

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 27th October, 1938.

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

NATIVE ADMINISTRATION ACT.

As to Regulations.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [4.32]: I gave an assurance to the House earlier in the week that I would be able to lay on the Table the regulations dealing with native affairs. It was impossible to have these regulations ready to-day, but I assure members they will be ready on Tuesday next.

MOTION—URGENCY.

Drought Stricken Wheat Areas.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the member for Mt. Marshall (Mr. Warner):—

I desire to inform you that it is my intention at the sitting of the House to-day to

move, under Standing Order 47A, "That the House do now adjourn" to call attention to the position of the people in the marginal or drought-stricken areas, particularly in the north-eastern wheat belt.

It will be necessary for seven members to rise in their places to support the proposal.

Seven members having risen in their places,

MR. WARNER (Mt. Marshall) [4.33]: I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

In moving this motion I wish it to be understood it is not my intention to harass, annoy or embarrass the Government. My desire is to make known the dreadful conditions that exist in the north-east wheatbelt, particularly the position now prevailing in the marginal areas. In other words, I refer to that portion of the wheatbelt which has again this year suffered from drought conditions. Probably many members have read the Press reports on the subject, and have heard the situation discussed outside the House. I wish to reveal the position as it is so that members may draw their own conclusions concerning the mental anguish suffered by those persons who, through no fault of their own, have again experienced these terrible conditions. They have been to all the expense of putting in crops that Nature determined should never be garnered. They have given of their labour in vain, incurred the cost of superphosphate, suffered the loss of seed wheat, had the wear and tear upon their machinery, and in many instances have done their farming work either on borrowed money or on credit. In this way they have added to the burden that already bore heavily upon them. I do not intend to labour the question further than is necessary. Beyond the boundaries of the Mt. Marshall electorate I do not intend to go, but will leave to members representing adjoining districts the presentation of the situation existing there. In my remarks I am not including that which might be termed poor crops, that is, in the area below a line drawn from Nungarin on the east to about ten miles south of Koorda on the west. Most of the crops sown north of that line will yield little per acre for sale. Some farms will produce a little wheat over and above seed requirements, but not many will do so. A crop that goes under two bushels per acre will not pay

to strip when wheat is at 2s., and will only pay approximately the cost of the fuel required to draw the harvester, the cost of cartage, and labour. The wheat in most instances would also be shrivelled and light, and possibly unsuited for next year's seed. As it would be under the f.a.q. standard, it would not easily sell, and would be refused by the merchants. To make things worse, large areas have been put in under lien to merchants, who, in some instances, have received no return from last year's operations. This is the fourth year of drought suffered by many of these farmers. Several of them are clients of the Agricultural Bank, and the majority have been on the Agricultural Bank and receiving I.A.B. assistance for two years or more. Members can imagine the condition in which these people find themselves. An allowance of from £6 to £9 a month from Government institutions has been their only income. Faced as they are with another drought, they can look for no return from their labour; only a further accumulation of debt added to all the encumbrances already in existence. Can we wonder that a cry goes up for some assistance to these people in their miserable circumstances. The main reason why I adopt this course is to give effect to the views of these afflicted people. They want to be assured that the Parliament of this State is fully acquainted with the position, and desire that members shall see things for themselves. Most members have probably received an invitation from the Mt. Marshall Road Board to attend a meeting in the district on the 30th of this month. Possibly the Premier has also received one. If he could be persuaded to attend the meeting himself, his presence would exercise the greatest possible influence. Failing his attendance, I hope it will be possible for him to be represented at the meeting. The people would then be satisfied that their position was being closely watched by the Government, and they would know that the calamity that has befallen them was realised in all its disastrous effects. A statement to some such effect from the Premier, should he attend the meeting, or his representative would do much to calm the feelings of sadness and despair. I am sure that a steadying effect would be the outcome, enabling the farmers to await, with some patience, the ultimate decision of the Government as to its intentions with regard to help to be rendered. For the infor-

mation of the House, I will read the invitation that has been sent to various members by the Mt. Marshall Road Board under date the 21st October—

A public meeting of all farmers in the north-eastern wheat belt will be held at the Ben-cubbin hall on Sunday the 30th October, 1958, at 2 p.m. sharp. This meeting is convened by the Mt. Marshall, Koorda, Mukinbudin and Kununoppin-Trayning Road Boards for the purpose of discussing the Government policy towards drought relief and the future policy in this district. We would welcome your presence as we feel sure that if you attended and saw the conditions that exist, you must support any measure for relief of this district.

