

BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.*In Committee.*

Resumed from the 22nd October. Hon. J. W. Kirwan in the Chair; Hon. H. J. Yelland in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 100a.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the proviso:—“unless such holding is used for agricultural or pastoral purposes.”

If any religious or charitable organisation carries on business in the pastoral or farming areas, the effect of exempting it from vermin rating would be to deprive neighbouring settlers of protection. Complaint has been made that Government reserves become breeding grounds for vermin, and I am afraid the same thing would happen on the properties referred to if they were exempted. When such organisations carry on trade as do ordinary settlers, they should play their part in the matter of vermin destruction.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: Mr. Hamersley has overlooked the principle observed in all our legislation that institutions of the kind should not be taxed. The measure does not relieve such organisations from the necessity for destroying vermin; it merely relieves them from the contribution of taxes towards the general fund provided for the destruction of vermin. Some of the institutions are subsidised by the Government, and why subsidise them on the one hand and tax them on the other?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Suppose one of the organisations had a big farm or station.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: It should be exempt from taxation.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Why?

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: Because the business is not run for private profit and because such organisations have always been exempt from taxation.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: If they rented a shop, they would have to pay rates.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: I dare say they would. This clause merely provides the relief from taxation usually given to religious and charitable organisations.

The HONORARY MINISTER. The tax is not such a serious matter as might be inferred from Mr. Yelland's remarks. The

fund has been established for the benefit of all engaged in the industry, and I cannot see why such organisations should be exempt.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: Quite a number of institutions conduct farm schools and instruct young people in farming operations.

Hon. V. Hamersley: And receive fees for it.

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: No. Should institutions like the Swan Boys' Orphanage and the Fairbridge Farm School be taxed?

Hon. G. Fraser: Do they sell produce?

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: Yes, to enable them to carry on the institutions, but they are assisted by the Government or the public, or both.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Would you agree to the insertion of the words “agricultural school”?

Hon. H. J. YELLAND: That would not meet the position. The amendment is a direct attack on a principle observed in all our legislation that such organisations should be exempt from taxation.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 24th October, 1929.

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Panton) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

BILL—SANDALWOOD

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

BILL—CREMATION.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—MENTAL DEFICIENCY.*Recommendation.*

On motion by the Minister for Health, Bill recommitted for the purpose of further considering Clause 29.

In Committee.

Mr. Lambert in the Chair; the Minister for Health in charge of the Bill.

Clause 29—Power to recover expenses:

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: During the debate last night the member for West Perth showed that Subclause 2 made an offence of debt a criminal one, embracing imprisonment. He wished to have that altered to bring it into conformity with a debt in a civil case. I had no objection, and said I would consult the Crown Solicitor and have the necessary amendment framed. This has been done. I move an amendment—

That Subclause 2 be deleted, and the following inserted in lieu:—"Any money payable under any such order shall be recovered as a debt due to the superintendent or the managers of the institution in which the defective is for the time being detained, or to the guardian or to the person authorised by the board to obtain the order, by action in any court of competent jurisdiction."

That will give what the member for West Perth has asked.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They will pay all the same.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes, but by a different method.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I move a further amendment—

That in Subclause 4, after the word "summarily" in the last line, the words "by action in any court of common jurisdiction" be inserted.

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

Bill again reported with amendments.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE.*Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. TROY—Mt. Magnet) [4.43] in moving the second reading said: This is a harmless little Bill. It has been customary for the Industries Assistance Board to take mortgages over crops of Industries Assistance Board clients for the recovery of the amounts advanced. Very frequently the board have handed back to settlers some of the proceeds from the sale of the crops to enable them to carry on. The board may have a lien to the amount of £500 or £1,000 over a crop. When the money is paid they may find it necessary to hand back a proportion of this to the client to help him to handle his property. This has frequently been done. The Crown Law Department have pointed out the irregularity of such a proceeding. The Agricultural Bank, therefore, finds it necessary in the case of every refund to take out an additional mortgage. That means delay for the settler as well as a certain amount of expense. This Bill provides that the original refund made shall come under the mortgage, and that no fresh mortgage shall be necessary.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It brings the settler under the Act instead of under the mortgage.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. This will facilitate business, which will be made cheaper for the settler. That is the object of the measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT.*Message.*

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation in connection with the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. TROY—Mt. Magnet) [4.47] in moving the second reading said: The same principle is contained in the Bill I now present to members as characterised the Bill I have just been dealing with. I have already ex-

plained to hon. members the practice adopted by the trustees of the Industries Assistance Board with regard to refunds and the same thing applies in connection with the Agricultural Bank. Amounts received by the bank are deemed to be repayments of loans, and the money refunded to the settler is not secured by the existing mortgage. The Bill provides that such a refund shall continue to be secured by the first mortgage and that will serve to obviate the trouble and expense of registering a fresh mortgage each time a refund is made. That is the first principle contained in the Bill. The second is that the Bill makes provision for an increase in the fees paid to the trustees. Under the amending Act that was introduced by Mr. Angwin in this House, the maximum amount that could be paid to a trustee in a year was fixed at 250 guineas. The Act of 1909 set out that the trustees were to receive three guineas per sitting. The Bill provides for an increase of those fees to four guineas. No further aggregate amount will be required than that which is already provided in the Act. That amount is regarded as sufficient to cover the increased fees. The Agricultural Bank trustees have to shoulder greater responsibilities than are accepted by any other board in Western Australia. The Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board advance large sums of money to settlers every year. In making those advances the trustees of the bank take greater risks than are taken by any other institution in the State. Unlike directors of companies, who merely attend meetings for an hour or two and deal, in a more or less formal manner, with what has been done, the Agricultural Bank trustees sit practically every day until late at night. They go thoroughly into the files of clients whose business is under consideration. They have to give as much attention to their work as the General Manager, and are obliged to investigate matters fully. They must make themselves conversant with the details of administration in order to do justice to the clients of the bank and to the State.

Hon. G. Taylor: Are their recommendations always carried out?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. All advances made by the bank are entirely on the recommendations of the trustees, which are never interfered with.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The trustees control the bank; that is their business. The Minister does not hear whether the trustees grant an advance or not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course, that is the position. I never hear unless there are complaints, or unless some new policy is sought. If a departure from established policy is contemplated, then the trustees consult the Government. The trustees may desire to make advances in a locality where such assistance has not previously been rendered. They may wish to make advances for some new purpose, such as for fallowing, for work in sandplain country, and so on. In such instances the policy of the Government is sought. But once the policy is stated, the trustees operate entirely at their own discretion, and take the full responsibility that the Act places upon them. Hon. members will agree that the trustees are entitled to receive increased fees. I have no doubt that if the Agricultural Bank were privately controlled, the trustees would be paid upwards of £2,000 a year. The State receives remarkably cheap service from these men.

Hon. G. Taylor: And the limit they can earn in a year is 250 guineas.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Hon. G. Taylor: That amount should be increased.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course it should. If the Agricultural Bank were a private concern, the trustees, in view of the work they do, would receive more than £1,000 a year.

Hon. G. Taylor: If they were employed by the Commonwealth Government they would probably get £5,000 a year.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. It was suggested at one stage that the amount set out might be absorbed by the trustees in day sittings only. As it is, they sit all day and well into the night. That may not be regarded as right, and it might be suggested that they could spread out a day's work over two days. The point is that, in order to cope with all the business, it is necessary for them to continue working at night so that the General Manager may get the business through. Of course, he does not demand that the trustees shall sit late every night, but they are doing so now. Parliament can well show appreciation of their work by agreeing to an increase in the fees payable to them. The only other principle contained in the

Bill seeks to increase the amount of the trustees' authorisation for the expenditure upon the erection of premises. Section 2 of the Act passed in 1922 authorised the trustees to spend up to £10,000 in the erection of bank premises. That amount has been exhausted and it now sought to increase that authority to £15,000. Offices and residential quarters are required in various centres.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Strong rooms and safe buildings are required in these days. We run great risks.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, we require better premises, hence the proposal to increase the authorisation to £15,000.

Hon. G. Taylor: Will that be for new work?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, for the erection of new premises. For instance, we wish to erect offices at Salmon Gums, which is the centre of a large area. I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—INTERPRETATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [4.55]: This is one of the Bills that the Government bring down, which contain few words but have a very important bearing on the control of public funds. I did not hear the speech delivered by the Premier when he moved the second reading of the Bill, but I presume he pointed out that under different Acts we have set out the methods of bookkeeping to be adopted, and the Auditor General has proceeded to give effect to those methods from time to time. I have no hesitation in saying that our bookkeeping methods throughout the service could be considerably improved, and great economies could be practised. As it is, we can do just as we please regarding the methods we employ. Public finance is not much like private finance, although we hear that it is. The methods employed in Government departments are not at all like those practised outside. There is practically nothing in a Government department that

is not public property, and every member of this House has the right to demand information and see documents concerning any subject, no matter how private it may be. I suppose that is right, but it makes the administration of Government departments expensive. The Bill proposes that we shall set aside not only all obstruction but seeks to nullify the provisions already to be found in Acts of Parliament in connection with bookkeeping matters, as well as those that may be included in measures passed in the future. By an order of the Governor-in-Council, acting, of course, on the recommendation of Ministers, who will turn will make those recommendations upon the advice tendered by departmental accountants, this far-reaching alteration in our bookkeeping methods is to be made.

The Premier: That would be done only in such instances as were considered advisable in the interests of economy.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But that is not all. If the Premier says that the authority will be exercised only when it is wise to do so, it will be all right.

The Premier: That is the intention.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, that is the intention.

The Premier: There could be no objection in making an alteration unless it were to facilitate the business of the department.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should think not, but it is bad to have continuous alterations made; we should have some settled system. Before we make any change it should be carefully thought out and we should alter our methods altogether if we were found advisable. What is proposed under the Bill is that alterations may be made notwithstanding a decision this House has already come to relative to this matter or may come to in the future. Bookkeeping should always be perfectly simple. The best books are the simple books. If it were not that we had evolved a most complicated system of bookkeeping, with checks, counter checks, safeguards against frauds and so forth, we should be where we were years ago. We would have simple entries that everyone could understand, and the work would be done at a minimum cost. The extension of bookkeeping systems has led to the establishment of accountancy as a profession and, in consequence, books are difficult to understand.

