

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 28th August, 1928.

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

QUESTION—SALE OF GOVERNMENT PROPERTY ACT.

Mr. ANGELO asked the Treasurer: What were the amounts standing to credit of the various accounts operating under the provision of the Sale of Government Property Act, on the 30th June last?

The TREASURER replied—

Government Property Sales Fund, 1927-28.

Item and Credit.	£	s.	d.
Main Roads Board—Salaries and Incidentals	150	0	0
Roads and Bridges	2,650	16	2
School Buildings	4,606	8	1
Claremont Hospital	735	7	1
Hospitals Generally	1,249	3	3
Police Stations	1,856	5	2
Court Houses	261	13	2
New Furniture	182	1	5
Additions and Renovations	2,055	3	5
Rocky Bay Extension	2,600	0	0
South Beach Repairs	38	12	5
Geraldton Jetty	56	4	9
A. & R., North-West	88	17	8
Carnarvon Jetty	57	19	5
Foreshore Protection	16	17	9
Wyndham Jetty	0	9	11
Onslow Water Supply	526	11	3
Ravensthorpe Smelters	24,140	11	10
Beacons and Buoys	607	6	0
Total	£41,880	8	9

QUESTION—GROUP SETTLEMENTS, OVERHEAD CHARGES.

Hon. G. TAYLOR (for Mr. J. H. Smith) asked the Minister for Lands: Is it a fact that overhead charges plus capitalised interest represent 25 per cent. of the total charges against group holdings?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied Generally, no. Under the heading "Overhead charges" are included fodder for group horses, general wages (carting, etc.) horse hire, freights, plant and tools, and sundries during the sustenance period which might more properly be shown as a general group charges divisible over all holdings.

QUESTION—LAND CLEARING.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH asked the Minister for Lands: 1, How many acres of land to be cleared under Agricultural Bank conditions were authorised for the period 1st July, 1927, to 30th June, 1928? 2, What area had been let (a) to Australians and Britishers, (b) to foreigners during that period? 3, Of the total area authorised for the period mentioned, what acreage remained unlet at 30th June, 1928? 4, What area has been authorised since 30th June, 1928? 5, How much has been let to date? 6, Of the total area authorised for the period 1st July, 1927, to date, how much has been cleared by (a) owners or applicants, (b) contractors?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied 1, 403,640 acres. 2, No record. Borrowers make their own contracts subject to the proviso that British labour must be employed if obtainable. 3, No record. 4, 89,214 acres. 5, No record. 6, No record.

BILL—COAL MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Mr. Wilson and read for first time.

BILL—ABATTOIRS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. H. Millington—Leederville) [4.37] in moving the second reading said: Although generally speaking the Abattoirs Act, which came into force in 1909, has worked smoothly, yet experience has shown that certain amendments are necessary to give statutory power to effect requirements. For instance, at the Midland sale yards, which have been established in association with the abattoirs there, fees are very properly charged for the upkeep of the sale yards

But it is found that no statutory authority exists to enable us to collect fees. Obviously, therefore, such power should be taken. The Bill also provides for the establishment of sale yards for stock in any abattoir area that may be proclaimed. At the present time, the department controls the sale of stock, other than horses and milch cows. It is not proposed to alter this.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Bill seems to alter it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, it is not proposed to alter it. At the present time, an amicable arrangement exists between the stock agents and the department. Still, it is deemed wise to take action in order to have statutory power, as in the other States. In the Eastern States, the respective Governments have statutory power enabling them to control sale yards. This obtains in each capital city of the Commonwealth, Perth being the only exception. Experience has shown elsewhere, as here, that abattoirs and saleyards for stock other than horses and milch cows are complementary, the one to the other. This is a simple amendment, but one that is very necessary. It is clear that we should have the authority that exists elsewhere, and so come into line with the Eastern States.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No. God save us from the Eastern States.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Even so, our own experience affords sufficient justification for the amendment. We have been fortunate in being able to arrive at an amicable arrangement with the stock agents. The fact remains that we should have the power, since sale yards must of necessity be associated with abattoirs. It is time the Act was amended so that we shall have the necessary power, not only to control the saleyards, but to charge necessary fees. Another amendment in the Bill provides that the Minister shall have power to issue licenses in special cases for killing specified classes of stock elsewhere than at an abattoir. The necessary discretionary power to meet exceptional circumstances does not exist at the present time. Difficulty has arisen, mainly in connection with small pig growers, who find it most difficult to get their stock to the abattoirs. In administering the Act I have found it necessary that this difficulty should be overcome by the issue of permits. It has arisen in the metropolitan area and other districts. The circumstances have been such that we have had to grant these permits, but of course it is obvious

that where such power is desirable, the power should be contained in the Bill. It means a slight amendment to the Act in order that these permits may be granted.

Mr. Mann: And making provision for the inspection of the carcasses.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That has to be done, of course. It is done at the present time, but we want power vested in the Minister to grant these necessary permits.

Hon. G. Taylor: In the parent Act, similar provision was strongly opposed by the member for Guildford.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In the main it is desirable that the stock should be killed within the abattoirs boundaries.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: This will give power to license any sale yard.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, it will not. At present we are practically compelled to issue certain licenses without statutory authority, because it would be imposing undue hardship on the producer if the license did not issue. In some cases the growers are situated practically 20 miles from the abattoirs, although within the abattoirs boundary. In the case of a small grower, it would mean he would be put to much trouble and prohibitive expense. If these powers are not granted, the industry is not likely to remain in existence. It does not pay the small man to shift one or two pigs to the abattoirs, whereas it does pay him to fatten a few stores, and kill them on his own premises in his spare time. It will be of great assistance to a man who is endeavouring to make a living if he is allowed to do this sort of thing. I do not suggest that this practice should be made general. There would have to be special circumstances before these licenses were granted.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I suggest this Bill gives powers that are altogether too wide.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am sure that anyone who is administering the Act will take care to see that the interests of the abattoirs are safeguarded.

Mr. Teesdale: Would these special licenses be given to outsiders, to a number of small growers?

Hon. G. Taylor: To anyone.

Mr. Teesdale: An avalanche of inspectors would be required to look after them.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Unless arrangements can be made for proper inspection, licenses of this kind will not be given. In some cases growers take their animals to the abattoirs and have them inspected. In other cases they can arrange for an inspector to be on the spot when the animals are being killed. That must be provided in any case. Permits that have been given under the Health Act have been strictly observed. There has been no difficulty in the past. This Bill will merely authorise something that is already being done.

Hon. G. Taylor: How many small abattoirs come under the parent Act?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There are some private holdings at a considerable distance either from the Midland or the Fremantle abattoirs. Special circumstances must exist in all cases. There is a disposition on the part of those controlling the abattoirs to cause all stock to be driven into them.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is the intention of the parent Act.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We must either have the right to license these premises or the industry will be wiped out of existence. We have the right to prescribe regulations that will conform to the amended Act. Unless these people have a permit to kill their pigs, the industry will die. We have to decide the matter in the interests of those engaged in the primary industry of pig raising. The Bill deals particularly with that industry. Where permits have not been granted in connection with the industry in the past, those engaged in it have gone out of it. Only where permits have been granted have people continued in it. We have had experience in the past. No matter who is in control of the department, I am sure he will safeguard the interests of the abattoirs as well as the health of the people.

Mr. Mann: I think you have been doing this successfully by allowing small growers at Wanneroo to slaughter pigs at Bantock's instead of taking them to Midland Junction.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The idea is that they shall kill on their own premises under certain conditions.

Mr. Thomson: Do you propose to apply its provisions to sales of stock in the country?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Within the abattoir area.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It does not say that.

Mr. Thomson: What will you do with country districts where there are three or four saleyards?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Licenses will be issued there just as they would be elsewhere. The real reason for the amendment is that at present we have no power to charge fees in connection with saleyards. Such premises must be associated with abattoirs.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: This gives you power to say that people shall not sell stock on their farms without the permission of the department.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Oh no. These things can be explained in Committee.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You will not get the Bill there if you do not explain them now.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We have had to act in contravention of the law ever since the Act was passed, so far as saleyards are concerned. The Bill will perpetuate the existing practice and legalise it. It is not proposed, if the necessary safeguards do not exist under the law, to interfere with present arrangements as regards saleyards dealing with horses, milch cows, etc. It is necessary, however, to take this power in the case of stock that is slaughtered for human consumption. We should certainly have power to control abattoirs. If we have abattoirs we must have saleyards associated with them, and must have the right to charge fees and control them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I do not think the House will agree that fees shall be charged for the sale of stock all over the State.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Fees would be charged only in the instances I have mentioned. There will be no alteration with respect to saleyards. These are two very simple but necessary amendments.

Hon. G. Taylor: They are very far-reaching.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: These licenses must be given, otherwise an injustice will be done to those who are engaged in the pig-raising industry.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I do not object to the killing of pigs in the way suggested, but I do object to the powers that are to be given.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:
We must have authority to do these things. The other amendments are consequential on the two clauses I have dealt with. In Committee the provisions of the Bill can be further outlined. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

BILL—FERTILISERS

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
(Hon. H. Millington—Leederville) [4.55]
in moving the second reading said: The reason for the introduction of this amendment to the Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act is set out in the memorandum attached to the Bill. It shows that the necessity for amending the Act arose out of the amendments that were passed at the conference of Ministers for Agriculture in 1923. As the proposed Bill was of a technical nature, the agricultural chemists of the different States were called together, and they submitted a draft Bill which was intended to embody the best provisions of the various Acts in force in Australia. It was found on examining the draft Bill that it differed very little in principle from the Act in force in Western Australia. The measure now submitted is in the main a reproduction of the draft Bill. It was deemed preferable to recast the Act entirely rather than bring down an amending Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Bill, on the ground that the Act is a composite one. It is proposed to omit from the Bill all reference to feeding stuffs, and to deal only with fertilisers. This is the practice followed in the other States, where such matters have been dealt with. This Bill will permit of fertilisers being dealt with as a separate matter. It will be seen from the Notice Paper that feeding stuffs for stock will also be dealt with separately. In the draft Bill provision was made for the registration of dealers in or vendors of fertilisers, as well as the brand of fertilisers. That was at variance with the Act. Experience has shown that it is sufficient to provide for the registration of fertilisers, and that it is not necessary to insist on the registration of dealers. The responsibility is placed either on the manufacturer, or if the commodity is made elsewhere, upon the indenter with-

in the State. To insist upon every dealer in or vendor of fertilisers in country towns being registered, would be to place an undue burden on the trade as well as upon the agricultural industry. The Bill as prepared by the agricultural chemists provided that the details of the contents of the fertiliser should be set out on the bags, in addition to being clearly denoted in the registration, and on the invoice given to the purchaser. In the Bill now before the House the two latter requirements only are insisted upon. To have the details also set out on the bag or label would involve additional expense, which would doubtless be passed on to the producer. The Bill differs from the Act mainly in two respects. It provides for the annual registration of fertilisers, and the payment of an annual fee. The present system provides for a single registration, which remains in force until cancelled by the vendor.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That was the proper way to do it.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:
No. The result of the present system is that the register of fertilisers becomes congested with brands that are no longer in use. That is the experience in this as well as in the other States, hence it is suggested that fertilisers should be registered annually. No registration fee is now required. The result is that irresponsible vendors may register, and amend the brand of fertiliser that is not in general use without regard to the administrative expenses involved. They may register a fertiliser, and, as no fee has to be paid for the registration of the amended formula, they merely alter the formula and notify the department accordingly. We do not want that. It is preferable that there should be recognised standards, and that these should be registered, and there should be a place where the register can be inspected. The information would be valuable to purchasers. The Bill provides for the furnishing of more adequate details of fertilisers.