As may be expected, the prevailing conditions have caused me a great deal of concern and have necessitated many trips throughout my electorate. I have received letters that would indeed bring sadness to the heart of any member of this Chamber representing a section of the community so adversely affected. As a result of the position in which so many of the settlers find themselves owing to the drought, meetings have been held not only of the producers' organisations but of the local governing bodies in the districts affected. Many resolutions have been carried and forwarded to various members of Parliament, in the hope that effect will be given to the objects therein outlined. I will place before the House some of those resolutions. As there are so many couched in the same strain, it will not be necessary for me to take up the time of members by reading them all, but those I shall present will, I believe, be sufficient to make members realise the nature of the existing conditions and the need for a definite statement from the Government regarding the action it intends to take. That course is essential if the abandonment of quite a large area of wheat land is to be prevented. It is necessary, too, so that we shall avoid the loss not only of some of our best farmers, but the augmenting of the already large number of unemployed men and women in the metropolitan area.

The position must be viewed from another angle, that of arranging finance to enable the farmers to remain on their holdings and to maintain production until the cycle of bad seasons has passed. Obviously, that course would be far more economical than if the position were allowed to drift and the distressed farmers and their families were added to the already large number in receipt of sustenance. If these people were able to

remain on their holdings, it might be found that next year a good harvest would be reaped, which would place them in a more or less safe position. It would mean that there would be some wheat for export and the settlers would be able to continue their task of production. On the other hand, approximately the same amount of expenditure would be entailed if these farmers were allowed to drift to the city, where they would have to be provided with sustenance work, as would be necessary if assistance were rendered so that they could stay on their holdings. The uncertainty of the position gives rise to the demand for information from the Government as to what is to be done. Members will readily understand that, as things are now, the farmers are not only wasting their lives but those of their wives and children as well. What is desired to quell the fears, and maintain the morale, of the suffering settlers is a knowledge of what the Government's policy really is. Does the Government intend that the marginal districts shall be abandoned, or does it intend to assist the farmers to remain on their holdings by enabling them to put in another crop, in the hope that next season will be normal. Many of the farmers, it must be borne in mind, have cropped for the past few years on the strength of liens with the merchants, and they may not be able to secure credit next year. I have heard it suggested that some of the merchants intend to cut the loss and pull out. Thus, a farther call will have to be made on the Agricultural Bank, if the settlers are to be kept in production. If they are to remain on their farms, assistance will be necessary to enable them to obtain super and other essential supplies so that they will be able to crop their holdings next year. Here are some of the resolutions that have been passed at meetings and these will serve to indicate the state of affairs in the drought-stricken areas—

At a representative meeting of all organisations in the Mt. Marshall Road Board area in conjunction with the Mt. Marshall Road Board, held in Bencubbin on Saturday, 8th October, the following resolutions were carried unanimously for submission to the State Country Party by Mr. F. L. Warner, M.L.A., and after consideration by the Country Party, to be placed before the State Government.

Failing prompt action by the Government to these proposals we suggest that the Country Party should, to bring these proposals before the country, move the adjournment of the House on these questions.

(1) That owing to the serious position of settlers in the north-eastern wheat belt after three seasons of drought, we ask the State Government to obtain from the Federal Government sufficient funds to pay an acreage bonus to farmers so that crop returns and bonus will amount to £1 per acre minimum, such bonus to be averaged on the opening price of wheat.

(2) That we, the people vitally concerned, having endured the trials of endeavouring to produce wheat and sheep under the present and past accepted policy of Australian and State Governments and fully realising the hopeless task of continuing under such conditions; emphatically urge the State Government immediately to declare and make known its future policy for the marginal and drought affected areas, with special regard as to whether the Government is prepared to advance sufficient moneys to make the future carrying on more encouraging and hopeful.