The Premier: Some of the Acts under which we are working are 30 years old and

new methods have been adopted since then. The Bill will help us to keep pace with modern methods of bookkeeping where it is desirable.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But this is an all-embracing measure. It means that we need have no regard for what has been done or may be done.

The Premier: Can you suggest why the Governor-in-Executive-Council should arrive at a decision to effect a change except where it was advisable?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier can answer that question as well as I can. If measures were taken only when there was some good reason, many acts would not be undertaken at all.

The Premier: There is no politics in this.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is all politics.

The Premier: There are no politics in a system of books.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: All the devious ways that we find in a politician we find, too, in bookkeeping. I do not suppose the Premier proposes himself to alter the system: it will be the accountant of the Treasury who will say 'we shall simplify this and simplify that.'

The Premier: The change will make for efficiency and the saving of time.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It will be a change, anyhow. We set up requirements in nearly every Act that we pass. The existing system of bookkeeping is costly and does not reveal all that we want to know, but any proposed change should be discussed with the Auditor General, whose work would be very much simplified if we had simpler books. Years ago I went through the Agricultural Department and asked for the trading accounts of the State farms. I could not get them because the method of bookkeeping then in vogue did not permit of it. The system has been altered since then. When first I went to the Lands Department entries had been made in the books for some 50 years, but I do not think any balance had ever been struck. All that has been altered. The only fault to be found with our existing books is that they are expensive to keep and the method is wasteful. All the same, I do not know that the Bill will alter that position very much, unless we go into the whole matter. The public often want to know the true financial position of the State. There is

no reason why we should not be able to get an exact statement of the position at any moment without having to make calculations, as is necessary under the existing system. I should like to see our methods of bookkeeping improved, but before I consent I should like to know how they are to be improved. The Premier says that in certain directions changes are advisable. Under the amendment it is proposed to make those changes. I know from experience something of the methods obtaining, but I do not know just how far and in what direction the Premier intends to go. It will be noted that the Bill proposes the adoption of any method or system commonly used in commerce. That, of course, is a very vague term. The systems used by the banks all differ considerably, and if we take the bookkeeping methods commonly applied in commerce in Perth, we will find in them great differences. What the Premier really means is that a simplified system will be adopted by a department without having any regard to anything else in vogue at the moment. If that is to be done, and if this amendment will give the public clearer information about public finance, I shall be glad to agree with it. But I had hoped the Premier would tell the House he had consulted the Auditor General and the Treasury accountants before submitting this amendment.

The Premier: Of course, it has been done on the recommendation of the accountants.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am glad to hear that.

The Premier: As a matter of fact, new methods were adopted, and the Auditor General queried them because they did not conform with the Act. These loose-leaf ledgers are not regarded as books.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yet they have been in use for the last 20 years, and it is now too late to object to them. We can all agree to that change.

The Premier: The Crown Law Department advises that there is no legal interpretation of "book."

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: These books are designated loose-leaf ledgers, and every ledger is a book.

The Premier: The Crown Law Department say the loose-leaf ledger is not a book.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Crown Law Department say it is not a book—I am not surprised at that. Apparently the Bill is brought here because the Auditor

General has objected to the loose-leaf system, and because the Treasury accountants think they can improve the existing method. The effect of the Bill will be that the Auditor General will no longer object to these later methods of bookkeeping. In my own time at the Treasury I thought we ought to introduce considerable changes in the bookkeeping system, but I could never get from the officials a system that could be approved and adopted. The Bill is a short cut. In effect it says to Parliament, "Tell the Government to do as they please so long as the Executive Council agree." It is a pretty drastic change. I hope it will not mean that the furnishing of returns as we have them now will be interfered with in the slightest. Every quarter we get certain necessary publications.

The Premier: Take the Titles Office. If they want to find out anything, they have to search through a book at the cost perhaps of an hour, whereas under other methods they could go straight to the name they want.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think they have the card system now. I warn the Premier that if this thing be lightly faced, and if he takes the recommendations of each department without the approval of the Treasury accountants and the Auditor General, he will soon land himself in trouble. So I hope he will see to it that the Audit Department and the Treasury agree to any proposed alteration of system in any of the departments.

The Premier: The only two departments at present concerned are the Treasury and the Land Titles.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The accountants at the Treasury ought first to approve of any proposed change.

The Premier: The amendment has been recommended by the Under Treasurer and his next senior officer.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But before making any change you should have the recommendation of those officers of the Treasury, and also the Audit Department. I warn the Treasurer to be careful about these proposed changes.

MR. KENNEALLY (East Perth) [5.13]: With the object of the Bill I am heartily in accord. If the Bill is intended to simplify methods of keeping Government accounts, every member will give it unqualified support. But it does occur to me that

in effect the Bill will go much further. The parent Act, in Subsection 1 of Section 3, makes provision that in the absence of any express provision to the contrary, the parent Act shall apply to all Acts of Parliament previously passed or that may be passed subsequently. Therefore, that applies to Acts, whether for Government departments or not. This amendment, working upon the same lines, in my opinion makes provision covering all Acts of Parliament, whether or not applied to Government departmental bookkeeping. There are other Acts of Parliament that make provision for the keeping of time books. I have in mind the Industrial Arbitration Act. That makes provision for the keeping of books, and if any of the provisions of this Interpretation Bill, if it should become an Act, were made to apply to the keeping of books provided under the Industrial Arbitration Act, it would, from the point of view of those who have to attend to the policing of that Act, render it practically inoperative in certain sections providing for the keeping of books. Therefore, in my opinion, the clause would be very dangerous in its present form. I understand that the Premier does not intend the measure to apply to other than Government Acts, and if that is so, the language used could be improved to make clear that it is intended to apply to the bookkeeping under Government measures.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The Arbitration Act is a Government measure. How could you discriminate?

Hon. G. Taylor: That will not get over the difficulty.

Mr. KENNEALLY: I think it will. The Arbitration Act does not provide for the keeping of books in Government departments. The books I refer to are those kept by private employers. Unless we made this measure apply specifically to the books of Government departments, the Arbitration Act or any other Act under which books have to be kept would be brought within the scope of the measure. In its present form, I would feel compelled to oppose the Bill, but as the Premier has intimated that the Bill is to apply only to Government bookkeeping, I suggest that further consideration be given to the point.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [5.17]: When the Premier moved the second reading of the Bill, the measure ap-

peared to be perfectly simple and harmless. He told us it was merely to facilitate the adoption of loose-leaf ledgers, cards, etc., for the Government service. Under the Interpretation Act a loose-leaf ledger is not a book. The Bill, however, will give almost unlimited power, because it provides that any system may be adopted that is commonly used in commerce. Under the Bill, therefore, anything can constitute a book; it need not necessarily be a loose-leaf ledger. Still, no Government would dream of adopting a system that would make the departmental bookkeeping more complicated than it is at present. The object is to simplify the bookkeeping and make it more efficient. There is force in the suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition that before any alteration is recommended or adopted, it should have the support of the Auditor-General and the Treasurer. We shall not always have the present Premier in office.

Mr. Kenneally: Why be so pessimistic?

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Another Premier not so well versed in the facts might act on less wise advice, and consequently might approve of a system of bookkeeping that would not be advantageous. We do not want to weaken the power of the Auditor-General to challenge any item of expenditure.

The Premier: How in the name of fortune could it do that?

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I understood the Premier to say that the Auditor-General had queried what was being done at present.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder—in reply) [5.21]: I do not think there is any danger of the measure applying in the way suggested by the member for East Perth. It certainly is not intended that it should apply to any except Government bookkeeping. It could not be applied to systems of bookkeeping for private concerns, traders and business people generally.

Mr. Latham: It would apply to an incorporated society working under an Act.

The PREMIER: But the Governor-in-Council could not lay down methods of bookkeeping for business people and commerce generally. Too much importance has been attached to the first portion of the proposed new section and not sufficient importance to the last two lines. It provides that where provision is made for keeping books for any of the purposes of the

Act and any method or system commonly used in commerce for keeping and preserving records and accounts is adopted with the approval of the Governor-in-Council, such method or system shall be deemed to be a book for the purposes of the Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That would mean the approval of the Government.

The PREMIER: Yes, but purely for keeping the accounts of departments. I am sure the Bill is restricted to systems of bookkeeping for Government departments. Certainly that is the intention. Let me read, for the information of the Leader of the Opposition, a report made by the Under Treasurer—

Certain Acts of Parliament, enacted before modern methods of bookkeeping and record-keeping were in existence, refer to "book" and the law officers have had to advise the Auditor-General and departments seeking to adopt up-to-date systems that such articles as loose-leaf ledgers, cards, etc., are not books within the meaning of the Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They have been in use for years.

The PREMIER: But it has just been discovered that they are not books within the meaning of the Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why do you want to discover that after 20 years?

Mr. Thomson: Have they been used for 20 years?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes.

The PREMIER: The report continues—

It is proposed to overcome this difficulty by enacting that Government departments may use any modern system as used in commerce for bookkeeping and preserving records and accounts, provided such system is approved by the Governor-in-Council; and if such system is approved by the Governor-in-Council then the method adopted shall be deemed to be a "book" for audit and other purposes.

Hon. G. Taylor: If those words appeared in the Bill, it would be perfectly plain.

Mr. Kenneally: Or if there were reference to Government departments.

The PREMIER: The report continues—

The chief departments concerned are the Treasury and the Supreme Court, the Treasury as regards accountancy and the Supreme Court as regards registers kept for bills of sale and other matters which have to be registered, and which would be kept infinitely better and more systematically by utilising a card system or some other system, which the law officers now advise cannot be called a "book."

Take the Bills of Sale Act, 1899, as reprinted in 1925. It will be seen that the method in which the registrar is instructed to keep bills of sale shall consist of a registered book, details being given of how the register book is to be kept. This prevents a better method of keeping these records being adopted. The officers concerned have put up a very good report showing what an immense amount of time is now wasted, pointing out that under the present system members of the public having to search registers take an hour or more before completing one search, and then they run the risk of missing the name for which they are searching, whereas if a modern system were followed, the searchers could go straight to the name of the person required.

A similar system is being followed in the Titles Office in connection with certain matters as regards which the Act has not specified any special method of record, and every satisfaction is being obtained.

