospectors—whose work I value even more than that of the geologists—I dare say we would have a great deal more benefit than we are likely to get from the present proposal. I do not often agree with the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall), who spoke last evening, but on this occasion I believe he was right when he said that most of the money will be blown out

through the exhaust of an aeroplane. I really believe that is where most of this money will go, although I hope I am wrong in that. We are now using the air for so many purposes, such as photography and the like, that the survey may prove to be useful in a number of directions other than the locating of mineral deposits; but to think we are going to discover by this experiment what is underneath the soil is to be too credulous altogether. Frequently we hear of persons claiming the power to locate minerals in a given district, but invariably those persons require Government assistance. The only reply to them should be that if they have that power, they should go to the goldfields and make wealthy men of themselves. But they do not do that. In my view, if this geophysical machine is so wonderful, private companies will readily employ it and those capable of operating it, for there is any amount of money available for the discovery of minerals.

The Premier: Do not you realise that you are thinking in the dark ages?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am glad to know the Premier himself is a convert to this new science.

The Premier: I am a convert to all scientific investigation.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Then I hope I am at one with the Premier in that respect. But so far we seem never to have had any material benefit from these geophysical surveys.

The Premier: Has anything ever been proved without investigation?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, I believe the geologist has materially assisted us. But after all, he does not put down the bore; neither does he turn over the soil. He locates the deposit from the nature of the soil at the surface. He has intimate knowledge of it because he is walking over it and can follow the lodes of greenstone and other significant features. But this proposed observation is to be made from the air, an observation of steeply undulating country covered with spinifex. Then these people who are versed in the science of geophysics come along with their instrument. If the instrument is so valuable, why do not the mining companies employ it? Yellowdine was not found by that means.

Mr. Cross: The Sons of Gwalia recently carried out a geophysical survey.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: So far as I know, all the important mines have been discovered

by methodical examination. I hope nothing more will be done until this science has proved its worth. The sum of £37,500 is a large amount for this State to find, which may be wasted. If the geophysical survey is of any value at all it would be far better to explore country which is not so easily accessible to men on foot or in a motor truck as, for instance, the country around Hall's Creek. Personally I look on this proposal as a waste of public money. It may have some value, it may have a value to the Federal Government in that it will give experience to their aircraft, to the Royal Air Force. But if it has that value, why do not the Federal Government pay the whole cost themselves? To my mind that is probably the greatest value to be found in this proposal. Then of course it may also have a value as an experiment; but if that is looked for, we should confine it to a small sum of money just sufficient to determine the value of a restricted area. Even then, it would have so wide a value that it should be, not for the State, but for the Federal Government to carry out. I hope that in future the State Government will not agree to spending money in this direction while so many men are out of work. This £37,500 would provide work for a year for 187 men at £200 per annum. And the man on the goldfields, the person who goes out prospecting and is a good prospector, would probably find a great deal more gold by immediate contact than will those men in aeroplanes with their aerial photographs, and this geophysical instrument the value of which is very indefinite. I have told the House of the man who undertook to find water for us with such an instrument, and who had to cover his machine with an umbrella to preclude its being affected by the sun; and who, having collected money from us, departed from the State and then advised us not to sink wells, because his instrument was not altogether reliable. This proposal before the House is a national, not a State matter. I am afraid we enter too readily into many agreements with the Federal Government. The Minister for Lands, speaking the other night, remarked upon the relationship between the Federal Government and the State Government, and what the Federal Government forced the State to do. It demonstrates to me that the Federal Government are expecting far too much from the State Government. If the

Federal Government want this work done, they themselves have far better means of finding the money than has the State; they can do it out of revenue, whereas we have to do it out of loan funds.