Mr. Thomson: How many brands are registered?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:
Although there are only a few recognised local brands, there are numerous different interstate and overseas brands of fertilisers. In this State we are concerned mainly with superphosphate of recognised brands. It is necessary that the brands should be registered. Further, it is desirable that we should have an inventory of

all the fertilisers sold in this State, and that there should be a yearly registration, which would mean the striking off the register of such brands as have gone out of use. Arrangements can then be made for advertising the recognised registered brands of fertiliser.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No one wants to know that except the experts.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There has not, I believe, been much abuse in this State, but still there has been some abuse. In Victoria an instance occurred of the sale of a brand of fertiliser which did not contain what it purported to contain; and in that State there was no power to deal with the matter because the fertiliser came from outside Victoria. The principal features of the Bill are: Firstly, the elaboration of the definitions which provide for a more accurate description of some of the technical terms.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What is the meaning of some of the technical terms used in the Bill?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The chemical symbols used are explained in the Bill, the equivalents being given in plain English. This is an advantage not only to members of Parliament, but to the users of the phosphates. The chemical symbol is given first, and then its equivalent in plain English. The second of the principal features of the Bill is the exemptions, which apply to bulk lots of fertiliser compounds supplied to a fertiliser manufacturer, and to less quantities of fertilisers than one hundredweight. Supplies to fertiliser manufacturers need not be subject to control, because we look to the manufacturers to protect themselves in purchasing. But when a quantity of fertiliser is placed on the market by a manufacturer, the brand will have to be registered and the provisions of this measure will apply. In order that hardship may be obviated, the provisions will not apply to small quantities of less than 1 cwt.

Mr. Mann: Then if a man sold numerous small quantities, he could evade the measure?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes.

Mr. Mann: What is the good of it, then?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The exemption does not mean that if a man sold in small quantities fertiliser which was not what it purported to be, he would be exempt from the provisions dealing with fraud. The exemption is merely as regards

branding of the bags. The fertiliser itself, it is insisted in this measure, shall be what it purports to be, even if the quantity is only half a dozen pounds.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The purchaser gets a statement of the contents on the invoice, and therefore does not want that information on every bag.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. Therefore, although the agricultural chemists recommended that the details of the contents be set out on the bag, the Bill does not ask for that. It is not considered necessary. If the contents appear on the invoice and are registered, that should be sufficient. The third of the principal features of the Bill is the compulsory preparation of a register of fertilisers which shall be open to the public, and from which certified copies of entries can be obtained on payment of fees. The fourth feature is the compulsory registration of all fertilisers sold in the State on payment of an annual registration fee. It is intended that each year there shall be a compulsory registration of all brands of fertiliser sold within the State. At present there can be only one registration, which continues indefinitely, without payment of fees. Under this proposal, a fee will be charged each year for registration, and from the register information can be obtained as to what the contents of registered fertilisers shall be.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But you do not propose that every one who sells fertilisers shall take out a license?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No. We do not expect dealers or sub-agents to take out licenses. In the case of imported fertiliser, there must be a recognised agent, who will have to register the fertiliser. There need be only one registration for each fertiliser sold in Western Australia, and so there will be no need for other agents, country agents for instance, to be licensed. However, there must be someone, whether the manufacturer or the indenter, who can be held responsible. The register may be published in either the "Government Gazette" or the "Journal of Agriculture." Then provision is made rendering it unlawful to sell fertilisers which are not registered. The Bill makes it clear that this provision does not apply to organic fertilisers. I believe the measure will prove an invaluable safeguard to users of fertiliser.

Mr. Thomson: They will have an assurance of getting what they pay for.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. There is also provision enabling a purchaser of fertiliser, on payment of a prescribed fee, to obtain an analysis of a sample submitted. That is already so under the existing law. As I stated, the existing legislation has been wholly re-cast, as it was considered that this course would simplify matters. The two subjects of fertiliser and feeding stuffs are now separated. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER AGREEMENT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [5.13] in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to ratify an agreement which has been made between the Perth City Council, the Melville Road Board, and the Government in regard to the supply of electric current in two localities. It is appropriate that the Minister for Agriculture should just now have been discussing the Fertilisers Bill, inasmuch as the necessity for the present measure arises because of the fact that a new manufacturer of fertiliser, the Cresco Company, has started operations at Bayswater, and it is necessary to supply a somewhat large volume of electric power to enable the company to operate. Steps were taken to ascertain the method by which this can be done most economically. Bayswater is within the five-mile radius of the Perth Town Hall, and should be supplied with current by the Perth City Council. In the ordinary course of events, the power required by the Cresco Company would be supplied from the mains which go round Perth. If, however, the supply were taken from them, it would mean a heavy burden on them and would necessitate their increase before long. The Government having direct high tension power going out to Midland Junction, almost within a stone's throw of the new fertiliser works, it was thought to be a distinct advantage if an arrangement could be made whereby the Perth City Council should take current from the main going out to Midland Junction and supply it to the Cresco Company. The arrange-

ment would be economical for the Government, advantageous to the Perth City Council, and satisfactory to everyone concerned. Bayswater is partly inside, partly outside the five-mile radius controlled by the Perth City Council in respect of electrical reticulation. It is considered better that one authority should have control there. The Government Electricity Department do not desire to supply the few retail consumers outside the five-mile radius, and have accordingly arranged for the Perth City Council to take over that portion of the Bayswater area which is outside that radius. The City Council will exercise the same authority over such portion as over the portion within the radius.

Hon. G. Taylor: At the same price?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We do not supply at all.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You supply the current, though.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, to the City Council in the ordinary way.

Hon. G. Taylor: Under this Bill, will you supply at the same price as you are supplying at now?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Hon. G. Taylor: I do not know about that. The price is too cheap.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is, but there is another phase to be taken into consideration.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But you cannot generate at that price, according to your statement.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, but concurrently with this proposal there is another that we shall agree to a small exchange of territory. Under this proposal we shall hand over a small portion of Bayswater beyond the limits where the City Council can supply current and receive in exchange the Applecross area. The Leader of the Opposition will remember that a somewhat similar arrangement was arrived at when provision was made for supplying current to Queen's Park. In this instance it is not anticipated that the handing over of the small portion of Bayswater to the City Council will affect the position of the Electricity Department to any extent, and it is believed that the supply of current to the Applecross area will compensate the department and equalise the position.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The manufacturing area is more in the direction of Bayswater.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But the Perth City Council practically has the right to supply the whole of Bayswater, except a small portion. The council is not in a position to supply current that is required just the other side of its boundary, and in the circumstances it is only right that the supply shall be provided in the most convenient and economical way.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is no doubt about that.

Mr. Mann: Will the Cresco people pay the higher rate to the Perth City Council?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is a low rate.

Mr. Mann: It is a low rate that the council pays to the Government, but is not a low rate that the council charges.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The only way to consider the proposition is to view it from the economical standpoint. The most economical way would be to tap the high tension main leading to Midland Junction and thus take the current direct to the works. If we were to adhere rigidly to the agreement, and insist upon our rights, it would mean that we would have to strengthen the ring mains, and that would be most expensive. By taking the supply from the high tension main, the convenience of everyone will be served, and for tapping the main the City Council have to pay a rental of £50 a year.

Mr. Thomson: Will the method you suggest be more economical from the State's point of view?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, and the department is anxious to have the matter arranged along the lines I have indicated.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We made a bad agreement once before; do not let us make another bad one.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There is nothing in this agreement that will be detrimental to the State. The Government are responsible for keeping the high tension mains in order, and if we can provide the necessary power direct from our existing lines, it will not be necessary to put in another main from Perth to achieve the same end.

Mr. Thomson: Would that be the function of the Government?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The Perth City Council would have to do that.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And they pay rent?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, £50 a year, because they tap the main through a transformer. As I have already indicated, if the current were taken from the ring main, which is now near the limit of its load, we would have to strengthen the ring mains throughout Perth. The arrangement proposed has the approval of everyone concerned, and therefore we are asking Parliament to ratify it so that it may become effective. When we looked into the matter at first, we found that this small portion of Bayswater was outside the City Council's five-mile radius. In the circumstances, we would hardly have been prepared to supply the requirements of the few consumers outside that radius by means of reticulation, and the exchange of territory was therefore proposed.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You will get through to the hills bit by bit in this way.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Already supplies are taken to Gosnells, Bellevue and the State Brickworks. In fact, we supply current to Cardup, about 30 miles from Perth. However, hon. members will realise that the exchange of territory is highly desirable in the circumstances. It will be mutually advantageous to everyone concerned, and in the process the Electricity Department has purchased the Melville Road Board's plant. That local authority did not desire to go in for reticulation and all the expense that would be entailed in the installation of the three-phase system. The board did not wish to go in for the supply of current either for power or lighting, nor was it deemed desirable to increase the staff in order to deal with electricity matters. As a result, the board indicated a desire to hand over the whole business to the Electricity Department so that the reticulation of the district could be undertaken by the department.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Are you buying the board's plant?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, for £1,500. It would cost considerably more than that to replace it at present, and it is expected that we shall make a profit over the deal. Instead of the City Council being supplied with current at 4d. per unit, and the City Council in turn

supplying to the Melville Road Board, only for the current to be passed on by that body to the consumers at a charge of 5d. per unit, the Electricity Department will retail current direct to the consumer at 5d. per unit. As all parties concerned are anxious that this arrangement shall be ratified by Parliament, the Bill has been introduced. It is possible that similar agreements will be made in the future, because, when the original Act was passed, a radius of five miles from the Perth Town Hall was fixed. Hon. members will realise that from time to time it may be found advantageous to all concerned to refrain from adhering rigidly to the boundary fixed by the original Act. I do not think there will be any objection to the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

BILL—DRIED FRUITS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. H. Millington—Leederville) [5.24] in moving the second reading said: Every-one will acknowledge the difficulties that have confronted those associated with the dried fruits industry. There is no need in this State to justify the principle of control in regard to the dried fruits industry, because, not only here, but throughout the Commonwealth as well, it is recognised that the industry could not exist unless it was subject to control. That is the accepted policy of Australia.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is an extraordinary thing.

Mr. Thomson: The results have been rather extraordinary.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is so.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If the industry had not been subject to control, there could not be any other result but disaster.

Mr. Lindsay: Bankruptcy.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Are the provisions contained in the Bill what the growers have asked for?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The provisions contained in the Bill have been sought by the Dried Fruits Board, and

at the Agricultural Conference, attended by Ministers and officials from the various States and held recently in Perth, these matters came up for discussion. In the Eastern States the growers are more deeply involved than are our growers in Western Australia. The dried fruits industry is on a more extensive basis there, particularly in South Australia and Victoria.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If the growers in the other States are going to send their dried fruits here and undersell our growers, we shall have something to say about it.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That was the position before the Dried Fruits Act was passed.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It has been so since.

Mr. Thomson: Yes, but it was worse before.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: However, the industry is subject to control. There have been surpluses in Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria. I do not think there was any surplus crop in New South Wales, but the industry is also subject to control there. The growers in that State have to fall into line with those in the other States, as all are subject to control. The main provisions of the Bill, which seeks to amend the Dried Fruits Act, are those that the experience of the Dried Fruits Board has shown to be necessary. Many of them are small amendments, but they are necessary if we are to have control exercised over the industry. Instead of the position of the industry becoming better, it is becoming worse. To give the House an idea of the conditions that are operating, I might mention that this season California is placing between 300,000 and 400,000 tons of sultanas on the London market.

Mr. Thomson: Yet, although we cannot grow sufficient to supply the requirements of Western Australia, our people intend sending our sultanas to London for sale!

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. If we are to have control, there is no question of the decision being left with the Western Australian growers. We must have Australian control, or none at all.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We want to eat our own sultanas.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Quite so, but if there is no Federal legislation and Federal control, it will be impossible for us to prohibit dried fruits from

the other States being brought to Western Australia and sold here.

Hon. G. Taylor: But our dried fruits were prohibited from entering Victoria.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Although that was done, it has since been discovered that the authorities in the East did not have that power. I will explain that position later.