There is no doubt that the intention is merely to improve the efficiency of and perhaps effect economy in Government departments. If the House is satisfied with that explanation and passes the second reading, I do not propose to take the Bill into Committee to-day, and I shall have further inquiries made as to whether the clause clearly expresses the intention or whether it might be made more explicit.

Hon. G. Taylor: You have made it perfectly clear.

The PREMIER: But some members seem to think the language in the clause does not clearly express the intention. It would be made clear if we stipulated that the Bill was for keeping and preserving records and accounts in Government departments.

Hon. G. Taylor: That would meet the position.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Have the discussion on the clause and then you will know what is desired.

The PREMIER: Members have expressed their opinions and have made clear what they desire.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Received from the Council and, on motion by Mr. J. H. Smith (for Mr. Davy), read a first time.

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.31]: I cannot approve of the Bill. The parent Act is perfectly clear, and says that members of the Licensing Bench must be appointed for a term of three years. The term is fixed at that period for obvious reasons. The court is of the highest importance, and should not be subject to any control by the Government except as Parliament has provided by the Act itself. Apparently, on the 15th August these magistrates ceased to be magistrates, and anything done by them since then is illegal. They are now no more magistrates than hon. members on the Treasury bench are. The position set up is difficult and unfortunate. Acting no doubt in the belief that they were properly constituted, the licensing magistrates have gone on administering the Act. Everything done by them has doubtless been done properly, though done without authority. The Bill provides that licensing magistrates may be appointed for six months or a less period from time to time. Thus the court could be kept going by appointments for six months, and a further six months, and then a further six months, and so on. If any Act requires serious administration, it is the Licensing Act. No Government should interfere in the slightest degree with its administration. Magistrates, if not appointed for a fixed term of three years, would not be as free as one would like them to be. I do not know why the Government wish to make appointments for six months instead of three years. In the first instance, I believe, the re-appointment was missed when the date came round.

The Premier: It was overlooked.

Hon. SIR JAMES MITCHELL: We must validate what has been done, but I do not think the House should go beyond that. Acts of Parliament are prepared with considerable thought, and passed after long discussion. For what seemed to Parliament a perfectly good reason at the time, we said there should not be any short-term appointments. No measure has received such careful scrutiny or so much attention as the Licensing Act, except insofar as it provides for the appointment of these magistrates.

The Premier: When a Bill is reconstructed by a select committee, there fre-

quently are conflicting provisions afterwards.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I agree with that, especially when the select committee are moved not from inside but from outside.

Mr. Mann: The select committee made that Bill a good measure.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There was a generous desire to make alterations, as a result of which Parliament drifted in connection with the appointment of the licensing bench. However, the term was made three years in order that the licensing magistrates might be perfectly independent, as all magistrates should be. The Government have the right to remove the licensing magistrates if the administration of the Act does not prove satisfactory. In earlier days we appointed resident magistrates to the licensing bench; but that system has been departed from. A chairman was appointed from outside the service. He came from the goldfields. It was thought desirable to have a goldfields man on the licensing bench. Now, apparently, these magistrates are men who can carry on other businesses. With this change in the appointment of the majority of the magistrates must come great care on the part of the House in giving powers to the Government. If the Government have the right to make short-term appointments, they will be practically in entire control of the work of the licensing bench. I shall not support the Bill, though I am prepared to support a measure validating what has been done. Let us leave it at that. The position of these magistrates will be somewhat altered when the moneys in the compensation fund run out.

The Premier: They will run out when the contributions run out.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I believe the total of the contributions is small. A change may have to be made in that respect.

The Premier: Nearly all the reduction work is done.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This important work cannot be done except by men giving their whole time to it. Under the Act it is expected that the magistrates shall make themselves fairly familiar with the manner in which licensed houses have been conducted; and I believe the magistrates have done so. They visited most of

the country towns, and they know a great deal of what has happened. However, there seems to be a weakening on the inspection side, which is the important side.

The Premier: As a fact, the inspection staff has increased in numbers. Constables have been appointed licensing inspectors as part of their ordinary police duties.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Apart from the work done by constables, there ought to be some other provision for adequate inspection. We ought to see that people who want accommodation are accommodated, and generally that the Act is carried out.

The Premier: There is one inspector whose whole duty is licensing work; that is, apart from the Chief Inspector.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The work is well done, and hotels are very well conducted indeed.

The Premier: In some cases the inspectors are too strict.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, and that is wrong. Money has been compulsorily spent on unnecessarily expensive hotel buildings in many country centres. At the same time, country hotels are pleasant places to stay at, and are excellently run. However, it is wrong to spend £50,000 on a hotel in a country place. The cost of upkeep and running is considerable, and all that expense has to come out of the pockets of local customers and the travelling public. This criticism refers not to the inspector's work, but to the work of the bench. For instance, there is no need for mosquito curtains where there are no mosquitos.

The Premier: And septic tanks should not be insisted upon where there is no water supply.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Where does the Bill provide for mosquito nets?

Hon. G. Taylor: That is in the parent Act.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: All these matters are at the discretion of the licensing magistrates, and do not appear in the parent Act.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I think you are in a stone-walling mood today.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No. The present is an opportunity for the hon. member interjecting to discuss the question. In his district there are complaints about the decisions of the licensing bench

—at Midland Junction, for instance. It is important that we should discuss the matter now, and that the licensing bench should get some idea of what hon. members think of the work that has been done. The licensing bench have enormous powers, and control the size of the business to be done and the cost to be incurred in erecting accommodation. They can also control details of management. Their duties are important, and those duties have been performed very well indeed.

Mr. Corboy: There has been a vast improvement in recent years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, naturally; otherwise the improvement stands to the credit of the late Government. The Premier should limit this Bill to the validation of what has been illegally done. If for any good reason he wants to appoint the members of the licensing bench for one short term, provision should be made for that in the Bill; but to give continuing power to appoint the bench for less than three years seems to me quite wrong.

Hon. G. Taylor: Very wrong indeed.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If there be any good reason why just now, possibly owing to a change in connection with the magistracy, the Government desire time for consideration, I will approve of such a provision; but I will not approve of unlimited power to appoint for a lesser term than three years. I realise that reduction of licenses no longer plays an important part in the work of the licensing bench. Possibly, in time resident magistrates will do much of the licensing work.

MR. LATHAM (York) [5.45]: We should have some permanency with our boards, and particularly a board such as this that deals with important matters throughout the State. The Premier told us that this was really a validating Bill, but the Bill does not bear out what he said, because it provides for the extension of the term of office "from time to time."

The Premier: I will be content with the first six months.

Mr. LATHAM: Then there can be no objection to the Bill. I realise that mistakes will occur in the best regulated families. Government officers are no more immune from the liability to make mistakes than anyone else. Provided the Premier agrees

to strike out the words "from time to time" there can be no great objection to the Bill.

MR. MANN (Perth) [5.46]: It is necessary that the Bill should be passed to validate what has been done by the Government. But the Government should take into consideration whether the licensing bench, as now constituted, cannot be dispensed with.

The Premier: As a matter of fact, the idea of the appointment for six months was to give us time to consider the whole question of the constitution of the court.

Mr. MANN: I had the honour of being a member of the Royal Commission that investigated the licensing laws and with the present Minister for Works and the member for Subiaco, I took an active part in the drafting of what is now the Act. At that time it was clear that a considerable amount of work had to be done in the way of the cleaning up of the liquor trade, particularly on the goldfields and in some of the country towns. That work has been completed and all that there is now for the board to do is to hear applications for transfers of licenses from one person to another and applications for new licenses in new districts. The latter do not occur very frequently.

The Premier: And to see that all existing licensed premises are kept up to the standard required by the Act. That is a big work.

Mr. MANN: At the same time, I do not think there is enough work for three men to do. It could all be done by one man—

The Minister for Works: Don't you think it would be placing too great a power in the hands of one man?

Mr. MANN: I do not think so. I was going to suggest that if we had a licensing magistrate permanently appointed, he could act with the resident magistrate in the district in which a particular application was being made.

The Premier: That was how, under the old Act, so many unnecessary licenses were granted all over the country.

Mr. MANN: There was no licensing magistrate at that time.

The Premier: There were three.

Mr. MANN: The work was done by the resident magistrate. I suggest that all that is now necessary to do could be done by a magistrate with experience of the licensing laws, acting in conjunction with a resident magistrate of the particular district.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I hope we shall never go back to that system again.

Mr. MANN: At that time we had a magistrate acting with two local justices.

The Minister for Works: I was one of the justices who sat on the bench.

Mr. MANN: A magistrate with a knowledge of the liquor laws could well do the work acting with the local resident magistrate or police magistrate as is done in Victoria.

The Premier: Victoria has a court like ours—three permanent men.

The Minister for Works: What you suggest is the South Australian system.

Mr. MANN: South Australia has one magistrate and he acts with the resident magistrate of the district in which the case is being heard. The present bench—and I am loth to criticise magistrate or Government officials—are not all practical in their decisions. They have issued most extraordinary instructions to licensees, instructions quite incapable of being carried out. The member for Guildford mentioned an instance when he referred to mosquito nets. Of course it is very nice to have mosquito nets in hotels.

Mr. Thomson: They are very essential in some places.

Mr. MANN: In some country hotels they have ordered that two parlours should be provided, in hotels where bedrooms were more necessary than parlours.

The Minister for Works: The Act provides that there shall be two sitting-rooms.

Mr. MANN: At a place like Derby they inquired why the hotel did not have bath-heaters, and they issued instructions that meat safes should be kept on the verandah instead of in places away from the heat. In fact, the members of the bench have shown that they are not practical when administering the Act. Considering all these things, it might be wise, now that all the cleaning up has been done, to alter the personnel of the board. This could be done on the score of economy and in the interests of better administration. I repeat that one magistrate, acting with the resident magistrate of a particular district, could now do all the work that is necessary.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [5.52]: The Bill was to an extent objectionable but the debate has satisfied the Premier that what is really required now is

to validate what has been done. The House will be justified in agreeing to that part of the Bill, but to give power to do the other things proposed would be unwise. I am pleased that the Premier has accepted the suggestions that have been made in the course of the debate.

On motion by Mr. Corboy, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1929-30.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Lambert in the Chair.