Mr. Lambert: They are using their aeroplanes.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, they are training their aviators, and so in consequence they are losing nothing by the scheme, because it is just as well for those men to be flying in the north of Australia as to be flying about Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. I think the Federal Government might at least have found the whole of the money required. I regard it as a huge experiment, and I fear the State will have to pay too much for that experiment. I hope that in future such agreements as this will not be entered into until the House has had opportunity to consider them. We have to authorise the expenditure. Members of this House represent the people, and so have to authorise all expenditure. Yet these agreements are first entered into by the Government and then we are asked to ratify them. I am not blaming the present Government nor, for that matter, any other Government, for the practice has been in vogue for many years past. It is different, of course, in any emergency, when the money has to be spent without delay, as, for instance, when the Minister for Railways had to expend a large amount on railway washaways. But I hope the Government will not enter into agreements until this House has had an opportunity of listening to both sides of the question. I should like the Minister to tell us the result of previous geophysical surveys made in this State, as, for instance, that in the Northampton district.

The Premier: Advances in science may entail many years of investigation with no definite result, and yet ultimately be to the world's benefit.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Of course so. After all, this is a national matter and if it is of any value the Federal Government should find the whole of the money; but they never find any money where there is any risk. The money they are putting up for this proposal is really to be expended on the training of their aviators—at all events, that is how I regard it. I am opposed to the Bill, but we have no option to agreeing to it, for the Minister for Mines on

last year's Estimates told us what was happening, and we did not object. So I say we ourselves are responsible for the expenditure; because we knew what was happening, and so we ought to accept the responsibility of authorising the expenditure of this money.

MR. LAMBERT (Yilgarn - Coolgardie) [5.30]: I more or less share the views expressed by the Leader of the Opposition. I doubt whether the expenditure in question is justified. If it is justified, then it is a national matter. There should be a national mapping of the minerals of Australia. Probably in other countries people have a better knowledge and appreciation of the minerals of Australia than Australians themselves have. That was brought home forcibly during the war. What useful or economic purpose can be served by having a geophysical, a geological, or an aerial survey of the central part of Australia when we have minerals available that cannot be placed on the market with economic advantage? It must be admitted that year after year the Geological Department have been doing wonderful work with but a scant staff. The staff has been merely a skeleton one. No attempt has been made to supplement that staff by getting men with physical and chemical knowledge of our rock structures so that they might indicate how our minerals could be usefully or economically employed. Of what use is it to go to Central Australia to locate some mineral deposit?

The Acting Minister for Mines: Do you regard the Pilbara goldfield as being in Central Australia?

MR. LAMBERT: That was the second goldfield discovered in this State. Its geological structure is fairly well known to all the officers of the Mines Department. I do not know that a geological survey would serve any useful purpose. If I thought otherwise I would be the last to condemn an expenditure of this description. The Federal Government must realise that in our present economic position in the Federation of Australia the only way they can assist our mineral industries is either to give them the same protection that is given to secondary industries in respect of the raw materials that are economically and commercially consumable in Australia, or pay a bonus on production. We know that the

State Railway Department have tried to assist our mineral industries by offering favourable freights to the seaboard, and this action has made it possible in some directions to work such minerals economically and commercially. That is only playing with the business. No man with any sanity would put a shilling into one mineral deposit in Western Australia. The Government would be better employed in asking the Federal authorities to give a bounty upon the production of manganese to the extent of £1 per ton, just as they are giving bounties for sugar production and other things. Instead of doing that, they are rooting up a railway. That is a matter of policy and one that I hope will be justified in the future. So far as the application of geophysics scientifically to the assistance of the ordinary miner is concerned, I am doubtful whether that will have any practical effect. We have had cranks who believe in the divining rod. I remember one man, a brother-in-law of an ex-Premier, who spent thousands of pounds trying to prove that the divining rod was a practical way to find big gold mines in Western Australia. The records would show that the experiment cost the Mines Department a considerable sum of money. The gentleman in question may have enjoyed himself walking around with a divining rod, just as some of the officers of the Federal Government may enjoy flying over Central Australia in military aeroplanes, but I do not think they should derive that enjoyment at a cost to Western Australia of £37,500.

The Premier: Nearly all great discoveries in history were made by men who were described as cranks.