Hon. G. Taylor: At any rate, that was done and that action injured our dried fruits industry in Western Australia.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Although the Act concerned contained power to enable that action to be taken, it was in contravention of the Federal Constitution. When action was taken, it was found that the Act could not stand. The Californian fruit has been sold on the London market at 39s. 6d. per cwt. The lowest price at which we could sell to cover the cost of production of our sultanas is 50s. per cwt., and for higher grades, up to 55s. and 65s. per cwt. It will be seen, therefore, that, from the standpoint of the export trade, our dried fruits industry is in a pretty bad way. One means by which the position may be alleviated is by extending our local market. At present 25 per cent. only of the local article is consumed within Australia, and the problem is to find a market for the balance. Having established control over the industry, it is necessary that the control shall be effective. What, more than anything else, has given rise to the need for this measure was the action taken by a Mr. James of Berri, in South Australia, who, in defiance of the South Australian Act, exported fruit to New South Wales. The fruit was seized by the South Australian Board and after litigation, which eventually reached the High Court, that court decided that the State authority had not power to prevent dried fruit passing from one State to another. To that extent the court ruled in favour of Mr. James. But, as a matter of fact, Mr. James received no benefit from the finding, because he could not prove to the satisfaction of the court the identification of his fruit and, in consequence, although they held that the State authority had no legal right to prevent the export of fruit from one State to another, nevertheless Mr. James's fruit, which could not be identified, was confiscated and sold.

Mr. Thomson: Our markets have been flooded by dried fruits from the Eastern States.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If there were no control in any State, our market would be flooded to an even greater extent, and we would be simply swamped.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Our growers are swamped now.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The dried fruit boards in the various States are closely in touch with the methods of marketing and are most anxious that the conditions should continue. It is of distinct advantage, because the quota sold in Australia does bring a profitable price. As for the export quota, of course we have to depend on the world's market. If the control were abolished it would not affect the export prices, and certainly the control does enable the grower to reap the advantage of a reasonable price for that portion of his harvest disposed of within the State.

Mr. Thomson: Do you think it right that our growers should have to export their quota of sultanas, when they cannot produce sufficient for local requirements?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That question was raised at the conference of Ministers for Agriculture. It was the Victorian people who asked that the quota system should be rigidly applied to Western Australia. Up to date the sultana growers in this State have produced less than the requirements of the local market. They have had the advantage of the local market. What the Victorian and South Australian boards desire is that we should at least acknowledge the principle of the Australian quota. They do not insist, for instance, that only 25 per cent. of the sultanas grown in Western Australia should have the advantage of the Australian price. They merely want the principle of the Australian quota to be recognised. At that time it was not assented to by the board. But it was necessary that there should be an amicable feeling between the several boards. I believe that, out of consideration for the motion carried at the conference of the Ministers for Agriculture, it has been decided to recognise the principle to an extent. Victoria suggested that if it were not 25 per cent. it should be 10 per cent., or some other percentage that would give recognition to the principle. They said it would be of advantage. They also said that New South Wales, an exporting State, had recognised the principle. There must be co-operation in Australia. Without it, the enormous output of Victoria and South Australia would entirely swamp our mar-

ket, and we would not have the advantage of prices that at present we get for dried fruit consumed in Australia. Once a war was started between the States, the position within Australia would be similar to the export position, where we do not control the prices.

Mr. Thomson: It is absurd that, when not producing sufficient sultanas for our own requirements, we should have to export a quota. The other States supply their own requirements and export the surplus.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That has been considered.

Mr. Thomson: And they are flooding our markets.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They have considered it. Up to date the sultanas grown in this State have not had the advantage of the local price. Since that test case was taken, the Commonwealth have come to the assistance of the local boards. A provision in the Federal Act reads as follows:—

Dried fruits shall not be carried from a place in one State into or through another State to a place in Australia beyond the State in which the carriage begins, unless a license has been issued under the Act permitting such carriage.

So the Federal Government have power to regulate any such trading. What would be the position if we wanted the protection of the Federal Government in Australian trading and there was a suggestion that we were attempting to put the screw on the Eastern States? I think the Federal Government would not refuse a license. So, whether we like it or not, if we in Western Australia thought we could ignore the principle of the quota altogether, we should find ourselves mistaken. They have not insisted upon the quota system to its full extent. What the board had in mind was that a percentage of the fruit grown in Australia should be exported.

Mr. Thomson: How could they give a license if we had not sufficient fruit for our own requirements?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We have a shortage of sultanas, but not of dried fruit. We do not consume more than half the dried fruits that we produce. We produce 1,600 tons per annum, and consume not more than 800 tons.

Mr. Thomson: And we are supposed to export 80 per cent.!

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, it would depend on the consumption.

The rate of consumption works out at 25 per cent. as against the 75 per cent. to be exported. I think we must be satisfied that no one State can stand on its own and control the product. We are compelled to work amicably with the other States, particularly now that we have called upon the Federal Government to give the necessary legal authority for the control of the industry.

Mr. Thomson: That doesn't act in other industries. They swamp all our industries.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We discovered during the test case that although we desire to do these things for ourselves, we cannot. So we have called on the Federal Government to take the necessary authority, which they have done. Now we shall have to stand by the general agreement. That is the position as we find it. The Bill will bring the Act into conformity with the South Australian and Victorian Acts, and, I believe, the New South Wales Act, and also with the Federal law. It has been discovered that we have a weakness. We endeavoured to do something that required Federal legislation. In this State the board have found themselves up against certain difficulties. Naturally there is on the part of growers a disposition to take advantage of a price in this State which is artificially created.

Mr. Thomson: What average price did the growers get for their fruit in this State last year?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not quite sure. I have asked for information on that point. What the State board has to do is to see that the industry is controlled and that no one grower shall be given any undue advantage. Since 1926 there has been on the part of certain growers an endeavour to take advantage of the local market. The amendments suggested by the board have the common object of preventing that sort of thing. It is only right that the grower in this State should get certain advantages, but if some of the growers managed to dodge the provisions of the board to the extent of selling more than their quota in this State, immediately the principle of control would be attacked. So all that the board desires to do is to see that the dried fruit grown in this State shall go through the prescribed channels. Each grower, instead of getting an undue advantage from the local price, has to take his fair quota of the local price and must accept whatever

price is obtained for the export of the balance. The provisions set out in the various amendments all have the object of giving the board the necessary authority.

Mr. Thomson: What is the quota that our growers will be permitted to sell locally and to export?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They have not insisted upon rigidly enforcing the quota as regards sultanas and we have an advantage in that respect.

Mr. Thomson: But what is the quota?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: About 25 per cent. will get the Australian price and 75 per cent. will bring whatever can be obtained for it. This legislation was originally introduced because the industry was in such a condition that the growers themselves demanded a measure of control. I believe that the growers in each of the producing States, as well as the members of the boards of control, are satisfied that the legislation is advantageous.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If the growers were not subject to control, they would be getting the export price for the whole of their crop. One would be undercutting the other in order to get the Australian market, and the position would become impossible.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is also the question of supply and demand.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Members need not worry that growers do not appreciate the value of control. That question has passed beyond the sphere of argument. What they desire now is to get better control in this State. The amendments have been requested by the board. I do not think any exception can be taken to the manner in which the board is administering the business. I have considered the amendments and I am satisfied they are necessary if the board is to do effective work. There is a weakness in the State law and the same applies to South Australia and Victoria. We are hopeful—that is as much as I can say—that the Federal law will stand. The Federal authorities claim that they have the power to regulate interstate trade. That is what the Federal law is based on.

Mr. Thomson: Who gets the benefit of the Queensland market? That State does not produce currants and sultanas.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. The matter will be considered, but whatever price is obtained, each grower will get his fair quota, except that the growers of Western Australia will have an advantage in the matter of sultanas.

Mr. Lindsay: There is apparently an injustice to Western Australia all the same.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There will be a greater injustice if there is no control. There can be no separate State control.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is so, because the other States would swamp us.

Mr. Thomson: When the Bill reaches the Committee stage I should like the Minister to tell us what advantages will be derived by Western Australia.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I realised that that information would be required and have asked for it. It is unnecessary for me to deal particularly with the several amendments. The desire is to bring the Act into conformity with the legislation of the Eastern States, and it is necessary to make certain amendments in order that we may take advantage of the Federal law, which has been specially enacted to meet the difficulties of the State boards. If this Bill be passed in its present form, we shall have uniform legislation throughout the States that produce dried fruit.

Mr. Davy: You will have more complete machinery to compel the local consuming public to pay more than they otherwise would.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I daresay that is true.

Mr. Davy: It will enable the growers to take it out of the pockets of the consumer.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: When we agreed to the principle of control, we took that risk.

Mr. Davy: It was not a risk; it was a certainty.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I shall not disguise that fact. Still, anyone with the slightest knowledge of the industry would not object to paying the extra price in order that the industry might exist.

Mr. Davy: Is it a good thing that the industry should exist?

Mr. Mann: How many growers are engaged in the industry here?

Mr. Davy: How long are we to go on paying the bonus?

Hon. G. Taylor: So long as we continue to pay the sugar bonus.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

We have to pay the sugar bonus.

Hon. G. Taylor: Which really is atrocious.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

We may object to it, but still we pay. We pay the butter bonus and we pay other bonuses, and we pay higher prices for many commodities because industries are protected. Growers of dried fruit have to compete on the world's markets and they live in a protected country. While I consider it worth while to maintain the industry, I have not come across anyone who advocates additional planting.

Mr. Thomson: We want to protect our own growers. That is the point I am concerned about.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

If the hon. member can devise ways and means for Australian control of the industry that will give this State an advantage, I shall be pleased to hear him, but I am very doubtful whether it is possible, considering that we have the protection of the Federal law. If we depend upon that protection, we cannot expect that any one State will be favoured.

Mr. Lindsay: Is it not a fact that we sent currants to Melbourne and they were seized by the Government and not permitted to be sold?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

Very likely, but until the Federal law came into operation, that was done illegally. If the case had been tested, the result would probably have been similar to that in South Australia. It was established that the act was ultra vires the Federal Constitution, though it was discovered that there was insufficient evidence to identify the currants.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They were not branded.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

Consequently the appellant had to pay his legal costs. We want to avoid disputes of that kind. The industry must be protected and regulated. That is the accepted policy of Australia, regardless of whether we approve of it or not.

Mr. Davy: When we get to the stage of bonusing the wheat industry, what will happen?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

It is fortunate that we have some industries that can stand up to world competition.

Mr. Davy: Wheat and wool have to stand everything.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

The dried fruit industry cannot, and hence the need for this legislation to control the output not only within the State, but interstate. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.54]: This measure is largely one for consideration in Committee, because we already have a law on the statute-book and this is a Bill to amend it. The people engaged in the industry are very anxious that the Act should be amended. We have agreed that the dried fruit industry is to live on the price it can charge to local consumers; it cannot live on the export values. That is the position all over Australia. Either the industry must go out of existence, or the people of Australia must pay more than the export value for dried fruit. To that we have already agreed.

Hon. G. Taylor: It is not a good thing, although we have agreed to it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, but it is a necessary thing. If we did not do that, the industry would go out of existence, and if we had to import our requirements of dried fruits, I do not know whether we should get them much cheaper. I admit the principle is bad, but we are doing the same thing with sugar and butter.

Hon. G. Taylor: In the case of sugar not of our own volition.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, that is almost a scandal.

Mr. Davy: In a few years time we shall be asked to do it with wool and wheat, and then where will you be?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: People might want kola beer protected in the same way. On the face of it, it is ridiculous.

Hon. G. Taylor: Then why pass the legislation?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is already on the statute-book and we are now asked to amend it. In doing that, let us be careful to do as little damage as possible.

Mr. Lindsay: Eastern States dried fruits were quoted at lower prices than ours.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: So we have made the law for the benefit of Eastern Australia? To that I object. If any advantage is to be given under this measure, it must be given to our own

growers and not to the people of the Eastern States. The local grower, too, must not be permitted to overcharge the local consumer. I believe that was done in some instances. If the Minister can tell us that it was done, we should hesitate about further improving the Bill. It is necessary that one State should treat another State fairly, and it is necessary that growers within the State should treat each other fairly. There are some districts in Western Australia with only small growers who could hand out their dried fruits to the local storekeeper and so save the cost of freight to the packing shed from the place where the fruits were grown and back again. At present, a man growing 5 cwt. has to send it to the packing shed instead of being able to sell it direct to the local storekeeper. I do not think that is either wise or quite fair. The small grower should not be put to the trouble and expense of packing his produce and sending it away by train, if it could be sold to the local storekeeper.

The Minister for Agriculture: It must go through the processing shed.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am speaking only of small lots grown about the country. We should not compel growers to go to all the trouble of packing and paying freight to the packing shed when the fruit is required in the centre in which it was grown.