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

Note—Mines, £103,476:

MR. CHESSON (Cue) [5.54]: Last night the Minister for Mines gave us the figures relating to miners' phthisis and the results reported to date. The statistics disclosed a serious state of affairs. We were told that the total amount of compensation that had to be found to the 30th June last was no less a sum than £104,650, and that it was estimated the compensation for the current financial year would amount to about £43,000. It is regrettable to think that up to the present time 371 men have been reported to be suffering from tuberculosis since the inception of the Act in June, 1925, and that of that total 115 have died, 140 are totally incapacitated, and 72 are fit for only ordinary or light work. The total number of dependants of deceased and totally incapacitated men who are still eligible for compensation is 355, comprising 86 wives, 59 widows and 210 children under 16 years of age. Everyone will agree that it is the State's obligation to look after these people, but the difficulty presents itself when we realise that we cannot add any further imposts to the industry. If we attempt to do anything of the kind, the result must be to close down some of the big mines where so much development work is going on at the present time, and where many men are being employed. Some people might say that it would be a good thing if the mines closed down, but I do not hold that view. There was a time when the industry might have made provision to compensate these men, and that was when it was in a prosperous condition. In

those days we might have increased the royalties on the gold produced and in that way established a compensation fund. It would be folly to attempt to do anything of the kind now. In days gone by it was possible for any individual to secure employment in a mine. There was no thought of a medical examination and we found men coming to this State from South Africa and elsewhere, where tuberculosis was prevalent, and getting work underground in the mines of this State. These men have come here, worked underground, and by that means have disseminated germs in the mines. Some years ago I had a talk on this question with Dr. Blanchard who was then at Cue. He expressed the opinion that germs were in the underground workings. Everyone knows the mortality that occurred in the Great Fingal mine. That was a quartz mine, and the nature of the lode was such that the dust impaired the lungs of the men. As the germs were underground, men could not be employed there for any length of time without contracting the dread disease. In those days no provision was made for examination prior to engagement. To-day every man who goes underground must first be medically examined. In places where there are no X-Ray plants the local doctor has no opportunity to say definitely whether a man has the disease or not, although he may appear to have the symptoms. The Great Fingal paid over £2,000,000 in dividends. It would never have missed a small royalty in the old days to make provision for the men. It has, therefore fallen upon the State to look after those who have been stricken down. We know what the industry has done for Western Australia. An obligation is now cast upon the people to assist the afflicted persons. No one has a right to complain of what the State is doing. It is no use lamenting over the past; we must now provide for the future. The necessary safeguards for health can be installed in every new mine. The primary facility is that of adequate ventilation. The whole trouble in the past was due to lack of ventilation and lack of a proper distribution of air. The dust was another important factor. In the big mines there is no regularity about firing. This is done at any time on a shift, with the result that smoke and fumes are about the men all the time. Most men who worked in the industry for any length of time had no chance to escape the disease. In addition to the necessity for providing an ade-

quate supply of air to flow in every working place in undiminished quantities, as is provided for in the Mines Regulation Act, the conditions should be altered to ensure a certain amount of air going into every place, as well as to ensure the regulation of the time of firing and the use of water jets. The Minister has said that the Mining Act will be amended and that it will provide for water lining machines. This will greatly minimise the dust nuisance. If the dust nuisance is overcome, sufficient air is made available throughout the mine, water is freely used, and the fumes after firing are got away, mining will be made more attractive to the workers. There will be less difficulty in getting men to go into the mines. At present mining is not attractive. Companies are beginning to realise that better results are achieved from better conditions. If the conditions are not good, the results correspond. On the Kalgoorlie fields the mines to-day are fairly well ventilated, owing to a recognition by the companies of this important fact. We can profit by past experience. The facilities I speak of will not be costly in the case of new mines. They must be equipped with proper ventilation, the dust nuisance must be abated and the time of firing must be regulated. These things will make the mining industry a healthier one to work in, although it will still not be as healthy as some other industries. According to the figures, mining is on the decline. I was very hopeful that with the necessary capital quite a number of shows would soon be producing. What they require is up-to-date treatment plants. Unfortunately, such plants have not yet been placed upon these mines. A great amount of development is going on at Wiluna. Indeed, Western Australia, from a mining point of view, is depending very largely upon that particular development. The Government themselves have laid out a great deal of money in building a railway to that centre. They are satisfied, from the opinions expressed by the State Mining Engineer, that the mine will show a fair profit. A pilot plant has been working there for some years. The mine is one of the best developed in Australia. It is only a question of gold extraction. That problem will have to be solved by the metallurgical chemist. I feel confident that the Wiluna mine will never be a burden upon the State. The company are satisfied that they will get results. This will mean the opening up of a big mine which

has been closed down for some years because of the failure to get good extraction. The Youanmi and Lancefield mines are also big properties. The assay results were good, but the companies could not get the gold extraction from the ore, and had to close down. It was stated by the managers at Youanmi that in the stopes they were operating, 58s. dirt was buried there and could not be treated profitably. If results can be obtained at Wiluna, they can also be obtained at Youanmi and Lancefield. That would mean a great deal to the State. There are one or two good propositions in the Cue electorate. A good deal of money has been spent on the Big Bell mine. No less than seven bores have been put down, and there has been opened up a lode that is 100ft. in width in every instance. Throughout the lode the values exceeded 25s. per ton. This is one of the biggest lodes in Australia, and it can only be treated on a big scale. There is good reason to hope that capital will be forthcoming for the development of this mine. A large number of men would then be employed upon it. Boring is also being carried out by a syndicate in the Little Bell mine alongside. I do not know what has been the result, but I am hopeful that it will turn out to be good. The Mararoa mine was under offer to an English company a little while ago, but it was not taken over. This was due to the large amount of capital that was being sunk in Wiluna, and to the Horse-shoe merger proposition in Kalgoorlie being put through at the same time. The money market in London was, therefore, tight. A South African company is now dealing with the proposition, and I am hopeful it will be taken over. That would mean the employment of a good deal of labour there. Some excellent results have been obtained at the Cue battery. The Minister referred to a parcel of 24 tons yielding 178 ozs. of gold, and another parcel of 40 tons from the same show yielding 218 ozs. From Lake Austin 100 tons yielded 600 ozs. These are abandoned mines. The parcel of 40 tons came from a party who own a lease on the Fingal lode. It looks as if these people were going to make a big rise. They have a decent chute of gold going down and are satisfied that they will do well. Other crushings have gone over an ounce. In the case of the Lake Austin and Fingal mines the tailings went an ounce to the ton, but these are not included in the results. Through the Prospecting

Board the Government have assisted the industry in a material manner. Every bona fide prospector is given assistance so long as he is a man of decent character. He is given sustenance, tools and other equipment so that he may carry out his operations. A large amount of money has been spent by the Government on this work. Most of these men are elderly people, for the young man of to-day does not seem to take to that work. The men who came across to the State as pioneers are still the only ones who are interested in prospecting. I have been over a great portion of the auriferous belt in this State and feel satisfied that big finds will yet be unearthed. Most of the outcrops have been located. People rushed through the belt and anything that represented an outcrop was discovered. Prospecting must now be done more systematically. Alluvial gold is found all over the place, but as yet the chutes from which the gold came have never been found. There is a big overburden in this country, and before these chutes are found a great deal of systematic work must be done. The men who go out prospecting must be fairly well equipped. When they reach the places where alluvial is found, they cannot rush over it as was done in the early days. They have to work intensively to locate the places from which the gold emanates—that is the reason why no new big finds have yet been made. The Prospecting Board will assist any bona fide person to search for gold so long as he does so in a known auriferous belt.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. CHESSON: I desire to compliment the Government on the assistance they have rendered the mining industry, firstly through the Mines Development Vote, which has created opportunities for large propositions like Gwalia to employ considerable numbers of men in development work. Money spent in that direction means an excellent chance of mines continuing to produce over a long term of years, with benefit to the shareholders and the added benefit of the Government's advances being repaid. In regard to prospecting, too, the Government have rendered valuable assistance. I feel confident that in the enormous auriferous belt of Western Australia new fields will be developed. Thus our empty spaces will be filled. In the North an important find would answer the demand for population. For many years to come the

only prospect of peopling our North lies in the discovery of gold or oil. The Government are also giving every assistance in the carting of ore, thus bringing a show that is within a radius of 25 miles to within a radius of five miles. The Government allow 1s. per ton, thereby enabling a prospector with a show at a distance of 25 miles from the nearest battery to open up his proposition. I can certify that prospectors are most grateful for the assistance the Government have rendered them. In my own district there has been no complaint by any genuine prospector, or by any mine owner who can put up a reasonable case. Fair treatment is given invariably. I am sanguine of valuable results, as so far Western Australia's auriferous belt has only been partly explored. Outcrops have been found, but systematic prospecting should result in the development of important fields. I compliment the Government on their mining estimates.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [7.35]: The figures quoted by the Minister as to the call made by gold mining on the manhood of Australia, and of Western Australia in particular, give cause for grave anxiety. Last year the value of our gold production was £1,671,093, and the Auditor-General's report shows that the State paid last year by way of compensation under the Miners' Phthisis Act £41,144, making a total of £105,949 since the Act came into existence. Comparing last year's figures of production and compensation, it is seen that for every £40 of gold won the State had to pay £1 in compensation to afflicted miners. Though realising the great debt Western Australia owes to gold mining, one cannot help wondering whether the price paid in the health of our manhood is not excessive, and whether it is not imperatively necessary to adopt some method of minimising the dreadful toll. We have profited a good deal by the experience of South Africa. I believe our Miners' Phthisis Act is based upon South African legislation. Might it not be worth while to consider the possibility of alternative employments for men engaged in the mining industry? The South African mines employ about 1,500,000 natives. In mentioning this fact I know that I am likely to be charged with wishing to encourage black labour, but I merely desire to draw attention to the system adopted in South Africa. There the natives work in the mines and underground for three

years only, after which they return to their kraals, their old open-air life and their rural habits. As a result, natives who have worked underground in South Africa are not afflicted with the same serious amount of disease as our miners. While in nowise criticising the industry, one cannot help wondering whether sufficient care is being taken of the health of the miners. The Government are to be congratulated on having introduced a measure for the relief of miners suffering from disease and thus disabled from following their calling, but might we not go a little further and by means of medical examination evolve a scheme for preventing the continuance of the drain on our miners' health?