MR. LAMBERT: That may be so. The Premier might suggest that I have made some great discoveries myself. There is a wider phase of this question to be considered. The State Government have a legitimate right to make the Federal authorities realise they cannot have things both ways. If national mapping is to be useful and economical, whether for non-ferrous industries or otherwise, it must be regarded as a national obligation. Such a work is long overdue, but not at the expense of a State that is struggling to balance its Budget when the Federal authorities through their protection and Customs and Excise revenues have an overflowing Treasury. We should hesitate. An even wider

aspect of the proposal looms up on the horizon. Why should the Federal authorities interfere in our mining industry? If they are going to do so, it will not be long before they will want to take over the Mines Department, especially if we give them this authority to spend money. We should call a halt and tell the Federal Government clearly but firmly that if there must be a national mapping of the country, whether it be a matter of employing geophysicists, aeroplanes or aerial photography, it is a question for them. The work will be of no practical use. Whilst I agree that probably the work will absorb a few more unemployed, I think there is an important national aspect of the question to consider. We do not want to narrow the thing down to a question whether we can employ Smith or Jones by spending this money. We should tell the Federal authorities, as we have been attempting to tell them at the expense of considerable sums of money at the fountain head of the Empire, the Imperial Parliament, what their responsibilities are. If they are prepared to allocate a certain sum of money for what they consider is a useful work, it is for us within the four corner pegs of our Constitution rights to say, "You give us a sum of money, and it will be for us to direct its expenditure."

THE ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES

(Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet—in reply) [5.43]: There is a good deal of error in the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie, and some of the statements of the member for Marchison also require correction. I certainly think this programme may be regarded as a practical one.

Mr. Marshall: To have as many people in the air as possible.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: There is nothing new about aerial photography. It has been particularly successful in indicating conditions of the earth that could not be found by anyone walking over it.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is admitted.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: I was very much struck by an article I read in the Royal Geographic Magazine last year. This work published aerial photographs of a portion of South America. These have led to the discovery of an

old city. The walls and foundations of the ancient city stood out as clearly as the pattern on the carpet on this floor. When the aeroplanes were flying over the earth there was no evidence whatever of the existence of the city beneath.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I agree that aerial photography is valuable.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: The aerial photography is the first work. When the photographs are developed the geologist gets to work, and makes a detailed geological map of the field. The member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie stated that the Pilbara goldfield was the second to be discovered in this State. Our goldfields are very old. The Pilbara field has not been geologically mapped, and much of it has not been mapped at all. This scheme prepares the work for the geologist on the ground. The work of geologists has been made more successful because of material furnished by means of aerial photography. As a result of aerial photography a geologist attached to the Mines Department advised that he had discovered possibilities which caused him to recommend that the department should reserve the area in question, so that anyone who wanted it would have to pay a fee to take it up as some compensation for the expenditure incurred. I did not agree to that. I regarded the work as one which would be of assistance to prospectors. It was our business, I thought, to make the information available, and I did not think a reserve was desirable in the circumstances. I do not pretend to know all about the geophysical aspect of this question. The Leader of the Opposition was wrong when he stated that private enterprise did not employ this science. I would point out that private enterprise is doing that in Western Australia to-day. There are certain reserves for that purpose. When the geologist has completed his work, then the geophysical expert follows.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I will guarantee that better results are obtained with the diamond drill.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: Companies have used the knowledge that has been acquired by the geophysicist for diamond drilling. I do not know very much about the principle, but it is very much in operation in America and other countries. There the scientist is employed first.

The Minister for Justice: And as a result, where a million dollars was previously spent in surveys, the work can now be done for 50,000 dollars.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: I have discussed the subject with a mining man from South Australia, and I have been given to understand that geophysical prospecting is not by any means despised in America. The geophysicist cannot, and does not, claim to be able to locate gold or other precious metals directly. The indications obtained with the instruments he uses merely show the presence or absence of structural features favourable to the occurrence of deposits of economic minerals such as shear zones, faults, lode channels and quartz reefs. It is claimed that this has been done in America. Dr. Woolnough recommends the work, and he suggests that the Kimberley country should be tested in this way with regard to oil. So what can we here do against an opinion such as that? It might be claimed that the Commonwealth Government are doing this work for our benefit, a work which experts declare to be valuable and which provides a foundation for development in the future. As I have said the experts do not claim to be able to locate gold, and it is not like divining for water. With such machinery as he possesses, the expert claims to locate formations by some magnetic principle. What would hon. members have said a few years ago if anyone had prophesied the developments of to-day? We read now that Marconi has invented a ray by which a motor car can be stopped in the street. Who would have thought that possible a few years ago? We know that this is a marvellous age, and that the last 15 years have been marvellous years in the world's history. Things which 40 years ago we regarded as impossible are looked upon to-day as being commonplace. Cranks have not made all these discoveries, but there are cranks and cranks.