The Minister for Agriculture: But you must have a record of the State produce in order to fix the quota for each grower.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That would be a simple matter. There are not very many growers.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is a matter for the board, of course.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. When I represented this matter to the board, the reply I got was that the board had no power and the fruit had to be sent to Perth. We must give the board the power necessary to obviate the waste arising from unnecessary packing, freighting and other charges. There are a few growers around Northam, small growers whose output would not interfere with the work of the board if they were allowed freedom to sell their fruit to the local storekeeper. Although this is a Bill entirely for Committee, I hope that stage will not be taken for a day or two, and certainly not until the Dried

Fruits Board, which is independent of the Government, has had an opportunity to peruse the measure. When the present Minister for Lands introduced a Bill on this subject, I think he said the Government were not keen on it, and were not anxious to introduce it, but that it was necessary for the preservation of the industry, and it was proposed to give the producers a Bill they could operate themselves. That is all we are proposing to give them now. They must therefore have an opportunity to see what we propose, and we on our part must see that no injustice is done to the consumer. Unless we do allow the industry to live by a certain amount of price fixing, it will not live at all; therefore to keep it alive we are agreeing to this extraordinary means of price fixing. I understand that all the amendments required by the board have been imported into the Bill, as well as a few others.

The Minister for Agriculture: Only those that the Dried Fruits Board requires, not only for this State but to bring this State into conformity with the other States.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Do you mean they are agreed to by the local board?

The Minister for Agriculture: By the local board.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And members of that board are elected by the growers, are they not? What we have to do is to see that the consumer within the limits we fix gets a fair deal. We cannot be expected to allow the Dried Fruits Board to go free altogether, can we? I believe that the price of dried fruits increased tremendously after we passed the last Act, over the sales of the previous years, when the price was considered reasonable. If that is so, it is a matter that will require to be looked into.

The Minister for Agriculture: The board has no power to fix prices.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Who fixes the price?

The Minister for Agriculture: The board does not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It controls the whole of the sales. Who does fix the prices?

Mr. Thomson: The packing sheds.

The Minister for Agriculture: The grower gets the full advantage of whatever price is obtained.

Hon. G. Taylor: But how is it arrived at?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course the price is fixed by the board. In the control of the industry the board has to fix the price against the local man. It cannot fix the import price. Of what use would the Bill be if it could not fix the price, when competition within the State is eliminated, and now the competition within Australia is also to be eliminated? Of course the board fixes the price, and we must see to it that it is fixed at a reasonable figure.

Mr. Thomson: The trouble is that competition is not being eliminated between Western Australia and the other States.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I understood from the Minister that this would be done. It is no use trying to protect our own people if the Eastern States can send their fruit here and undercut the local prices.

Mr. Thomson: They have been doing so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know, but I understand the Bill will prevent that for the future.

Hon. G. Taylor: No.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If all the States adopt the same Bill, the position will be adjusted. Our own fruit will go to our own people.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is an Australian product.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, but it will be of no advantage to us if the people of South Australia can send their fruit here.

Mr. Mann: They are doing it.

Mr. Thomson: And we in turn send ours for sale to South Australia.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: What could be more ridiculous? I understood the Minister to say the Bill would obviate that.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is what has happened in the past.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know.

The Minister for Agriculture: And since the control, too.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, but I understood from the Minister that this Bill plus the Federal Act would give the necessary control.

The Minister for Agriculture: The board would certainly be able to control the local fruit.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This Bill, with the Federal Act, will control the sales all over Australia.

The Minister for Agriculture: The board will be able to do that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It would be ridiculous for us to export our fruit, and to eat the fruit of the Eastern States, would it not?

The Minister for Agriculture: We do export.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If we export 75 per cent. of what we grow, we ought to stop at that. Under last year's system, we might have been compelled to take in South Australian fruit. I saw the quotations which were very much less than the quotations for local fruit. This meant that we are making our own people pay more than was being paid in South Australia, or more than South Australia was able to get in London. That is of no advantage to our growers. I understand we are only considering this Bill with a view to overcoming that difficulty. The Minister said that this could be accomplished. We cannot forbid Victorian dried fruits from coming to this State by any Act that we may pass.

Mr. Panton: Only by our own act in refusing to eat it.

The Minister for Agriculture: The matter has to be regulated amicably by all the boards controlling Australian dried fruit.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That can only be done by eliminating competition between the States in the sale of the fruit. If we are going to do that, we might as well endeavour to protect our own growers. Our job apparently will be to see that the consumers are fairly treated, seeing that the growers' representatives have suggested these amendments. I am not going to oppose the second reading, but I hope the Minister will allow the Committee stage to stand over for a day or two in order that the public may have an opportunity of knowing what we are doing by this extraordinary piece of legislation.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [6.7]: As the Leader of the Opposition has spoken on the second reading, I do not propose to move the adjournment of the debate. I supported the Bill that was brought in previously, because I believed it would eliminate waste and bring about co-ordinated effort in the way of assisting the primary producers to obtain a reasonable return for their labours. I confess that the action of the board, as I interpret it, has not led to the accomplishment of those things which others besides myself hoped for. We all realise the difficult position in which the

industry is placed. Last year a Bill was brought down and immediately put into effect, with the result that the small growers had to send their products to the packing sheds to be processed. When the Minister is dealing with this matter in Committee, I should like him to supply members with the number of packing sheds, and to give his or the board's view as to whether it is not possible to eliminate certain overhead charges made by the packing sheds. Members should also be informed as to the quota of currants exported last year, the price obtained from local consumption, and the average price returned for the exported quota. With regard to sultanas, I cannot understand the action of the board. No doubt it was acting in good faith, but no doubt, also, it adopted the broad Australian view that the whole of the people who are interested in the industry must come in on a common ground. This industry does receive more assistance in the Eastern States than it does here. I believe it costs about £5 per ton to transport dried fruit from Mildura to Melbourne, and that this charge is levied upon currants and sultanas that are for local consumption. When the dried fruit is being exported, the levy amounts only to £2 10s. per ton. This is of assistance to the industry.

Hon. G. Taylor: The local consumers pay on a £5 freight.

Mr. THOMSON: That is the railway freight per ton on fruit for local consumption, but in the case of the exported article there is a rebate of £2 10s. per ton. That is one direction in which the Western Australian industry might be assisted. I thought when the board came into existence it would bring about such a co-ordination of effort that much waste would be eliminated and handling charges reduced to a minimum. Growers in my district who had previously been able to supply local storekeepers with their requirements were compelled to send their products to be processed at the packing sheds on the Swan. I believe that the growers were deprived of about £2 10s. per ton for that reason. I recognise the peculiar position in which the industry is placed, and that the whole of its products cannot be consumed within Australia. This fruit is being raised under Australian conditions, and has to compete with products grown under Eastern or cheap labour conditions. We are all desirous of maintaining an industry which has cost the Commonwealth and the State a considerable

amount of money, as well as individual settlers who have put into it a large proportion of their life savings. If the board is going to function properly and co-ordinate the business, we should have an assurance that the type of thing that is going on in my district is not allowed to continue. The growers there used to supply currants and sultanas to local storekeepers without any processing, and the local consumers hardly realised that the fruit had been grown in their own districts. The settlers were then compelled to send their products to the Swan. I challenge the board to dispute my statement that at least 75 per cent. of the dried fruits that have been produced here, and should be sold locally, have been exported, and that we have imported Mildura and South Australian fruit for sale in our stores. The waste that is now going on must be eliminated. If we are going to export our fruit, is it not reasonable to suggest that sufficient should be kept within the State for local consumption? Why should consumers have to buy dried fruits on which steamer freights, rail freights, and handling charges generally have been paid, before they go into consumption? Surely that is one point where the board could alleviate the present position.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. THOMSON: Before tea I was emphasising the desirability of eliminating waste. I hope the Bill will pass, though with some slight amendments. Indeed, before it passes, the Minister should give us an assurance that in future there will be greater co-ordination in working than there has been in the past. Now I should like to read one or two letters which have been sent to the Dried Fruits Board by men engaged in the industry in my district. Here is a letter addressed to Mr. F. Davis, the chairman of the board—

By this mail I am forwarding to you a small package of currants. These currants were sold to a baker in Woodanilling by Messrs. Henry Berry & Co. They are currants brought in from the Eastern States, and the case was branded "St. Albans." Although they are currants supplied to pastrycooks, it appears to the members of our association that, provided steps are taken to sell our own currants at a reasonable figure, rubbish like this would not be dumped from the East. Practically every storekeeper that I and members of our association have approached admit that they are purchasing currants and sultanas from the Eastern States. I am referring to storekeepers so widely separated

as Dumbleyung, Busselton, Katanning, Wagin and Albany. The reason for this is that our own currants and sultanas are sold by the board's distributors at such high prices that it would not be payable to purchase them. It seems to us the height of foolishness and a bad business policy that currants from the Eastern States should be permitted to be sold here, in the midst of the district in which they are grown, at a less figure than they could be purchased at locally. I understand that currants will only be sold by the distributors in this State at more than 1d. per lb. higher than the Eastern States fruit can be sold at. The Dried Fruits Board has been brought into being for the sole purpose of protecting the industry, but instead of protecting the growers it has already ruined one large vineyard in this district, and it is pursuing a course which will mean that all the other vineyards will have to pull up their vines. Mr. Trimming, of Woodanilling, will receive £300 less this year from his vineyard than he would have received if he had been allowed to market his fruit here, and his vineyard has only 10 acres in bearing. After making inquiries and finding that Eastern States currants are being sold in Western Australia, we see in the papers that 400 tons of currants have been forwarded to the Eastern States.

That is one case which has been brought under the board's notice. Growers in a district producing currants and sultanas were not permitted to sell them, and despite that fact this State exported 400 tons of currants to the Eastern States. I do not quite know what the cost of those 400 tons would be; but I understood the Minister to say that Western Australia's annual production of currants is approximately 1,600 tons, while the local consumption is 800 tons. If we have to export 75 per cent. of our production, it means that the State of Western Australia, by entering into the agreement, is compelled to export 1,200 tons of currants, whereafter we shall have the spectacle of 400 tons of currants entering the State in order to replace what we have exported. In all my born days I have never heard of such a foolish proceeding, and I am utterly unable to understand the action of the board in continuing such a system. In respect of these 400 tons alone there is the possibility of eliminating considerable waste. Even if we continued to export our quota of 75 per cent., surely it is reasonable and practicable to say to the Eastern States growers, "You send away that quota of 400 tons, and we will use the same quantity locally, thereby saving about £5 per ton, and the amount of the saving can be distributed amongst the growers of the Commonwealth."

Mr. Mann. Each State shares in the loss.

Mr. THOMSON: Yes. It is a rotten system that sends away those 400 tons of currants. By the time the returns reach Western Australian producers, the loss must amount to £5 per ton. That is a total of £2,000 on the 400 tons. Then the bringing into Western Australia of 400 tons in replacement means another loss of £2,000. So the process costs the producers of dried fruits £4,000 or more. If the board are to function in the manner Parliament hoped, when passing the existing Act, that they would function, they must get down to common-sense methods and eliminate such damnable waste. Next I wish to read the reply of the chairman of the board to the writer in Katanning—

Yours of the 26th to hand re conditions of the dried fruit industry in the Katanning district. I am pleased to hear from you at any time, but I desire to point out that it is regrettable that you did not follow the usual procedure of sending the letter to the office. It would have reached there earlier than I did myself, and as we held a meeting of the board during the week, it would have been dealt with right away and an official reply forwarded. Under the circumstances, whatever I may say in reply must be regarded as my personal opinion, and not necessarily as the views of the board. As there are several matters mentioned in your letter, I will deal with them categorically:—(1) Re inferior currants imported from the Eastern States: So far as dried fruits are concerned, bakers are always a class apart. They will take and use no other currant than the "one-crown" or what we call "manufacturer's." They always have done so, and so far as we can see will continue to do so, until circumstances not yet in existence enable us to alter the custom. So long as such currants are not sold to the general public for ordinary consumption, the evil does not assume formidable proportions, as "baker's currants" are only a small percentage of the currants sold.