Mr. Marshall: The drain will be a diminishing one.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not know that. I do know that at present it is most serious. Further, there are the wives, and the children up to a certain age, of disabled miners to be provided for. The Government are endeavouring to meet the case of dusted men by placing them on the land near Southern Cross.

Mr. Marshall: We are paying now for the derelicts created 25 years ago. Had this Act been in operation 25 years ago, the expense would not be so great to-day.

Mr. THOMSON: That is a matter of opinion, and I shall not enter into an argument with the hon. member. I am dealing with the question as it now presents itself to us. On the Minister's figures the drain, instead of decreasing, becomes a greater factor year by year. The member for Cue (Mr. Chasson) said that the germs of the disease are in the ground.

Mr. Marshall: Yes, unfortunately.

Mr. THOMSON: It remains to be seen whether with the aid of science we can extirpate those germs and thus make mining a healthy industry. I hope this will prove practicable, and I am sure every member of the Chamber joins me in that hope. The Government have acted liberally, even utilising portion of the disabilities grant to pay insurance premiums under the Workers' Compensation Act, thus helping the industry though the disability in question cannot be described as of Federal origin, having been imposed by the State Parliament. All sections of the Chamber desire to assist the Minister to increase gold production. It has been suggested that amalgamation of mines would result in reduction of costs.

That may be the case, or may not; I cannot say, not being an expert miner. After all, it is the cost per ounce that tells. It is said that for every ounce of gold that comes out of the earth, considerably more than an ounce goes into the earth.

Mr. Marshall: That has been so in the past, when costly buildings were erected on the leasehold before it was known what the mine was worth.

Mr. THOMSON: That may be correct; I shall not enter into that phase of the subject. I wish to state my personal desire to stand solidly behind the Government in their endeavour to increase the State's gold production. When replying, the Minister might make a reference to the Ravenshorpe smelter case, to which there are allusions in the Auditor-General's report. I know the Minister had nothing to do with that; it represents a legacy the Government have to carry. It seems to me that we have arrived at a state of perpetual motion regarding this difficulty, and it appears to be impossible to reach finality. I believe the Minister has been making an endeavour to arrive at a solution.

The Premier: It has been a harvest for the legal profession.

Mr. THOMSON: It has been an absolute gold mine for the lawyers.

Mr. Davy: I have not had a bob out of it, at any rate.

The Premier: The member for West Perth is about the only lawyer who has not benefited.

Hon. G. Taylor: He is waiting his turn.

The Premier: Perhaps he will come in at the finish.

Mr. THOMSON: I am not criticising the Minister because I believe he has been honestly endeavouring, in common with those who preceded him in his office, to reach finality. I understand from statements that have been published in the Press that considerable interest has accrued and heavy legal costs have been incurred in connection with the litigation. Perhaps the Minister will yet be able to solve the difficulty.

The Minister for Mines: We had a hard try and the Chief Justice was with us, but the Full Court overruled the Chief Justice. I do not know how I can possibly finalise it now.

Mr. Davy: I will tell you!

The Premier: I am afraid this problem will be handed down to our successors for ever.

Mr. THOMSON: There does not seem to be a very hopeful outlook. I assure the Minister that anything I can do to encourage the extension of the gold mining industry, or any other mining interests that will be profitable to the State and also to those engaged in them, will be done readily. I notice that provision is made for an inspector under the Miners' Phthisis Act. I have been told that there is a certain amount of dread amongst the men who are inspected that they will not receive the consideration they think they are entitled to.

The Minister for Mines: Where did you get the information that there was an inspector appointed under that Act?

Mr. THOMSON: I understand there is an inspector who has the right to say whether or not men will be brought under the provisions of that Act.

The Minister for Mines: I do not know anything about that, and I am the Minister for Mines.

Mr. THOMSON: I am pleased to hear that; I was informed that there was such an inspector.

Mr. Marshall: That was wrong.

Mr. THOMSON: Then I shall not pursue that matter further. I trust the hopes of the Minister will be realised, and that there is a new era of prosperity before the gold mining industry of this State. On a recent visit to the goldfields it was satisfactory to me to note that instead of people concerning themselves with the selling and removal of houses, they were more interested in the erection of homes.

Mr. Marshall: You come to Wiluna next month and I will show you what is happening!

Mr. THOMSON: That is a satisfactory and healthy sign, and I hope it will continue. I trust that the amalgamation of various mines will help towards the prosperity we hope for, that future developments will provide healthy employment, and that instead of large sums having to be paid to miners as compensation under the Miners' Phthisis Act, whoever may be Minister for Mines next year will be able to inform us of a decline in the number of men compelled to be brought under the provisions of that measure.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret) [7.50]: I do not desire to delay the passage of the Mines Estimates. Over £42,000 is provided for compensation under the Min-

ers' Phthisis Act, and the rest of the money that we are asked to vote concerns salaries only. I was rather struck by the statement made by the Minister regarding the effect the mining industry has upon those employed in it. There is no doubt about the human toll. The figures given to us last night were alarming. The Minister did not advance any suggestion as to how that state of affairs could be prevented in the future. We know that in some of the newer mines that are being opened up, better provision for air is being made, as well as in connection with developmental work, than was done on the mines of the Golden Mile. A statement by the Minister appeared in the Press to the effect that a new process for the treatment of ore had been successfully tested on the goldfields and that the Government intended to subsidise the installation of new plant to enable that process to operate. I commend the Government on their decision. If it can be proved that wet ore can be brought to the surface without adding to the cost of treatment, it will represent a great advance in safeguarding the health of the miners working below.

The Minister for Mines: I think so, too.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Can the Minister tell the Committee whether the process has been successfully operated on any extensive scale?

The Minister for Mines: Something like 400 tons have been treated in various parcels.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I understand that the installation of the necessary plant will cost about £20,000 and that the company desire assistance from the Government. According to the statement in the Press, the Minister stated that if certain arrangements were made the Government would advance about £10,000. If this process is likely to prove successful, the Government would be justified in spending any amount within reason to put the plant into working order. According to the Estimates, we will spend £40,000 odd this year in connection with miners who have been affected by their work underground, and that expenditure will continue in the future. If the new system proves successful, it will mean a great saving under that heading. I understand that the new process will mean that plenty of water will be played on the ore as it is broken down below. It will be wet when it reaches the surface, and it can be treated

without being dried as is necessary under the present process. The necessity for drying the ore involves double handling and added cost. Recognising the value of the new process to the industry, and the beneficial effect it will have on the health of the miners, the Government will be well advised to render every assistance possible.

Mr. Marshall: I do not think that the watering of the ore will be altogether pleasant for those who are working down below.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Surely it is better for the men to put up with that unpleasantness, in the interests of their health, than that they should continue working under present conditions and go to an early grave.

Mr. Marshall: That is so, but it will be rather inconvenient for the men working with the water coming down on them.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: At any rate, I think it is worth trying out in an endeavour to minimise the danger that confronts the miners to-day. It will be worth the expense involved. I do not think the Government should be afraid to spend a few more thousand pounds than has been indicated, in an effort to test out this proposition.

The Minister for Mines: There need be no doubt about it: it will be given a trial.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I am glad to hear that. I think the Minister told us that about £80,000 had been spent in assistance rendered to the Sons of Gwalia Mine. I was pleased to hear him say it was hoped that with a few more thousand pounds spent on development work, the mine would be on a payable basis and able to carry on. Any expenditure that will enable a mine to operate for years and pay dividends is surely justified. The Government deserve every credit for their action. When the Minister replies I shall be glad to hear an explanation regarding the guarantee in connection with the Horseshoe mine.

The Minister for Mines: I will explain that.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I hope the Minister will tell us the position exactly regarding the guarantee at the bank and whether it was called up. At the same time I question the legitimacy of the claim, because the company declared a dividend the year before, representing an expenditure of over £30,000. I claim that the money allocated for dividends should have gone back into the mine for further developmental purposes. As that

money was not forthcoming, there was no alternative but for someone to step in and the Government did so and kept the mine working for a considerable time. With reference to prospecting in the back country, I am sorry I have to confess that Governments have been backing prospecting parties for the past 28 years without much success. I am sure I could count on the fingers of one hand all those whose ventures have been attended with success. I do not desire to daunt the Minister. I would not discourage him from sending men into the back country, especially the old prospectors who know the country. Such men should certainly be assisted. The members of the Prospecting Board have done splendid work. I have recommended several prospecting parties and the board have given every consideration to them. I do not want the Minister to suggest to the members of that board that they should be a little more careful in their judgment, because one never knows what is ahead when he goes out prospecting.

Mr. Marshall: And you have not in the present-day men the experience of the old prospectors.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: That is quite true. The old prospectors have died out, and the younger men have not come on. Prospecting does not appeal to the younger generation. That is easily accounted for, because there is not now the allurements for young men to take up the job.

Mr. Teesdale: It is too far away from the beer.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I am not going to say that. But if there could be found a new part of the State that had not been prospected, and regarding which there were reports of Bonanzas found, reefs studded with gold, endless alluvial on the surface, we would have thousands of young men starting out to-morrow.

Mr. Clydesdale: And old ones as well.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Yes, even the member for Roebourne and I might venture out; but if the member for Canning decided to go, he would go in his luxurious motor car. If there were to-day the inducements for young men go out prospecting that there were in the old days, we would again find young men going out. But as it is, one might travel in Western Australia hundreds of miles from the rail head and find every reef tapped, every alluvial gully panned and tested by earlier adventurers.

What inducement is that to young inexperienced men?

Mr. J. H. Smith: But was not gold frequently found by inexperienced men?

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Yes, but the first men out were experienced prospectors. Others coming after them chanced upon it lying on the surface.