Hon. C. G. Latham: But you do not tell us how many cranks have failed.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: I would not like to say that the hon. member is a troglodyte; he would not like that, but I do not think we have any right to despise this particular science. People elsewhere do not despise it; they take advantage of it.

The Minister for Justice: And they make use of it.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: While it may not do all those things people expect of it, we should rather encourage it. What is the expenditure of £37,000 in this country if we discover a new goldfield?

Hon. C. G. Latham: And what if we don't?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: If we discover one mine, what is £37,000?

Hon. C. G. Latham: If you used known processes you would perhaps discover a dozen.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: If this comprehensive survey can present greater opportunities to the prospector will it not be a good thing for Western Australia? The hon. member knows that it is a very small mine that will produce only £37,000 worth of gold. There are dozens of mines in this country that produce that quantity of gold in a few months. I am surprised at the hon. member taking exception to the Bill. I do not deny that the Commonwealth Government might have given more, but I think the greater portion of the money that has been allocated will be spent here. Certainly the expenditure on this work will be greater in Western Australia than in any other part of Australia.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We have been very mild in our opposition to the Bill.

The Minister for Justice: We like to be up-to-date.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: The agreement has been made, and that is the position.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And you have spent the money.

The Premier: How much did it cost the State to find out what our lands were capable of producing, and all the time we were supposed to know all about them?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR MINES: The agreement has been entered into, and if the expenditure of £37,000 will mean the opening up of one mine, then the surveys will have paid for themselves. I hope members will raise no further opposition to the measure.

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—BRANDS ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 27th August.

HON. P. D. FERGUSON (Irwin-Moore) [6.0]: Thank God there is nothing geophysical about this Bill. This Bill to amend the Brands Act, with its twin, the amendment of the Droving Act, have been designed, obviously, to assist in the prevention of sheep stealing. Sheep stealing, as members know, has assumed very considerable proportions in the agricultural districts during recent years. I venture to say that the numbers of sheep that have been stolen amount to many thousands per annum, representing a tremendous loss to the sheep owners of those districts. Those who carry on this nefarious practice of sheep stealing have mainly confined their activities to the farming districts; because it is not worth while stealing a mob of sheep unless you have opportunity to dispose of them, and most of the available markets for stolen sheep are in or about the metropolitan area, or those districts where sales are conveniently accessible. Consequently, the practice, as we know it in the farming districts, is not so prevalent in the pastoral areas, on account of their remoteness from marketing facilities. In the city and suburbs the Government provide in the Police Department powerful and fast-moving motor cars for the prevention and detection of crime. That is as it should be. But I suggest that if this legislation is to be effective, something similar will have to be done in the agricultural areas as well. Just as the Bentley cars in Perth have been a huge success, so I suggest that if fast motor bikes were provided for use in certain vulnerable parts of the agricultural districts, great benefit would result. I urge on the Minister for Agriculture that if the Bill is to prove as successful as he and I hope it will, it will have to be implemented in some more satisfactory way through the Police Department than obtains to-day, because of the inadequate means of transport the police officers have at their disposal. Most of the sheep stolen in agricultural areas are transported by means of motor trucks, and it is hopeless for a policeman on a slow horse to attempt to overtake a sheep thief on a fast motor truck. I happen to know that the present Commissioner of Police is intensely interested in this problem. In the process of working up from policeman to head of the depart-