The chairman of the board apparently loses sight of the fact that Western Australia also produces a proportion of what are called "one-crown," or baker's currants. Surely those currants required for manufacturing purposes here should be supplied by Western Australian producers and not by Eastern States producers. The chairman of the board proceeds—

(2) Eastern States dried fruits sold at lower prices than Western: In this connection I desire to point out that the Dried Fruits Board has no power whatever over prices. The question of price is absolutely outside our jurisdiction. The Minister for Agriculture, before introducing the Dried Fruits Bill into Parliament, stated on more than one occasion that he would not dream of giving

to any irresponsible body the power to fix prices by law. Prices of vine dried fruits in this State are fixed by the six agents acting for the packing sheds, of which one is your own agent, the Westralian Farmers. We cannot approach the agents on this point. You may, and I would suggest that you do.

The board admit that they have not the power to fix the prices at which dried fruits shall be sold in Western Australia. It is a remarkable fact, however, that last year certain business men in the southern portion of the State had submitted to them a quotation for dried fruits, grown and processed in Western Australia, at a lower figure than that at which they could be purchased from the authorised agents. There was the extraordinary spectacle of dried fruits grown in this State and sent to the Eastern States being brought back here and sold to local merchants at less than the cost of production in Western Australia. I know the Minister is most desirous of overcoming that difficulty, and I recognise that the board, in asking for the amendments contained in the Bill, have the same objective; but before we accept the proposed amendments we require a definite assurance from the board that they will be in a position to make decided alterations in what has been the practice. We know that those who handle the product have decided what the price shall be. The letter from the chairman of the board continues—

(3) Conditions of vineyards in Katanning district: I note that you claim the Dried Fruits Board by its policy has ruined one large vineyard in your district. Like most sweeping statements, this would be very hard to prove.

From my own knowledge I can definitely prove the truth of the statement made in the grower's letter. If those men in the Katanning district had been able to do as they did in previous years, supply the requirements of the district, they would have been able to sell their products to the local storekeepers, and thus have been placed in a position to pay their creditors and carry on. I wish to emphasise that as regards the particular case quoted, I can supply the Minister with information verifying the fact that the Dried Fruits Board have ruined one vineyard in the Katanning district. The chairman of the board goes on to say—

I have a personal and intimate knowledge of the vineyard to which you refer, am well acquainted with the events leading up to the present transition period, know personally the present condition and possibilities of the vines, also the condition of and extent of

the plant, and am in a position to say that it would be exceedingly difficult to prove the statement made.

I can prove beyond the shadow of doubt that as the result of the board's action in taking control of the product various growers to-day find themselves absolutely ruined. One man who invested over £1,000 in the industry has entirely lost that amount. Two others are ruined after having put in two years' work for practically nothing.

The Minister for Agriculture: Without control, they would all be ruined.

Mr. THOMSON: With all due respect to those who say that all would be ruined if it were not for control, I contend that is wrong. These men were in the position of having been financed by certain firms who had supplied them with all that was necessary to enable them to carry on, and had undertaken to purchase the growers' products at a certain price. The action of the Dried Fruits Board in introducing drastic regulations during the first year of their existence, resulted in these men having to face a loss. Those regulations took complete control of their products. Had I been in the position of a principal creditor, I would have taken steps to test the legality of the board's action in taking the whole of their products and paying the growers a certain amount of money. Prior to the Dried Fruits Act being passed, the products of the vineyards I refer to belonged to the people who had made advances to enable the growers to carry on. Now it is said that those men would have been ruined had control not been introduced. That is not so in this instance. In the Katanning district the growers, who had formerly sold the whole of their output to local storekeepers, were compelled to send their dried fruit to Perth, thus involving them in additional expense, amounting to £2 10s., on account of railway freight and handling charges en route to the packing sheds. Then there was the process of packing and putting the fruit in standardised cases. On top of that, we had the spectacle of currants and sultanias being imported from the Eastern States and supplied to the storekeepers at Katanning who had previously purchased their supplies from the local growers! Those who argue that the growers would have been ruined in any case, do not know, in my opinion, the true position in which those growers found themselves. In his letter Mr. Davis continued—

(4) Alleged loss of £300 by Mr. Trimming: I regret to find that our good friend Mr.

Trimming should take the view that he is likely to lose £300 this year. May I venture to say that this is because he has taken only a partial view of the situation. It seems he bases his claim on the supposition that he sells all his fruit in the Katanning district. But that is what precisely he must not do. If he did, he would be inflicting an injustice on growers in other parts of the State. I cannot conceive that Mr. Trimming, with his genial nature, would deliberately injure another. May I venture to point out that growers in the Katanning district cannot divorce themselves from the industry as a whole. The interests of the industry demand an export overseas of 75 per cent. of our crop, because as a State, we produce four times as much as we consume. If Mr. Trimming did sell all his dried fruit crop in the State, viz., the Katanning district, some grower in another district must perforce export the whole of his crop, and receive only half the price that our mutual friend does. If this line of action were carried out by growers throughout the State, it would mean eventually that quite a large number of vineyards would be abandoned, because it would not pay to keep them going. The State, as such, is desirous that the industry should not decline. It is of value to the State. Hence a Bill was introduced into Parliament, to give power to a board to "determine where—and in what quantities—dried fruits should be marketed." The Board determined that approximately 75 per cent. should be marketed overseas, and 25 per cent. sold in the State, the amount the State could consume. By this means every grower had to take his share of the burden of export, but also received his legitimate share of the State trade, which is all any grower can justly expect. In this connection there is no escape from the inexorable logic of facts. As growers, we must either hang or fall together.

(5) Re 400 tons of currants sold in Eastern Australia: This position is brought about by the failure of the dried fruit crop in the East. They lost half their crop there this season. The shortage automatically raised the Australian quota to 49 per cent. for currants. Our State consumption remains practically stationary. We could not consume the amount we are entitled to sell in the Australian market. Consequently, to sell up to 49 per cent., it was essential that we dispose of 400 tons in the Eastern States. Growers in the Katanning district, in common with others, will receive their proportionate share through their agent, of the higher price thus obtained. What that price will be, I am not in a position to say, certainly it must be higher than what we would otherwise have received as export returns. In any case, we stand to benefit by the unusual position. It would appear that sometimes, irrespective of our deserts, the gods are kind to us.

I am prepared to admit that the industry as a whole must be considered, but it is not very satisfactory to have men like Walter, Boulter and Heighton forced into the Bankruptcy Court through the actions of the Dried Fruits Board. Moreover, it must be remembered that the board acted with a view to

assisting the growers in the Eastern States, not those in Western Australia, and it is little consolation to the men I have mentioned to be told that they must be patriotic, and be prepared to face a loss of £300, while Dumbleyung, Wagin and other country centres surrounding them are furnished with currants produced in Mildura and other parts of South Australia. While I am Australian, I am a Western Australian first, and I consider it my duty to protect the interests of our own producers first, if it is at all possible. I will now read the reply that was sent to Mr. Davis—

Re inferior currants: As I do not know what price was paid for these currants, I cannot say anything more about them.

Eastern dried fruits: What we complain about and complain about very bitterly is that practically a monopoly has been granted to six agents. They fix a price, and allow growers from the Eastern States to come in and undersell. It would very easily have been a reasonable proposition to have sold all the currants that were needed in these country districts at 6d. a lb. rather than stick out for 8d. a lb., and allow Eastern growers to come in. So far as we can see, there is no reason why six agents only should have the sale of these currants. If they do not know how to conduct the business, and appoint more distributors, competition amongst them will soon teach them to deal in a businesslike manner. It is most galling to the local growers to see Eastern States currants sold in the shops, when we know that every lb. that comes in from the Eastern States means one or more lb. to export at low prices. We fail to understand why you cannot approach the agents on the question of price, and we are convinced that firm action on the part of the board would have saved the growers of Western Australia a large sum of money.

Re vineyards in country districts: The evidence that the Dried Fruits Board has ruined one vineyard here is very easily obtained. There is not the slightest doubt that if there had been no Dried Fruits Board, Messrs. Boulter, Heighton & Company's vineyard would have been carrying on operations to-day, instead of being bankrupt.

Re Mr. Trimming: Mr. Trimming would not be losing the £300 if he were certain that the very best was being done to conserve our interests, but when we see the anomaly of Eastern currants being imported into this State and sold at a lower price than ours, and, at the same time, 400 tons of currants being exported to the Eastern States on account of the shortage there, the thing seems too ridiculous to conceive, and no one can wonder at Mr. Trimming feeling extremely sore about the matter. Properly administered, we are all of the opinion that the pool would, in the end, be an advantage, but if the best policy of the board is to continue, it will be quite impossible to grow vine dried fruits at a profit.

I know that the great bulk of our dried fruits is grown in the Swan district. What

is suitable for the Swan district is not, unfortunately, quite suitable for other parts of the State. If we could approach the question with a view to seeing how we could best benefit the majority of the growers without inflicting a decided hardship upon the minority, it would be better and probably we would be more satisfied with the results than we are to-day. I do not think it was the intention of the Government—certainly it was not the intention of Parliament—that the board could take any action that would ruin men in the Katanning district. That is why I feel so strongly on this question. I supported the Bill when it was first placed before Parliament because I thought it was essential, in the interests of the industry, that control should be exercised so that we should have co-ordination and co-operation. On the other hand, the co-ordination and co-operation that we have had so far have been disastrous to some of the growers in the Katanning district. I hope we can make arrangements so that we can sell the products of certain districts locally without having to force those growers to despatch their dried fruits to Perth, with the consequent additional heavy charges they have to shoulder. I know that the Minister will reply that it is essential that everything shall be sent through the packing sheds so that a record can be secured of the dried fruits produced within the State.

Mr. Ferguson: And so that a uniform size for export can be obtained.

Mr. THOMSON: The product that has been placed upon the market for consumption locally has been eminently satisfactory to the people, so I do not think that the Katanning producers should be penalised by having their produce sent to Perth to bring the average quality up to the required standard for the State. I hope that is not the intention. Someone may ask, "What about the quota?" It is surely reasonable, possible and practicable to say to people who are producing in various districts, "You may sell the whole of your products and through our agents, you can deal with the local stores. You can sell the whole of your products in your district, and you will receive so much payment on supplies for local consumption but you will have to accept payment for your quota exported under the conditions obtaining when sold." That would mean that 75 per cent. of the dried fruits in the district would be dealt

with on a much more satisfactory basis than hitherto. If the same principle were adopted throughout Australia, we could eliminate a considerable proportion of the waste that the growers have to shoulder at present. I hope the Minister will be able to give us an assurance that under the Bill it will be possible to prevent dried fruits from the Eastern States being unloaded here. At the present time we have regulations enabling us to prohibit the importation of apples from South Australia on the score that the introduction of those apples might mean importing codlin moth from the neighbouring State.

Hon. G. Taylor: We are not totally free ourselves.

Mr. THOMSON: But we are freer than any other part of Australia, and I hope that will continue for a long time to come. I hope the Government will not relax their efforts in that direction.

Mr. Davy: Do you suggest that we should invent some reason for prohibiting the imports?

Mr. THOMSON: No, I am afraid we cannot go to that extent.

The Minister for Agriculture: We have not been asked to relax our regulations.