Marshall: In many instances they camped on it overnight and discovered it next morning.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I am sorry we cannot find some effective means of stimulating prospecting. A friend of mine, a very old prospector, is even now getting assistance from the Government to go out to the Warburton Range. He was there 25 years ago and he knows the country well. He is a bushman almost without equal in Australia, although like me, he is now getting up in years. However, he is going out again and I sincerely trust he will find something worth while. As I said before, most of these Estimates are for salaries. The Minister, I suppose will bring down on the Loan Estimates the amounts to be expended for further development of mining. When that is done we shall be able to help him with our encouragement and advice.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [8.5]: I agree with previous speakers that it is pathetic to see the huge expenditure in which the State is involved in supporting those afflicted and rendered physically unfit for further service by their occupation for long periods in the gold mining industry. Let it be said to the credit of the Government that while it was a formidable financial task, nevertheless they heroically took it on. One can only compliment them on their humane feelings in doing something to compensate those poor unfortunate men and their dependants. For it is very necessary that those dependants, young people, on starting out in life should be well equipped with good conditions and reasonably good education. I am thankful to the Government for all they have done in that regard, and I agree with the Minister that, after all, while the expenditure at present seems very large, we may regard it as being at its peak and hope that soon we shall see the beginning of a gradual decline in this amount.

Mr. Thomson: Tell us what the position is.

Mr. MARSHALL: The position is that for the past 30 years no effort has been made

to clean out the mines. The greatest crime of all was that the disease was in the mines. Unfortunately for mine owners and miners alike, even the Mines Regulation Act, although inherently efficient, was honoured more in the breach than in the observance, and there was no keen desire in anybody to keep the mines clean and well ventilated. Consequently we have bred in our mines, particularly the deeper of them, the malady known as miners' phthisis, which has become rampant throughout the gold mining industry. The trouble was that in the early days men who were contagious in themselves were invited to work without any very strict supervision alongside young, healthy men. In many instances the younger men contracted the disease from the older men and quickly died, because their constitutions could not throw off the disease or even allow them to stand up to it as well as the older men were doing. So our minds became literally infected. To-day we have cleaned out the seriously afflicted men and have in the mines only the minor forms of the disease, such as silicosis and fibrosis. All men carrying the germ, afflicted with T.B., have been expelled from the mines. Moreover, the 44-hour week is a big factor for improvement, inasmuch as it enables the mines to be aired and cleaned out over the week end. So, with the contagious men gone, and the mines cleaned up, it is only logical to assume that in the course of a few years we shall see a decline in the heavy expense the Government are heroically carrying to-day. Had the Act been in operation 20 years ago, the possibilities are that this cost would not be one-third of what it is to-day. In all probability within the next five or ten years most of those now being compensated will have made the great sacrifice to the industry and passed away. Again, the dependants of those men as they grow up will be put off the compensation fund. If with none but clean, healthy men in the mines we find in the next two or three years we are getting no relief, the best thing we can do will be to close down the industry altogether.

Mr. Thomson: The Minister last year hoped the amount would be less this year.

Mr. MARSHALL: The hon. member does not fully understand the position. Naturally a Treasurer with only a limited amount at his disposal would desire that the most acute cases should be taken out of the mines, and that following the annual

examination those suffering from the disease even in a minor degree, should also go out. But we could not take them all out at once because to do that would be to settle the mining industry. Those men are all experienced practical miners and to take them all even those with only slight signs of miner's phthisis, out of the mines at once, would be fatal to the industry.

Mr. Thomson: But in their own interest they ought to be taken out.

Mr. MARSHALL: And in the interest of others, of those working with them, for we do not want the clean men to be poisoned. Had the laboratory officials taken it on themselves to remove all in one hit they would have left the mining industry with only five per cent. of efficient men. Miners cannot learn their business in five minutes. A good shaftsman or a man who can go out in the level and economically bore out the face, must have had vast experience. So it would not have been very wise to expel all affected men at once. Consequently this was not done, and so there is no sign as yet of any decline in the amount it is costing the Government to compensate those men afflicted with the disease. I hope it will come; in fact, I am confident it will because we shall have none but clean men going in, and those who are unfortunate enough to contract the disease will be taken out. With the 44-hour week a strict enforcement of the Mines Regulation Act and with ventilation and sanitation of the mines up to date, I am hopeful we shall in a large measure get rid of the germ. Underground is the place where the germ thrives; it is at home away from the rays of the sun; the impure air in the corner of the mine is the condition that suits it best. With clean air going into the mines with clean men employed and with the contaminated men being taken out, one can only hope that the cost to the State will be a declining one. I have to disagree with the Minister for Mines when he says that the outlook for mining is brighter. Having in mind the Golden Mile and such large deposits as Wiluna, the Big Bell, Reidy's, Youanmi and Lancefield, as well as other huge gold-bearing channels already known, I still am not convinced that the future holds anything bright for the gold mining industry. We have reached the stage where the cost of production has just about overtaken the margin of profit. Although the State

Government have done much for the industry, what with the ever-increasing tariff and the high taxation, direct as well as indirect, only large companies with any amount of capital behind them are able to equip a mine and carry on a form of mass production. To such people only can we look to put money into the industry. The cost of producing an ounce of gold is increasing every day, while the price of gold is standardised and no increase can be obtained for it. With mass production on modern scientific lines there is hope for the mining industry, but we cannot expect the one or two big wealthy companies of the world to concentrate on Western Australia. They have interests abroad—in Africa, America, South America and, I believe, to a large extent in Siberia and Russia. I think we are getting a fair share of their capital at Wiluna, but the industry in Western Australia is unattractive. It has reached the stage when investors have begun to calculate. They reason that ore is valued at 40s. and that it will cost—as it will cost the people at Wiluna—the best part of £1,000,000 before they can expect to treat an ounce of ore, irrespective of the amount of gold they recover from it. It requires a courageous board of directors to undertake propositions of that kind. Had any prospector been fortunate enough to unearth some of the deposits to which I could refer—Mount Vernon, Nabberu, Reidy's, Big Bell, Jimblebar and others—prior to 1910, he could have walked out with £100,000 cash, whereas to-day he would not get £5,000 for any one of them. That is due to the cost of producing the gold having advanced to the point where no profit remains. I do not intend to take the State Government to task, but I should like the Minister to explain how the enormous sum of money allocated to the mining industry by the Federal Government was expended.

The Minister for Mines: We have not yet received any of it to expend.

Mr. MARSHALL: I knew that the "huge" sum of £28,000 provided by the Federal Government to assist the mining industry in this State would cause the Minister some agitation.

The Minister for Mines: For the whole of Australia.

Mr. MARSHALL: I understood that £28,000 was our share.

The Minister for Mines: There was only £25,000 all told.

Mr. MARSHALL: All that the Federal Government failed to do was to create a board to deal with the money. Had they created a board, it would have swallowed up the £25,000. I wondered whether the Minister had received the money and whether he had experienced any mental fatigue in his efforts to allocate it to meet the many requirements in this State. Another question I wish to ask the Minister relates to Phil Saunders, one of the first prospectors in this State, who discovered gold in the Kimberleys in 1884. According to the list of compassionate allowances the Government grant him £75 per annum. I should like to know whether Saunders is in receipt of the old-age pension. The Minister should ascertain, because Mr. Saunders is entitled under the Old Age Pension Act to receive only 12s. 6d. per week by way of pension. If the Federal Government are not extending to him any special consideration, all we are doing is to pay what the Federal Government are justly entitled to pay. Of the £75 we are paying, £52 should be paid by the Federal Government. Unless Saunders receives the advantage of the allowance, I do not think the Minister should continue to pay it, because we are only paying what the Federal Treasurer should and would pay.

Mr. Wilson: That is correct.

Mr. MARSHALL: Let the Federal Treasurer meet his obligations and then the Minister for Mines can step in and pay what he considers to be a fair thing. If he can convince the Federal Government that they should pay the £52, I would advocate the State Government paying the additional £75.

Mr. Wilson: Suppose he is earning £3 a week?

Hon. G. Taylor: Whatever he earns he is entitled to.

Mr. MARSHALL: But the amount of his earnings would be docked. Unless Saunders receives special consideration, he is entitled to draw only what the other pensioners get, and that is 12s. 6d. a week for board and lodging.

Mr. Chesson: Are not you doing Saunders a dis-service by directing attention to it?

Mr. MARSHALL: The Federal Government should not hesitate to add the pen-

sion to the amount paid by the State Government.

Hon. G. Taylor: Unfortunately we have no control over the Federal Government.

Mr. MARSHALL: No, but we should not pay the Federal Government's accounts, and that is what we are doing. If I had my way, I would pay Saunders £175, provided the Federal Government paid their £52 as well. That shows what I think of Saunders and other men like him. If the Minister is not aware of what is going on in the Federal Department, it is unfortunate. If I have the pleasure of being here when the Estimates are being discussed next year, I shall take care to be in possession of the facts. The member for Mount Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) was on the right track when he spoke of prospecting. While we do not want to speak disparagingly of the men who are out prospecting—I know several who are good bushmen, efficient prospectors and real triers—we have to face the facts. Years ago there was no occasion, or if there was it was not availed of, to prospect as men have to do now. In those days prospectors rushed hither and thither, and as the member for Mount Margaret said, the gold could be picked up in its raw and clean state. Bayley's party went over what is known as the island of Nannine and picked up 800 ozs. of alluvial gold. No one knew they were there until the horses were observed on the island. Today men have to undertake prospecting as a scientific work. There is no such thing as falling on gold. It is necessary to understand country, to loan for gold, costen for it, and really prospect for it. Take the prospect known as Mount Vernon. Mr. Corboy—not the member for Yilgarn—found that.

Hon. G. Taylor: You need not have said that because we all thought it was the member for Yilgarn.

Mr. MARSHALL: But I wish to disillusion the hon. member. I was astounded when I was shown how he managed to get on to that deposit. He was passing over what is known as a spinifex belt, making towards auriferous country beyond, when he had the good fortune to see a lone piece of quartz lying on the sandy surface. He picked it up and found that it contained gold. He might have imagined, as many prospectors would have done, that aborigines had carried it there, but he decided to

give the country a trial. He went down five feet in the sandy country and was lucky enough to hit on the cap of that rich deposit. In the early days, no one would have taken any notice of that bit of quartz. A speck of quartz containing gold and lying in a belt of sandy country would not have received any consideration. I repeat that I cannot agree with the Minister that the prospects of the mining industry are so bright.