ment, he has had lengthy experience in rural areas and knows quite well the position existing there. So he is willing and anxious to do everything he can to minimise the loss the farmers are sustaining by this practice. But I do not know that he can ever hope to cope with it, unless his officers are provided with powerful, fast motor bikes so that they may be in a position to overtake the sheep thieves on motor trucks. If fast motor bikes cannot be provided in every one of the country districts, they should at least be furnished in various country centres such as Geraldton, Moora, Northam, Merredin, Narrogin, Donnybrook and other places where they could be tried out. I believe the success that has attended this use of motor bikes in other countries would astonish the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Police, and I feel it would have a greater effect in the prevention of this crime of sheep stealing than would any other remedy. This measure, which I hope to see placed on the statute-book, backed up by sufficient means of policing it, would go a long way towards decreasing the crime so much in evidence at present. I mentioned that in most of the stealing going on to-day, the sheep are being transported by motor trucks and marketed as quickly as possible. In certain instances where that has proved impracticable to the sheep thieves, they have used another method, slaughtering the sheep and having them marketed in the fresh meat market in the metropolitan area. Then it is only in the disposal of the skins, if the thieves are brave enough to market them, that they can ever be detected. So the provisions of this measure, together with the wool branding of the sheep, are entirely necessary. I also believe that a very useful deterrent to the sheep stealer would be a much heavier fine than is imposed to-day when a thief is convicted of stealing. The maximum fine is fairly stiff, though, in my opinion, not heavy enough, but the minimum fine is altogether too low. If the minimum were increased considerably, it would be advantageous. One clause provides that wool-branding shall be compulsory, but ear-marking is not compulsory. Those members who have had experience of the ear-marking of sheep know that certain ear-marks which are particularly plain retain their shape throughout the age of the sheep, but owing to the many thousands of

ear-marks that are registered, it is not possible for every sheep-owner to have an ear-mark that easily retains its shape throughout the age of the sheep. Most of them, after two or three years, lose their shape to such an extent that the original ear-mark is unidentifiable. In South Australia there is no compulsory ear-marking of sheep; the only compulsion there is the wool brand, which is provided for in this Bill. I hope that the measure will meet with the approval of members and that, in conjunction with ear-marking, the compulsory branding of wool will prove so beneficial that no farmer in the State will have any objection to adopting it. Under the Bill, a breach of the Act will be committed if any sheep-owner does not wool-brand his sheep, and they must be wool-branded within three months of shearing. I suggest that three months is too long a period.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I know of no sheep farmer in this State who does not brand his sheep within about 24 hours of their being shorn. It is possible that some might finish their shearing before they do any branding, but that would be a matter of only a few days. The period of three months could well be reduced. I suggest that a wise provision would be to make the measure applicable to the farming areas only. The boundaries of the farming areas almost coincide with the boundaries of the South-West land division, and an extension could be specified to take in the few farming districts outside that division. Under the Bill it will be illegal for any person to have in his possession skins from which the ears have been removed. I consider that that is one of the best provisions in the Bill. Under existing legislation, it is illegal to mutilate or crop an ear, but an ear might be mutilated or cropped without being removed. As I pointed out earlier, earmarks lose their shape to such an extent that some of the earmarks registered in this State might easily be mistaken for a mutilated ear. That, of course, is not illegal, but under this measure if an ear were removed—and sheep thieves remove the ears as soon as they skin a sheep—it would constitute a breach of the Act. The sheep thief who wants to market the result of his depredations in the fresh meat market of the metropolitan area

will not be able to market the skins unless he leaves the ears intact, and by the markings on the ears, farmers will be able to recognise their sheep, and recognition will be made doubly sure by the requirement of compulsory wool-branding. I realise that the Bill is going to cause the farmers some hardship. Quite a number of farmers do not register a wool brand, and I regret that that is so. While it will be necessary for every farmer to register a wool brand, I feel that great good will accrue to those people who in the past have lost large numbers of sheep through the depredations of sheep stealers. A few farmers will be put to the trouble of registering a brand and of having a brand made. This will involve some cost, but it will be small compared with the benefit that will be derived by many farmers who, in the different districts, have been losing scores of pounds through having sheep stolen. There are one or two alterations that I think might be made to the Bill in Committee, but I support the second reading and hope to see the Bill placed on the statute-book, because I believe it is calculated to achieve a great deal of good in minimising the evil of sheep stealing, which is so prevalent in the agricultural districts at present.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.