Mr. THOMSON: But we know there was a suggestion in South Australia that we be asked to do so. If they do ask anything of the sort, the Minister should give them a definite answer in the negative. If we are to have a Bill to regulate the industry, the aim and object of the Bill should be to eliminate unnecessary handling and waste, and to serve the interests of the producers as a whole. I regret to say that the board, while desiring to do all that they consider best for the producers as a whole, are forgetting the rights of the minority and are more concerned with the rights of the majority in any particular district. I hope the Minister, when replying to this debate, will be able to give us a definite assurance from the information he and his co-Ministers in the other States have, that the Commonwealth will be in a position to prevent the existing overlapping. The Bill seems to me to be asking for a just a little more power than at present I feel inclined to give. No doubt, when in Committee, the Minister will be able to give us full information. The Bill makes provision for power compulsorily to acquire fruit, when the price to be paid

shall be the price in existence at the time the fruit is sold. I do not think that is really the intention. If we are to set up a compulsory dried fruit pool, it is not going to be a fair thing if my fruit is sent to the London market when the price happens to be low, and I have to accept that price, while my neighbour, whose fruit is sold say, two months later, gets an exceptionally good price. Certainly that provision in the Bill requires to be scrutinised. Also, in another amendment the board are asking for the power to register, cancel or refuse any dealer's license. To an extent that is only right. But I fear that sometimes the board may act foolishly and refuse say, my license, when I and the growers in my district think I am perfectly entitled to it. To pass that amendment, it seems to me, would be to give the board powers over and above what they are entitled to. In my view, anybody in the business should have the right to appeal to the Minister, and the Minister should have the final say. It is not right that there should be no appeal against the finding of the board. Then the board asks for power to seize dried fruit without giving any reason for their action. Coming from me—in general, I am a supporter of the Bill—this criticism may seem a little incongruous; but I believe much good will result from genuine criticism and a desire to overcome the difficulties that some of the growers have experienced since the appointment of the Dried Fruits Board. I am not opposed to the control. I recognise that in view of the parlous position of the industry it is essential there should be some kind of control. But certainly we require better administration than we have had in the past. I hope the Minister, when replying, will be able to give us some fuller information. I should like to know whether it is considered essential that we should have so many packing sheds, and whether it is possible to have inserted in the Bill a clause that will meet the case I have alluded to in respect of the growers of the Great Southern, to eliminate the enormous waste going on down there through people being compelled to send their stuff to Perth. Also, I should like the Minister to supply us with information as to the cost of handling, and what price was obtained for fruit for local consumption, and what have been the average

returns from exporting. Then I should like the House to have the reasons why the board passed a resolution affirming that we should export our quota of sultanas. It is the duty of the board, representing the producers of Western Australia, to serve the interests of the men they represent. The producers of the Eastern States could take no exception to the board in Western Australia declaring that until such time as the growers in Western Australia produce more sultanas than can be consumed locally, it is not proposed to export from Western Australia the quota of sultanas. No reasonable body of men would object to such a proposal. Then it seems to me the dried fruit board of Western Australia are somewhat quixotic in their desire to assist the producers of the Eastern States, forgetting that in the meantime they are injuring the producers of Western Australia.

Mr. Lindsay: You can blame only the majority of the board.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not opposed to control, for I recognise it is essential, but I feel that the actions of the board during the last 12 months justify me in speaking in the way I have done. I know from personal knowledge that the owners of one of the most promising vineyards in our district have been ruined because of the conditions imposed by the board when first they took control. Those owners worked jolly hard, notwithstanding which they have been driven into the insolvency court. Moreover, it has meant a serious loss to others interested in the industry. I will support the second reading, but I hope the Minister will not unduly hurry the passing of the measure, for I think there are several amendments that must be made. We have to see if we can in any way safeguard and protect the interests of the smaller men in the industry, and whether we cannot eliminate the waste that is going on to-day. No less than £4,000 or £5,000 has been wasted through lack of co-ordination between our board and the boards in the Eastern States. Of course the Minister will reply that we have no power to do these things. But before I agree to the passing of amending legislation, I want to be sure that it will not impose further restrictions on those in the industry. Moreover, I want to see that those engaged in the industry get an adequate return for their enterprise and their efforts.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [8.11]: The parent Act, which was passed in 1926, has not worked out the way I thought it would. The Minister, when introducing the original Bill, led me to believe that until such time as there was sufficient of any commodity grown for export, it would not come under the Act. There are many sultana growers in my electorate, and I have received a sheaf of correspondence from them. Just after the Act was passed, one of my constituents wrote to me on the subject. I wrote back to him, setting forth my views. He maintained that the Act would strangle sultana growing, but I said that until they had fruit for export, they would not come under the Act. Only to-day I have received from this constituent of mine a communication enclosing my original letter. This is what he wrote to me—

I am sending your letter of 14/10/26 containing your views on the Dried Fruits Act, just to bring before your notice again the danger of interfering with industries by Acts of Parliament. Under the board's decision compelling us to export sultanas, the industry here will be killed just as surely as if an axe were used to every vine. Our consumption of sultanas in Western Australia is over £30,000 yearly. We produce about a third of that, but now we are asked to export 80 per cent. from our little lot. So, because they are over-produced over East, we are not allowed to grow enough to supply our own local markets. In my opinion that is interfering with the development of this State. The Bill was instigated by the A.D.F.A. entirely, and now they have got the industry collared, thanks to the assistance of our Parliament.

It may be of interest to members to hear what it was I wrote at that time, under date 14th October, 1926. It was as follows:—

Re Dried Fruits Bill, I am satisfied a Bill is necessary in order to control the marketing of dried fruit. You say sultanas are under-produced for local consumption, and no control is necessary. This is correct at present, and control will not mean that you will have to export, until such time as production has overtaken the local demand, and will not interfere with or lower the price you at present receive. But, as you say yourself, the production is increasing, and will continue to increase. When that day comes, control in the interests of the grower will be necessary, and the Act will be available.

I took my ideas from the speech of the then Minister for Agriculture. It may be advisable for me to read some of his remarks. He dealt with the fact that the Western Australian grower was sending his currants

to the Eastern States. Before we passed the measure in 1926, there were Acts in operation in Victoria and South Australia, which States were controlling the sale of their fruit locally and exporting the surplus. It appears that the Western Australian growers, who were not subject to control by any legislation, were sending their surplus to the Eastern States and spoiling the markets there. We have been told in this House that it is impossible to prevent the fruit coming here from the Eastern States, and it seems rather remarkable that the Minister should have said it was being done at that particular time. The Minister for Agriculture (Hon. M. F. Troy) stated, in 1926—

Last year we exported 166 tons oversea and 327 tons to the Eastern States. It is claimed against Western Australia as a producer that we have taken advantage of the market provided in the Eastern States, and that we are selling the greater proportion of our product there in competition with the products of the Eastern States.

Is not that what the Eastern States are doing here to-day? When the grower, who wrote me from Wundowie, forwarded his letter, he enclosed a cutting from the "West Australian" headed "Exporting Sultanas, the Quota System, Dried Fruits Board's Decision." There are five members on the board, and three of them favoured the export of sultanas and two were against it. Consequently it was by no means a unanimous decision. The chairman, who opposed the motion, was reported as follows:—

The Chairman pointed out that the claim that there should be a uniform export quota, simply for the sake of uniformity, was not based on an adequate reason. There were precedents—such as butter and beet sugar export—for the variation of quotas. Western Australian growers did not produce enough sultanas to supply the State's needs. Why should they be asked to export 80 per cent. of their crop? The State's consumption of sultanas in 1927 was 325 tons, and the quantity produced in the State was 123 tons.

There we have the position as I explained it to my correspondent when I informed him that control would not affect producers of sultanas until the State's needs had been supplied. The chairman continued—

So the State provided a protected market for 202 tons of sultanas for Eastern States.

After disposing of the whole of the local production, 202 tons had still to be imported

from the Eastern States to meet our requirements. The chairman continued—

Had the local growers complied with the export quota of 80 per cent. for sultanias last year out of the 123 tons produced, they would have forwarded 99 tons overseas. This would have resulted in Eastern States growers marketing in this State the 99 tons in addition to the 202 tons they actually did sell here, or a total of 301 tons, against the 24 tons sold by local growers.

That is the position, and it seems to me to be a serious injustice to Western Australia. We have a consumption of 325 tons of sultanias and a production of only 123 tons. Of the latter quantity we are to be allowed to sell only 29 tons in our own State, and the balance is to be supplied by the growers in the Eastern States. I think we are entitled to say that the sultanias grown in Western Australia shall be sold in this State and not sent oversea, at any rate until such time as we have a surplus. There is something seriously wrong, and it is one amongst many of the disabilities that we are suffering under Federation. If the Victorian Government could take such action when Western Australia sent dried fruit over there, why cannot this State do likewise? Let me quote further from the remarks of the ex-Minister for Agriculture—

Last year the Victorian Government commandeered a considerable quantity of our fruit. The consignment comprised 1,500 boxes, of which 400 were distributed amongst retailers before the department in Victoria became aware of the position. The remaining 1,100 boxes were seized by the board of Victoria, and were disposed of according to the wishes of the Minister for Agriculture in that State. I am told very definitely by the authorities in Victoria that they must look after the interests of their own people, and if we pursue the policy of invading their market, they will retaliate and flood our market as well.

The Victorian Minister for Agriculture said he must look after the interests of his own people, and it is up to this House to look after the interests of our people. It is undoubtedly an injustice to our sultana growers, who produce only one-third of the quantity required in this State, that of that third they must export 80 per cent. to the markets of the world and allow sultanias to come in from the Eastern States. It is not an economic position, either. The Eastern States fruit will come from Mildura and will have to bear railway and shipping freights, while our growers are sending their fruit overseas.

The Minister for Agriculture: You do not suggest it necessarily means that we export

those sultanias? It depends upon the price received.

Mr. LINDSAY: As regards that portion of the crop consumed in the State, a price is fixed, and we cannot get away from it. But when it comes to exporting the remainder to the markets of the world, where the world's price will be obtained—and it has been shown that that price is below the cost of production—it is a serious matter. Because of that and in order to ensure for growers bread and butter, if nothing else, we have tried to control the sale of dried fruits, and have increased the price to consumers in Australia so that growers may have a chance to carry on.

Mr. Davy: Do you think that is a good thing to do?

Mr. LINDSAY: I do not think it is. It does not seem to be moral; in fact, it is wicked. Still, it is being done. Though I confess it is wrong, when it is done with other commodities, it must be done all round, and in time I dare say wheat and wool will have to have similar assistance.

Hon. G. Taylor: It will have to be knocked off some day.

Mr. LINDSAY: Reverting to the report of the board's meeting, the board consists of five members elected by the growers of Western Australia. The report shows that two of them, including the chairman, disagree with the proposal. In view of that fact, surely there is good reason for our discussing the matter and even for disagreeing with the decision of the other three members of the board.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Are the members of the board growers?

Mr. LINDSAY: I believe they are. Let me quote further from the report—

The members of the Dried Fruits Board, at a meeting on Thursday, the 9th August, were confronted with the problem of continuing or rejecting the policy adopted in the past regarding State export quotas of sultanias. The question was brought to a head by the receipt of a letter from Mr. W. N. Twiss, Secretary of the Dried Fruits Board of South Australia, who asked if it were possible for the Western Australian Dried Fruits Board to affirm the principle of an export quota, as in the case of the New South Wales board. The members of the board present were Messrs. F. W. Davis (chairman), J. N. Cox, A. D. Doig, P. H. Taylor, and G. E. Cook.

I understand that all of those members are elected by the growers.

Mr. Ferguson: And they were recently re-elected, too.

Mr. LINDSAY: The report continued—

In reply to a question, the chairman ruled that no motion moved could affect the position for the present year. The board had decided three months ago that there should be no exporting of sultanas from the State this year. On that basis dried fruits had been sold and extensive commitments made.

The resolution to which I have directed attention applies to next year and the following years. The board, by a majority of one, agreed that of the 123 tons of sultanas produced in this State, 80 per cent. should be exported or got rid of and not put on the local market.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why do you say 80 per cent.?

Mr. LINDSAY: Because the chairman said so.

The Minister for Agriculture: No, the board merely confirmed the principle.

Mr. LINDSAY: Then I shall read a passage that I have already quoted—

The chairman pointed out that the claim that there should be a uniform export quota, simply for the sake of uniformity, was not based on an adequate reason. There were precedents—such as butter and beet sugar export—for the variation of quotas. Western Australian growers did not produce enough sultanas to supply the State's needs. Why should they be asked to export 80 per cent. of their crop?

Thus the chairman stated that local growers, under the quota, would have to export 80 per cent., and he went further and showed that if we produced 123 tons of sultanas, as we did last year, only 29 tons of that could be sold in Western Australia. If we are to meet the growers of the Eastern States on an equal footing, we must have something fairer than that. The only reason for passing the measure in 1926 was that certain States in Australia had a surplus to get rid of. It was considered to be not right that the growers should be competing with one another in the local market. Therefore a measure of control was given over sales on the local market, and the price was increased for that purpose. The Eastern States have taken advantage of the position and are flooding our markets and forcing our growers to send their product overseas. Twelve months ago I received letters from electors informing me that they had grown their crop, that it was in the hands of the board and could not be disposed of. I spoke to the member for Katanning about it at the time. I called on the board and was told that the Eastern

States had sent a large quantity of sultanas into Western Australia and flooded the market, and that until those sultanas were disposed of, the local product could not be sold. I believe that later on a conference in the Eastern States reached an agreement that such a course would not be adopted again. We should follow the example of the Victorian Minister for Agriculture and show a little consideration for our own people and not so much concern for the people of the Eastern States.