The Minister for Mines: There is a revival.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, in the known deposits of the State, but every ton of ore extracted from a mine brings that mine one ton nearer to exhaustion. What I am concerned about is the perpetuation of the industry. Having regard to the excessive cost of producing gold and to the fact that gold commands only a fixed price, prospecting is unattractive, and with a shortage of experienced prospectors I regard the future of the industry with concern. There is only one system which has been adopted on a large scale by the present and by previous Governments and which gives any hope of efficient and economical prospecting at a depth, and that is diamond drilling. The previous Minister for Mines set out upon a free boring policy. Immediately capital began to come in the bores were taken off that policy and put on the pound for pound basis. I have tried to prevail upon the Minister to keep at least one bore on the Murchison under the policy that was originally laid down, but he has stuck loyally to the pound for pound basis. He said that while anyone was prepared to pay half the cost he would not alter the system. Boring is the only economical way of testing the value of a mine. I do not say it is positively efficient, but it is more or less efficient. It is the best way to ascertain what is below. If the Minister is not in possession of sufficient drills now, he should lay in a further supply without delay. They are greatly in demand. I believe they are required on the pound for pound basis in the Kalgoorlie district. He would not have much difficulty about keeping one diamond drill going on that basis there.

The Minister for Mines: I am doing more than that. In most cases two drills are in operation.

Mr. MARSHALL: Three would not be out of place.

The Minister for Mines: If you will get me the money I will find the drill.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is another matter. We shall go on giving sustenance and subsidies on the pound for pound basis for developing this or that small proposition in the hope of unearthing something good, until there is absorbed a great deal more than a diamond drill would cost.

The Minister for Mines: Not the cost of the drill; that is not the point. It is the cost of keeping it going.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the Minister cannot get the money, that is an end of the matter, but the industry will suffer if he cannot get it. People have been waiting for two years at Peak Hill. There is a fine well-known deposit there which only requires to be tested at depth when in all probability plenty of capital would be available to work the show. The Minister need not go any further than Meekatharra to find need for a diamond drill. Boring both north and south would probably reveal something good. Without a drill no progress can be made. When the Minister was amending the Mines Regulation Act, I thought he would also amend the Mining Act in accordance with modern ideas. At present it is in conflict with modern practices. He will find that the Mines Regulation Act is at variance with some of the regulations that have been made under it. The regulations are, therefore, ultra vires. The Act says this or that shall be done, but the regulations declare that something to the contrary shall be done.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is out of order in discussing legislation.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am usually out of order. That Act is like the Land Act.

The CHAIRMAN: Again the hon. member is out of order.

Mr. MARSHALL: Both require to be consolidated and brought up to date. The duties of a workmen's inspector are limited. He works under the Mines Department and is known as a check inspector. He has all the powers of the Government nominee to examine mines, but when it comes to enforcing those things which by statutory authority he is delegated with the power to enforce, he must obtain the permission of the Government nominee or the Government inspector.

Hon. G. Taylor: Is not that right?

Mr. MARSHALL: Not altogether. In certain cases limitations might be made, but to give the Government appointee the sole right to say that those who commit a breach of the Act shall not be prosecuted, except by an official who is not a workmen's inspector, is going altogether too far. With reservations a workmen's inspector should have power to prosecute in certain cases.

Hon. G. Taylor: You mean to institute proceedings?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes.

Hon. G. Taylor: Such circumstances should be very limited.

Mr. MARSHALL: He should be able to do it in some cases, though I admit it would be unwise in others. To-day if such an inspector holds an opinion contrary to that of the manager of a mine, and the latter understands the statutory authority under which the inspector is working, he can flip his fingers at the official and refuse to do anything. The only way to pull up a mine manager who is committing a breach of the law is to make him stand up to the law.

Hon. G. Taylor: Not much of that is done.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not know of one case on the Murchison where a workmen's inspector has been debarred from the right to enforce the Act. He has always had the necessary sanction, when it has been warranted, from the Government appointee. There may be managers in other parts of the State who would take advantage of the position in which the workmen's inspector finds himself, and in such cases the latter should be armed with the necessary powers. I have always advocated the abolition of rises in gold mines. I am glad to hear from the Minister that water-lined drills are being introduced to safeguard the health of the individuals who are working in the mines. Rising is a form of work which could be abolished from the mines without inconvenience. I do not say it is possible to winze as cheaply as it is to rise, but wherever rising can be done winzing can be done. The only reason why rising is done is because it is cheaper than winzing. The Minister says rising is 3d. a ton cheaper than the other method. I do not think that constitutes a good reason why the practice should be continued. I disagree with the policy. If the Minister does not entirely abolish rising, he should restrict it so that it can be used only in certain defined circumstances.

Hon. G. Taylor: Your objection to rising is that it constitutes an inconvenience in working a mine?

Mr. MARSHALL: Not exactly. I had two reasons. The first has been more or less overcome by the compulsory introduction of water-lining which will put an end to the dust nuisance. Rising means going from a level upwards. Every man who is in a rise stands on precarious ground.

Hon. G. Taylor: And it is very hot, too.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. All the gases, the fumes and the foul air go towards the dead end. There the man is working with the machine above him. Prior to the change that was brought about the dust used to shower upon him like snow. Before the man can fire out after boring out he has to lower all his machinery and paraphernalia to the level. This may be 100 feet down, but that would be the maximum distance. He may actually be 50 feet or 60 feet from the bottom. He fires out, and then has to creep up as best he can, not knowing what is above him after the firing has taken place.

Hon. G. Taylor: And he finds that his candle will not burn.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is nothing compared with his lack of knowledge as to what is hanging above him. He is in a place 4 feet x 4 feet, and does not know, after the shots have been fired, what the ground will be like. He has to hang like a flying fox while he bars down the ground to make it safe before he constructs a platform to stand on. It is a rotten system, and I fail to see why it should be perpetuated. It is frequently used and is popular because it is cheaper than the other system. If I were Minister for Mines, the difference of 3d. per ton would not stop me. If I did not entirely abolish the system I would restrict it only to certain circumstances.

The Minister for Mines: The previous Minister for Mines amended the Mining Act to prohibit this being done above 10 feet without the permission of the inspector. It cannot be done anywhere in the State except with authority. That has been the law for 3½ years.

Mr. MARSHALL: Is the Minister sure of his ground?

The Minister for Mines: Yes.

Hon. G. Taylor: Ten feet is not much of a rise.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the Minister's predecessor did anything, he did this, for I heard him answer a question on the platform at Meekatharra. According to his reply to the people of Meekatharra, what he did was to prevent rising in gold mining beyond 10 feet without boxing. If what the Minister has just said is correct, one can only be thankful for it. I do not think the inspector in my district is aware of the position. If this cannot be done without a permit, it is some safeguard.

Mr. Chesson: I think the inspector at Cue knows all about it.

Mr. MARSHALL: It constitutes a big step towards reform. Having regard for the developments at Wiluna, I think I am justified in saying that nowhere in the history of gold mining in Western Australia has any attempt been made to treat the workers in the industry as they are being treated there. In the past shareholders have thought only of what profits they could make from a mine, and then closing it down. In the case of the Wiluna mine, I am pleased to say that the directors and manager in particular are showing themselves to be more than human. They are complying strictly with the Mines Regulation Act. They are building homes for the employees, laying down recreation grounds and in every way giving them humane consideration from the point of view of sanitation, ventilation and the benefits and pleasures of recreation after a day's toil. When the Wiluna railway is being opened I hope the Minister will prevail upon the Premier to make special provision for sleeping accommodation in the town. The hotels are restricted in number and all available space will be taken up. I want all members of Parliament to be present on that occasion, and to take with them their wives and families in order that they may see Wiluna.

Hon. G. Taylor: Have it before next March!

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, for the hon. member's special edification, as he will finish in March next.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. MARSHALL: I hope every member of Parliament will make a special effort to travel by the first train to run on the Meekatharra railway. At Wiluna those connected with the early development of the mining industry in Western Australia will have the opportunity to realise what a mining com-

pany can do for its employees from a humanitarian point of view. Nowhere else on the goldfields of this State is such evidence of humanitarianism to be seen. I understand that the Consols mine at Meekatharra has had the good fortune—the Minister will check me if I have been incorrectly informed—to strike the lode immediately below the workings of the old Fenian gold mine. I am informed, further, that the lode carries fair values. I hope my information is right, as these people took the chance of buying the lease. I wish success to the syndicate, who have carried on so courageously with their development work. Indeed, they deserve every success that may come their way. I hope the present Minister will continue to be Minister for Mines. Although I cannot always see eye to eye with him, I have no grievance against his administration. In the main I have found him reasonable, and at all times he has shown himself sympathetic towards the industry. Accordingly, I wish the hon. gentleman a long term of office as Minister for Mines. Lastly, I desire to thank the officers of the Mines Department, without exception, for their courtesy and consideration in every regard. Whenever I have had occasion to approach them, I have obtained every attention and received good advice.

MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson) [8.49]: Some hon. members may not be aware that the great South-West is also rich in minerals. Initially, I desire to pay a tribute to the Minister for Mines for the assistance he has granted to Greenbushes, the small centre that has produced over a million pounds worth of tin. The hon. gentleman was good enough to authorise the expenditure of several thousands of pounds in order to prove whether the tin lodes exist at depth. Unfortunately the diamond drilling did not prove successful. However, some Greenbushes residents are still optimistic enough to believe that with the introduction of capital Greenbushes will again become an important mineral-producing centre. I ask our generous Minister to go thus far: let him continue the pound for pound subsidy towards searching for minerals in south-western areas approved by the officers of the Mines Department. The South-West has a great variety and a wonderful range of minerals. It is a far cry back to gold mining at Donnybrook, which centre at one time promised to become a great gold