MR. FERGUSON (Moore) [8.28]: I should like to ask members for a moment to cast back their minds to pre-war days when the dried fruit industry of Western Australia was in a very small way. At that time there were only a very few producers of dried fruits, most of them being located in the Swan district. When the soldiers began to return from the war, the then Government were at their wits' end to know how to repatriate them and what to do with them. The Premier of the day, after a visit to the Swan district, came to the conclusion that the dried fruit industry would be a suitable one for the returned men to engage in, and he spent large sums of money in settling a good many men on land in the Swan district. At that time there was a world shortage of dried fruits. The Mediterranean countries, which had been producing most of the world's supplies for a good many years, had been embroiled in the world war and a great shortage of production was the result. Prices soared to a high figure, as high as £90 to £100 per ton. The time came when the vineyards of the Swan district and other parts of Western Australia and Australia generally began to come into bearing. At first the growers received good prices, but gradually the level receded until a few years ago there was an over-production of dried fruits in the world, and prices came back to an almost unpayable level. It was just at that period that the ex-Minister for Agriculture (Hon. M. F. Troy) decided to inaugurate a system of control. The growers at first were divided on the question whether control would be in their interests or otherwise. Some of them asked the Minister to have a referendum taken amongst the growers to decide whether they were in favour of it or not. He refused that request, and decided to embark upon a measure of control. In 1926 he brought down the Bill which the present Minister for Agriculture now

proposes to amend. The latter is very wise to bring down these amendments, because most of them are necessary to ensure that the measure of control now operating in the industry shall be made effective. Once we have embarked upon the principle of control, it is essential that such control should be effective. Although many of the growers were opposed to control at the outset, I think I am safe in saying that the majority, having seen some of the benefits to be derived from a measure of control, are now of opinion that it should be made more effective. Our production of dried vine fruits in Western Australia is something on these lines: We produce about 1,600 tons of currants and consume about 600 tons; we produce about 700 tons of lexias and consume 120 tons, and we produce about 130 tons of sultanas and consume about 300 tons. The members for Katanning and Toodyay are more concerned about those who are producing sultanas. They have given no thought to the interests of the majority who are producing currants and lexias. Although we have a great under-production of sultanas, we should take a broad view of the situation and consider the interests of the majority who are concerned with the growing of currants and lexias. With those hon. members I want to do everything I can to ensure that the producers of sultanas shall have the Western Australian market kept for them. According to the information which was read from the "West Australian" by the member for Toodyay it is possible, if the decision of the board is carried into effect, that this market will not be retained for the Western Australian grower. I urge that the Minister should suggest to the board that it should endeavour to co-operate with the New South Wales board to induce the boards in the other States to agree to Western Australia and New South Wales retaining the local market for the producers of sultanas until the export stage is reached. Neither New South Wales nor Western Australia is in a position to export, while South Australia and Victoria have a large over-production in sultanas as well as other dried vine fruits. It is likely to be some time before New South Wales and Western Australia can catch up to the local demand. In the meantime the local market should be retained for the producers of those States. I am inclined to think we are never going to catch up to the demand for sultanas, as at the present time there is no inducement for the grower to in-

crease his production or for any new grower to embark upon the industry.

Mr. Davy: It would be a disaster if we did have very much more in the way of production of some dried fruits.

Mr. FERGUSON: Yes, because at present the growers are not getting anything like a reasonable return for their labour.

Mr. Davy: It would be a disaster for the public if this kind of legislation were persisted in.

Mr. FERGUSON: Having decided upon this type of legislation we might as well make it effective. There is not likely to be any more planting of dried fruits. The other side of the industry is in a more satisfactory position and might well be developed. The electorate I represent produces about 70 per cent. of the total quantity of dried fruit prepared in this State. I am satisfied from contact with the growers that they feel something should be done to retain the market for sultanas for their confreres who are producing those particular dried fruits. Although I would like that to be done and made effective, I fail to see, and I think the board as well as the producers fail to see, how it can be accomplished. There is no power, unless it can be done by co-operation amongst the Dried Fruits Boards of Australia. No matter how much we produce, or how much we would like to retain this market for ourselves, there is nothing to prevent growers in the Eastern States from swamping our market if they see fit to do so. When the quota system is fixed the growers in each State will get the Australian price for that which is consumed locally, and will have to take the export price for the balance. There are six processing sheds in Western Australia, and these handle all the dried fruit produced. It seems a hardship that the growers in the Great Southern district, who have no processing shed of their own, should be compelled to send their fruit to the Swan in order to have it processed. I would point out to the member for Katanning that the only way out of the difficulty is for him to endeavour to get a shed established in the locality. The Dried Fruits Board would be likely to have no objection to that, provided the shed came up to standard requirements. I believe the Commonwealth authorities have a finger in the pie, and are very particular as to the type of shed that can be licensed, and the class of machinery

with which it is necessary to process the fruit in order to bring it up to the standard insisted upon by the board. Whilst the hon. member may have no difficulty about getting the shed licensed, he will have to consider that the machinery with which the fruit is processed will cost between £6,000 and £7,000. That is probably out of the question, for it is unlikely that the few growers concerned would embark upon that expenditure.

Mr. Thomson: Would it not be possible to process the fruit sufficiently for it to be sold locally, and for the growers not to be compelled to export it? Prior to the passing of the Act all the dried fruit that came from the district was sold within the district.

Mr. FERGUSON: I do not think the boards would agree to that. They would insist upon the fruit being processed in a properly constituted shed, and in a proper manner to ensure their absolute control over it and the quality being kept up to standard.

Mr. Thomson: Of course!

Mr. FERGUSON: Each of the six sheds has its own agent for the disposal of the produce. These agents meet and fix the price to be paid for the quota that is for local consumption. The Minister was particular about declining to say that the local board fixed the price, and would not say who fixed it. It is the general opinion that the agents do it.

Mr. Davy: Practically a price-fixing combine.

Mr. FERGUSON: It has been said that, owing to the actions of the board certain men who embarked upon the industry have been brought to the verge of bankruptcy.

Mr. Thomson: I say that some have become bankrupt.

Mr. FERGUSON: It is not fair that this unfortunate result should be laid at the door of the board. That body has done its best to carry out the Act. It is the opinion of most of the growers that the boards have done fairly well. They are also of opinion that whilst there has been some hardship imposed upon a few growers in the outlying districts, through being forced to send fruit to the various licensed sheds to be processed, the industry as a whole has derived considerable benefit from the operations of the boards. It is doubtful whether the local board is responsible for bringing any vineyard property to the verge of bankruptcy.

It is possible that had there been no Dried Fruits Board and no system of control every grower in Western Australia would have been brought to that position. There would have been infinitely worse than the infliction of hardships on one or two growers. It is a little difficult to cope with the hardships that have been inflicted. I do not know how they are to be overcome. The cost of installing processing sheds and plants would be prohibitive. To say that the board is responsible for the mishap that have occurred is a little far-fetched and not quite justified.

Mr. Thomson: It is.

Mr. FERGUSON: The House would be wise to agree to most of the amendments contained in the Bill. One or two may not meet with the approval of members, but I think the Minister is deserving of thanks of the growers for introducing the Bill to give effect to the Act passed in the Eastern States where it seems to have secured almost universal approval.

On motion by Mr. Davy, debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [8.43] in moving the second reading said: This Bill will be familiar to members inasmuch as we have previously had before us other measures of a similar kind. During the past three sessions such a Bill has twice been introduced. On the first occasion it did not contain more than does this one. It sought to amend the Electoral Act to some extent. Last year fewer amendments still were contained in the Bill. On this occasion what we desire to do is to give effect to the principle of having joint rolls and practically nothing else. My instructions to the Parliamentary draftsman were to cut out anything that would not be required, except to give effect to the principle of having joint rolls for the State and the Commonwealth. A Bill has passed this House on each of the occasions when it has been introduced. This is not a party measure. In the first instance it was not passed in the Legislative Council owing to some technical point. On the last occasion when it was introduced in the Legislative Council, the Bill was deferred for six

months. I think if most members of this House, as well as of another place, were on the hustings, and some elector asked them if they were in favour of the principle of joint rolls, at least 90 per cent. of them would unhesitatingly answer that they were in favour of such a principle.

Hon. G. Taylor: But they were not returned.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not say that anyone did express himself in favour of the principle, but I believe that if members of this House or another place were asked the question they would say they were in favour of joint rolls for the convenience of the public. This Bill is introduced only for the purpose of affirming that principle. There is nothing else in it. There is one slight amendment to the Electoral Act, which is in existence in each of the other States. Outside of that there is nothing in the Bill which alters the law in any way, nor is there anything which is not absolutely required to give effect to that principle. Similar legislation is in existence in three of the other States. I noticed in yesterday's morning's paper, in some political announcement from New South Wales, that the Government were introducing a measure of a similar character there. It is not a party question by any means. Governments of all shades of political opinion have introduced this Bill into the various Houses of Parliament. I am not reflecting upon what has been done in another place. Apparently it has been sought there to make this a party measure. The principle was established in Tasmania in 1909, nearly 20 years ago.

Mr. Davy: You had some other things in the previous Bill.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There were one or two other things, but we have got down to bedrock on this occasion.

Mr. Lindsay: It is to be hoped those things are cut out of this Bill.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: They are. The measure merely affirms the principle I have mentioned. The corresponding South Australian Act was passed in 1920, and the Victorian Act in 1924. While viewing the measure quite irrespective of party standpoints, I may say that it was adopted in all those three States by Governments which were not Labour Governments. From what I can gather from all sources, no dissatisfaction has been ex-

pressed in any one of those States with the operation of the measure. Everyone will agree as to the great convenience for a man who seeks the franchise having to fill in only one form and send it to one official, and then knowing that he is on a roll which satisfies all the requirements of the law and enables him to vote at both State and Federal elections. Uniformity of procedure is essential, and all the clauses of the Bill are designed to that end, and to that end only. There seems to be some misunderstanding, if not inside this Chamber, then outside it, regarding the position of joint rolls. The phrase "joint rolls" seems to indicate to some people that the Federal Government will have something to do with the conduct of State elections. But that duty will be undertaken by no one except the Chief Electoral Officer of this State. Everything appertaining to our State elections will be carried out by State Officials, who are responsible to the State Government, who in their turn are responsible to this Parliament.

Mr. Thomson: What do you estimate the saving at?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is not expected to be very considerable. For the first year it is estimated at from £500 to £700, and it will increase, as time goes on, proportionately with the numbers of electors on the various rolls. However, that is not the paramount consideration as regards the Bill. The chief consideration in introducing the measure is public convenience.

Mr. Lindsay: The proposed system would be much better for the electors.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. Many of us have had experience, at either State or Federal elections, of the man who goes into the polling booth to record his vote and comes out looking disappointed and says, "I am sure I am on the roll, and here I find myself unable to vote." He is on one roll, too. Eventually he produces a receipt and says, "Here is the receipt to say I am on the roll." On looking at the receipt one finds that it is signed by a Federal electoral officer whereas the elector is trying to vote at a State election, or vice versa. The average member of the public is not nearly so well informed about electoral matters as are members of Parliament, and therefore he

is very liable to make mistakes. Such mistakes occur frequently, and result in numbers of people being disfranchised. The passing of the Bill will result in many people enjoying the right to the franchise, a right which they do not secure under present conditions. Persons do not get the franchise owing to the mistaken belief that, having receipts for claim cards, they are on the rolls.

Mr. Marshall: I hope we shall not adopt the Federal system of postal voting. That has disfranchised many people.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That system is awkward. Its provisions were never intended to apply to a State the size of Western Australia, where a man may be a thousand miles from an electoral officer and may get a mail not more than once in six months. However, no clause in the Bill deals even indirectly with the conduct of elections. The measure deals only with rolls and enrolment. I do not propose to discuss the aspect raised by the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall).

Mr. Lindsay: The Bill does not make the times of closing uniform.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. That would have to be done by amendment of the Electoral Act, which is entirely apart from the present Bill. It is expected that the passing of this measure will effect great improvement in the rolls. The chief advantages will be: firstly, common units of registration; secondly, one claim card for enrolment or transfer containing applicant's declaration of qualification; thirdly, one electoral registrar for both Governments. If the Bill passes, the agreement to be made with the Commonwealth will be on lines similar to those adopted in the case of the Victorian agreement. For the information of hon. members I have had copies of that agreement circulated. The basis of the agreement with Victoria is the appointment of the same person as registrar under the joint control of the State and the Commonwealth Chief Electoral Officers. Under this Bill our Chief Electoral Officer will have the right to inspect rolls and do everything that is necessary for the successful registration of electors. If he considers that the responsibility cast upon the Federal registrars—the 27 deputy registrars, and their various clerks scattered all over Western Australia—is discharged in such a manner as to give

cause for any complaint, he can immediately take action in order to see that the proper procedure is adopted in regard to enrolments.

Hon. G. Taylor: You will be able to use the post offices as the Federal authorities use them now?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. The agreement also provides for the alteration of sub-districts so as to make boundaries co-terminal. Any system of joint rolls would be almost entirely ineffective if the Federal and State boundaries were not the same. It is provided that in regard to any place which is a subdivision of a division, the Governor General may issue an Order in Council rendering the boundaries co-terminal where they are within a Federal division. The only factor that makes for non-success in a system of joint enrolment I repeat, is boundaries that are not co-terminal. •

Mr. Davy: Which will be altered—the State or the Federal district?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The Bill does not in any way alter the boundaries of districts. That matter will be dealt with in a Redistribution of Seats Bill.

Mr. Davy: Then I do not understand.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Leederville is the best illustration I can give. The State electoral district of Leederville is in two Federal divisions, partly in the Federal division of Perth and partly in the Federal division of Fremantle. But there is provision in the Bill for meeting that difficulty. It would be got over by printing a joint roll for the Leederville district to be used at State elections. Still, there is no reason why such a difficulty should necessarily arise, seeing that the State Government have indicated their intention of introducing a Redistribution of Seats Bill and that the Federal Government have agreed to endeavour to make the boundaries co-terminal. Thus the difficulty will not in any case be permanent. While it exists, it can be met by amalgamating the rolls of the two divisions and printing the amalgamated roll. That, of course, will be done at the expense of the State; the Commonwealth will not bear the cost of anything that we do for our own convenience.

Mr. Davy: I do not understand how the Governor in Council can alter the boundaries.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I will give another illustration. On the Eastern Goldfields, years ago, the Brown Hill sea

and the Boulder seat were co-terminal with the Federal subdivision of Brown Hill and the Federal subdivision of Boulder; but since that time, while the original Federal subdivisions have remained, the State Assembly seats have been altered by redistribution, and their boundaries now are different. There is no reason why the Commonwealth should alter its subdivisions just because the State electoral boundaries have been varied, and consequently the original Commonwealth boundaries still remain. If this Bill were passed and an agreement made under it, the Federal Parliament would, however, amend the boundaries of its subdivisions within the Kalgoorlie district.

Mr. Davy: Oh, the Federal subdivisions?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, to conform with our electoral districts. In that way all the subdivisions of the Federal electorates will eventually have boundaries co-terminal with those of our State districts. That is all right where our electoral districts are within the Federal subdivisions, but the difficulty commences where they overlap. Under the agreement which the Bill has in view, while it would not be mandatory on us to have no redistribution, that does not conform to Federal boundaries, so far as is possible with due regard to community of interests, we would endeavour to make the boundaries of our districts co-terminal with the Federal boundaries. Even if we did not quite succeed in that, there is the consideration that the Federal Parliament will have a redistribution of seats after the census, and that redistribution will enable the Commonwealth from a practical point of view to do what is necessary. The Federal redistribution will take place in 1931, so that only one State election is likely to occur in the interim. Leaderville is the worst possible case one could cite in connection with the Bill, but the difficulty there, as I have said, will be got over by the printing, at the State's expense, of a joint roll. It will be better for the State to bear that comparatively small expense in order to give effect to the principle of joint rolls, than to have chaos or even inconvenience in the conduct of an election. The joint rolls would include individual cases where an elector was not entitled to be on both rolls, owing to some unavoidable slight variation of qualifications. Some people would find themselves entitled to be on the State roll but not on the Federal roll, and conversely some people

would find themselves entitled to be on the Federal roll but not eligible for the State roll. There will not be many such cases—perhaps a hundred in the whole of Western Australia. But those cases will be easily distinguished by a mark placed opposite the names and a foot-note stating which roll they are entitled to be on.

Mr. Angelo: Is it suggested to have a footnote regarding the nomads too?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. I do not know that that comes under this provision.

Mr. Coverley: Why do you refer to nomads?

Mr. Angelo: I was just asking the question.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The State Chief Electoral Officer will have the right at all times to inspect claim cards. The Commonwealth will bear all the expenses except 50 per cent. of the cost of printing and binding rolls and the material necessary for that work. That will be divided between the Commonwealth and the State on an equal basis. The same conditions will apply to any special allowances made to police officers for the work they are doing to-day. The State has to make available the members of the police force for the purpose of making ordinary inquiries. If it is desirable, or considered advisable, not to continue the system of having joint rolls, the arrangement can be discontinued by 12 months notice. If that notice is given, the whole thing can be scrapped and done with.

Hon. G. Taylor: Without any question of indemnity on either side?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. All that will be necessary will be for Parliament to pass the necessary resolutions and the Government can terminate the agreement so that the whole thing will lapse.

Hon. G. Taylor: The Governor could get out of it by issuing a proclamation, irrespective of Parliament.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. If at any time the disadvantages of the system are considered sufficiently serious to warrant our terminating the arrangement, it will only be necessary to give 12 months notice. In order to give effect to this principle, the Bill provides for a new part, Part IIIA, in the Act. That new part will deal only with Assembly elections and the necessary rolls, and will be purely a machinery portion. It will be necessary to leave in Part III. to deal with the enrolment of people for the Legislative Council and the

new Part IIIA will come into force after the necessary proclamation has been issued by the Government. Even then, if we found that the difficulties were so great that we did not think it advisable to proceed with this arrangement, the legislation could merely remain on the statute book, but would not be proclaimed. As we are to have a redistribution of seats—

Mr. Davy: Is that the one you are going to effect?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. If when the redistribution of seats is undertaken, it is found that the boundaries of 40 out of the 50 constituencies are not co-terminal with the Federal boundaries, the Government can determine that it is useless introducing a principle of this description because the difficulties will be too great. If, as the result of the work of the people who will be responsible for the allocation of seats and the fixing of electoral boundaries, it were found that the boundaries were co-terminal—

Mr. Davy: Then the redistribution is to be the work of a Commission?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The hon. member cannot draw me on that point now, because I can tell him candidly that I do not know.

Mr. Davy: You must have a fair idea.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. There will be someone or somebody responsible for dealing with the boundaries, and he or they will not be tied down by the Government with instructions that boundaries fixed must be co-terminal with the Federal boundaries. That aspect will be one of the least of the factors governing the position although, of course, it will be of some importance.

Mr. Davy: I think you must have the Bill drafted by now!

Mr. Thomson: This Bill makes provision for the Governor in Council altering boundaries.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, but I have already explained that provision. Notwithstanding that the member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) wants to draw me on this question, I can say that I do not know much about it—at least not for publication.

Mr. Thomson: They are rather curious about it.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I can say that there will be a body appointed—it will not be a matter for one individual to undertake—whose duty it will be to fix the boundaries, but they will not be bound to

make them co-terminal with the Federal boundaries. Of course, hon. members will realise at once that if the boundaries do happen to be co-terminal, it would make the application of the Bill much easier. On the other hand, if those charged with the duty of fixing the redistribution of seats say that from the standpoint of community of interests, the spread of population or the distance from the capital, they cannot make the boundaries co-terminal and at the same time accord equal justice to everyone concerned, the upshot will be that the Bill will be on the statute book, but it will not be proclaimed. I do not know that anyone is in a position to-day to give a reasonably accurate forecast of where the new electoral boundaries will be fixed.

Hon. G. Taylor: They are rather anxious about it in Menzies.

Mr. Chesson: And they are not the only ones who are anxious.

Mr. Davy: Will the principle of one vote one value apply?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I am discussing electoral boundaries. At present if a person desires to be enrolled, two claim cards have to be sent to two different officers at two different addresses. Should the Bill become law, the signing and despatching of one card will entitle the individual enrolled to vote at both State and Federal elections. That system will be more efficient because the resources of the two electoral departments will be amalgamated in an effort to secure a better roll than is available at present. In addition to that, the Federal department has the advantage of its habitation index, particularly in the metropolitan area, where the index contains the names of streets and the names of the people who reside in the various houses that are numbered and are recorded in the index. That habitation index is constantly being checked by postal officers. On our part, we have all the local Government officials and our police and in addition there are 2,000 electoral agents scattered all over Western Australia. The work of registration will be in the hands of five divisional returning officers and 27 electoral registrars—all at the Commonwealth expense. The only alteration of any consequence that is sought in regard to the existing Act refers to the qualifications of electors. The intention is to make the qualifications as nearly uniform as possible. Our Electoral Act requires that a person shall

have resided in Western Australia for six months before he is qualified to be enrolled. The Commonwealth Electoral Act provides that a person must be resident in the Commonwealth for six months before he can be enrolled, but subsequently if he proceeds to another State, which is a Federal subdivision, he has to be there for one month before he becomes entitled to enrolment in that State. The last clause in the Bill deals with the position and it is proposed to alter our Act so as to make it more uniform with the Federal law. We say that an elector will have to be resident within the Commonwealth for six months, but to qualify for enrolment in the State he must be here for at least three months.

Mr. Davy: Why not leave it at six months?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is rather too long a time. For instance, a man may have lived in New South Wales for eight or ten years and he may then come to Perth to reside here. We propose to require that he shall reside here for three months before he can become enrolled.

Mr. Davy: Did you not propose to make the period one month last time?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes.

Mr. Davy: You have seen the error of your ways.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not want to talk about big Australians and that sort of thing, but I do not think there is any great distinction between the political parties throughout Australia; at any rate, no distinction that will prevent a man of ordinary intelligence, after 12 months' experience in the various Australian States, from getting a good grip of the position in this State. The different political parties in various parts of Australia are somewhat similar and there is not much difference in the policies of the several political parties.

Mr. Davy: But there is a tremendous difference in the quality of members of Parliament. You would not class yourself with the late Labour Government in New South Wales.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not intend to express any opinion detrimental to the Labour Government in New South Wales or in any other State. Probably they endeavoured to carry out the Labour policy under different and difficult circumstances. We may have been a little

more fortunate here than the Labour Government of New South Wales, who were actuated by the same motives.

Mr. Thomson: If you had attempted to bring in some of the legislation that was introduced in New South Wales, you would not be in that fortunate position.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The progress of Western Australia is such that we could not bring in legislation that may have been deemed necessary in New South Wales.

Mr. Davy: Has it not been a matter of conscience?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I found, on looking through the various Acts that have been passed in connection with the joint electoral roll proposition, that the provision we now suggest is in existence in the other Acts.

Hon. G. Taylor: You refer to the three months' residence in the State?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. If that provision is good enough for them and has worked smoothly in those States where the joint rolls have been adopted, we need not hesitate to apply it in Western Australia. The contentious clauses that were in the Bill introduced on a former occasion, have been eliminated from the measure now before members. I want this statement to be taken literally: When I gave instructions to the Parliamentary Draftsman regarding this Bill, I said, "Eliminate everything except that which is necessary to apply this principle." In those circumstances, it cannot be said on this occasion that any party considerations weigh at all, nor can it be said that there is any ulterior motive behind it. I am sorry that that was suggested in another place. There is nothing of that sort about the Bill, and I hope hon. members will accept the assurance of the Government on that point. If necessary, I will be prepared to explain the various clauses during the Committee stage. Having discussed such a Bill on two occasions during the last three years, I hardly think it necessary to go into the question of principle or into details at this stage. I will content myself with moving—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Davy, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.13 p.m.