producer. Besides gold, the South-West has tin and coal, and wonderful prospects of oil, on the search for which a great deal of money has been spent. Further, we have tantalite and feldspar, and many other minerals. There is mica at Collie, regarding which the Minister will receive a deputation tomorrow. In introducing the mining estimates the hon. gentleman made some alarming statements as to the future of the industry. True, he prefaced his remarks by drawing attention to new finds and the analyses of gold production according to tonnage. The figures read well; but in reply to an interjection from me the Minister said that the crushings were not from a big face, but practically picked ore. One cannot help wondering whether it is worth while to continue the industry. In its boom period gold mining put Western Australia on the map, and drew the world's attention to this country. The Minister has told the Committee what he has had to do towards assisting mines to obtain machinery, and how he has been compelled to make advances to them in order that they might continue working. The hon. gentleman was perfectly justified in doing what he did to keep the wheels of the industry turning. But taking into account the dreadful results to the miners, their sufferings and their deaths, can one help asking whether it is worth while to maintain the industry? What the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) said on that head is perfectly correct. The hon. member was heroic about the Government of the day and the manner in which they look after afflicted miners. But that is not being done by the Government of the day; it is being done by the people of the State, whose duty it is to do it. Still, is it right to ask sound young men to go into the industry and suffer the same fate as older miners have suffered, the fate of a living death? I often wonder what will be the ultimate result of Wiluna. The member for Murchison said the company were expending a million of money before they could get an ounce of gold. From that aspect it should be mentioned that the State has committed itself to a vast expenditure in building a railway to Wiluna. I do not yet know whether Wiluna is all right, but I have great hopes of seeing that centre employing several thousand men and bringing our mineral production to the fore again. At the moment something is radically wrong with the industry. Costs

must be reduced in order that both ends may meet. According to the Minister's statements, both ends are not being made to meet at present. The large mines which have operated for years are to-day in need of Government assistance in order to carry on. One can only bear in mind that the future is on the lap of the gods. Large numbers of families are dependent on the gold mining industry, and therefore we must continue it, hoping for a brighter future. I could wish that the Minister's forecasts of last night had been based on a solid foundation instead of small leaders. I do not agree with the member for Mt. Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) that the pioneering spirit has vanished with the prospectors of thirty or forty years ago, and that our young men will not go out prospecting.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is not what I said.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The hon. member said the young men of to-day were not going out prospecting for the reason that the inducement was not there. If we could discover a few more rich alluvial flats with nuggets to be picked up as in the past, men would scatter all over the country. All our mining fields were not found by experienced miners. Take the case of Greenbushes. That field was discovered by a man born in Western Australia, a kangaroo hunter named Dave Stinton. He was shooting kangaroos just off the Bunbury-road, and went to have a drink of water at a creek nearby; there he saw something like metal. It turned out to be tin. That is how the Greenbushes tinfield was found. I hope that the Minister will consider favourably a continuance of his policy of subsidising approved prospectors.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans—in reply) [8.59]: The Leader of the Country Party asked whether there was not some possibility of obtaining a final settlement of the Ravens-thorpe smelter case. I assure the hon. member that he is not half as anxious as I am to have the case settled finally. However, I cannot forecast when a settlement will be reached, though everything possible is being done to bring it about.

Hon. G. Taylor: I suppose you blame the other side?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know whom to blame. I only know that so far it has been impossible to obtain a set-

tlement on any conditions. The Leader of the Country Party also spoke of an inspector appointed under the Miners' Phthisis Act. In point of fact, no such inspector has been appointed. The Act is practically administered by the Miners' Phthisis Board, which body includes a workmen's inspector. That was so from the inception. All that happens is that when a report is received from the laboratory at Kalgoorlie that an individual has been examined and found to be suffering from tuberculosis, the name and address of the man concerned is sent to the workmen's inspector, Mr. Darcy, should the man live in Kalgoorlie or Boulder, and the inspector makes the necessary inquiries from the individual and the mine where he was working, to ascertain whether the miner is entitled to be brought under the provisions of the Act. That is all that I know of. The member for Mount Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) urged that the Government should not hesitate to find £1,000 or £2,000 extra for the purpose of assisting the venture on the Perseverance Mine in connection with the new treatment process. The hon. member has nothing to fear on that score. I made a statement to the Press recently to the effect that the Government have definitely committed themselves to a pound for pound subsidy not to exceed £10,000 for that purpose, and the directors have since thanked the Government and accepted the offer.

Mr. Davy: I suppose that is a loan.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot say that it is a loan, because we have advanced the money free of interest. Unless the company secure a reduction of 4s. per ton, they will not have to repay anything to the Government; if they secure a reduction of 4s. per ton on present treatment costs as the result of a new process, they will repay the amount advanced at the rate of 1s. per ton royalty. I do not know of any instance in the history of mining in this or any other State in which any such venture has been more liberally or generously assisted.

Mr. Davy: I should think not.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: My chief desire in extending that assistance was to conserve the health of the miners. The new method represents a wet process as against roasting. If it succeeds, it may be that other companies will ask the Government for similar assistance. I want to make it clear that the Government have agreed to assist the company because they are engaged upon an

experiment. The company have spent a considerable sum of their own money on the process and the metallurgist has been working on it for over two years. If by the assistance rendered to the company it can be proved that the process can be successfully operated, it will be of great benefit to the industry. The plant will have to treat 150 tons per day, and I regard that as a fair trial. If it can be proved that ore can be successfully treated by means of the new process, surely that should furnish sufficient incentive to the directors of other mining companies to instal similar plant without expecting any assistance from the Government. Then again the member for Mount Margaret wished to know what had been done regarding the Horseshoe guarantee. When the amalgamation took place, the Lake View and Star Company took over the liabilities of the Horseshoe with regard to the £51,500, of which the Government have not been called upon to pay a penny piece. They have taken over the guarantee now and consequently the bank is on a much better wicket and so are the Government. Not only have we now the assets of the Horseshoe Mine, but those of the Lake View and Star Company in addition. Our position is much safer. As regards the £5,000 that was loaned to the Horseshoe mine, that amount had to be taken over by the Lake View and Star Company as well, but no final settlement has yet been reached regarding that matter. Recently the Government agreed that they would not ask for the repayment of that amount for two years, and would forego interest as from the 1st January this year. The matter will then be reconsidered. Regarding the remarks of the member for Murehison (Mr. Marshall), I realise the good work that was done by Mr. Saunders, one of the early prospectors in this State. On the other hand, I do not regard it as my duty, nor would it be that of any other member of the Government, to ascertain whether or not Mr. Saunders is in receipt of an old-age pension. If I know Mr. Saunders aright, he would resent any such interference on my part or on the part of anyone else. If Mr. Saunders is not receiving a pension, and he asked me to assist him to get it, I would do all I possibly could for him. Unfortunately, in view of the provisions of the Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act, I do not think it would be legal to pay the old age pension to him if he is in receipt

of £75 a year. The next matter dealt with by the hon. member referred to diamond drilling. The Government have carried out extensive operations with diamond drills at their own cost. I told the hon. member that it involved a question of money as to whether we could continue diamond drilling. I will go further and say that the policy adopted by the department, and by me as Minister controlling it, is that if any company or syndicate has sufficient faith in any old workings or new ground to put up half the cost of the boring, the Government would be more justified in assisting them on the same basis than they would be to continue bearing the whole of the cost on the off chance of finding something payable. I do not intend to say that I will keep one or two diamond drills constantly boring at the expense of the Government. The fact remains that during last year there was one drill boring all the time and sometimes there were two.

Hon. G. Taylor: What did that boring cost per week?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot tell the hon. member the exact cost, but last year we bored 12,804 feet with the diamond drills in various parts of the State. The Government provided £3,350 from the Mines Vote and £6,680 from the Federal Disabilities Grant. On top of that the mining interests, chiefly syndicates and companies, provided £6,000. That was the actual cost of the boring operations last year, irrespective of the cost of the drills themselves. I am not going to alter that policy.

Hon. G. Taylor: Then over £20,000 was spent on the work last year.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. We had five drills working most of the time last year. The department had to take over two drills that had been working in the North-West. They had been engaged in boring on the basis of £2 found by the Government for £1 provided by the company. They were operating on the silver lead show at Ragged Hills. When boring operations were finished there, the Government took over the two drills and bored nine holes in different parts of the North-West. I am sorry to say that those holes proved to be "duffers." In some instances no signs of either reef or lode were found; in other instances both were found, but unfortunately they carried no values. The hon. member also raised a point regarding workmen's inspectors having the same power as district

inspectors to initiate prosecutions. That is a subject that has been discussed by miners' unions for many years. Even at the latest conference, the matter was discussed and we were asked to make the desired alteration. As Minister for Mines I do not feel disposed to alter the present regulations. In my opinion, they go far enough already. Since the appointment of workmen's inspectors in this State, there has been one instance only brought under the notice of the department of a workman's inspector being desirous of prosecuting and the district inspector objecting to that course. That instance occurred on the Murchison.

Hon. G. Taylor: Have you any idea as to which officer was right?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There was a dispute between the two inspectors and I shall not attempt to say who was right or who was wrong. The fact remains that that is the only instance of that sort of thing within the knowledge of the department.

Hon. G. Taylor: Then that is not sufficient to justify such a move.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not think any great hardship is involved in the present regulations. If there were numerous instances of district inspectors refusing to initiate prosecutions it might be considered that, in the interests of the safety of the men in the mines, the workmen's inspectors should be given the same power to initiate prosecutions as is possessed by district inspectors. For more than three years now the district inspectors have not been permitted to initiate prosecutions without consulting the State Mining Engineer. That is going further than granting workmen's inspectors the power sought for them. The reason for the action taken regarding district inspectors was that in several instances they initiated prosecutions in ignorance of the fact that similar action had been taken previously and had failed, the courts having ruled that there was no authority for the initiation of such prosecution. In view of that, the district inspectors were compelled to forward notifications to the State Mining Engineer regarding suggested prosecutions. Had we not adopted that course we would have wasted money on prosecutions from time to time.

Hon. G. Taylor: Has the State Mining Engineer power to institute proceedings?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, and so have the district inspectors, but we have

stopped the latter exercising that power owing to the ruling of the courts. I thank hon. members for the manner in which they have received the Mines Estimates and I hope the opinion expressed by myself and others that the mining industry is at its lowest ebb to-day and that from next year onwards the output of gold will increase instead of continuing to decline, will prove to be correct.

Item, Assistant Under Secretary £636:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I should like a little information here. Mr. Lang, who, until recently, was Assistant Under Secretary, has been elevated to the position of police magistrate at Carnarvon. Will the Minister tell us who has been appointed in his stead?

The Minister for Mines: Nobody.

Votes—Medical £183,313; Public Health £35,413—agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 9.17 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 29th October, 1929.

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

PAPERS—HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE, ESCAPE OF PATIENTS.

On motion by Chief Secretary ordered: That the papers relative to the escape of the lunatic Kelly from the Claremont Asylum for the Insane be laid upon the Table of the House and printed.