(3) That Mr. F. L. Warner, M.L.A., be requested to bring the subject of the Rural Relief Act before his party with a view to having the benefits of the Act made available to any farmer who has already had advantage of the Act and who finds himself in financial difficulties, so that he shall have another opportunity of placing his difficulties before that Board.

There is another letter that I shall read to the House as calculated to inform members further as to the actual position. It is signed by Mr. H. Felstead, chairman of the Mt. Marshall Road Board and is dated the 15th October—

At a meeting of the Mt. Marshall Road Board held on the 13th, the question of drought relief was discussed.

Parliament will go into recess shortly, and it is imperatively necessary that some action be taken before then. It was decided that if a satisfactory report from the Country Party was not received before the 22nd, this Board in conjunction with Koorda, Kununoppin, Trayning and Mukinbudin Road Boards, were to convene a large public meeting on the 30th in Bencubbin Hall at 2 p.m. sharp, and were to notify the Country Party that we expect them to be present.

Desperate troubles need desperate remedies, and we expect the presence of the members of the Country Party so that we can place the position before the whole of the party that they may fully realise its importance.

Unless some pronouncement is made immediately by the Government for more liberal sustenance or assistance next year there is nothing surer than that there will be a wholesale abandonment of the north-eastern district.

The exodus has already begun and we fear that it will beyond our powers to check it unless some effective encouragement is given to the farmers to remain.

Quite a number of leading farmers, all experienced men, are talking of clearing out. They

are discouraged and have lost heart owing to the indifference of the Government.

Another letter I have received is from the Secretary of the Westonia Road Board. It is dated 24th October, 1938, and is as follows:—

Drought Relief: I have pleasure in enclosing a report of the public meeting held at Walgoolan on Saturday last. We trust that you and your colleagues will be able to bring about speedy assistance to the drought-stricken farmers through action in the House. We cannot state too strongly the urgency with which assistance is required, and which is stressed in resolution No. 8.

There are a number of resolutions embodied in a report of that meeting which I will read to the House—

WESTONIA ROAD BOARD.

Report of Meeting.

Convened by the Westonia Road Board to discuss the disaster facing large numbers of farmers through drought, one of the largest mass meetings of farmers held in the wheatbelt took place at Walgoolan on Saturday last, 22nd October. The Chairman of the Board, Mr. D. A. Davies, presided, and Messrs. C. F. Baxter, M.L.C., I. G. Boyle, M.L.A., T. H. Powell, President of the Wheat and Wool Growers' Union, and J. S. Teasdale, President of the Primary Producers' Association, were present by invitation, as were representatives of the Merredin and Nungarin Road Boards, Merredin Chamber of Commerce, Agricultural, Commonwealth and Associated Banks. Apologies for non-attendance were received from the member for the district, Mr. G. J. Lambert, and from Messrs. Cornell, Wood and Hamersleys, Ms.L.C., F. L. Warner, M.L.A., L. F. Kelly, Chairman Yilgarn Road Board, and H. Arundel, Bank of New South Wales.

The following resolutions were carried:

1. That owing to the serious position of settlers in the drought-affected areas after three seasons of drought and a general failure of crops this season, we ask the State Government to have the flour tax paid on an acreage instead of a bushel basis; as a minimum crop return of one pound per acre is necessary to cover working expenses, any balance needed to bring crop returns and flour tax payments up to one pound per acre should be made up by a further payment by the State Government.

2. That we, the people vitally concerned, having endured the trials of endeavouring to produce wheat and sheep under the present and past accepted policy of Australian and State Governments, and fully realising the hopeless task of continuing under such conditions, emphatically urge the State Government to immediately declare and make known its future policy for the marginal and drought-affected areas, with special regard as to whether the Government is prepared to advance sufficient moneys to make the future carrying on more encouraging and hopeful.

3. That the full amount of drought relief be paid to the farmers personally.

4. That the State Government be requested to immediately obtain from the private banks a statement as to their policy regarding the carrying on of their farmer clients in the eastern and north-eastern districts; unless a definite undertaking be given by the banks to carry on all their clients the Government should at once take steps to protect the crop proceeds so that such may be used by the Agricultural Bank to carry on any farmer needing assistance, whether he be an Agricultural Bank client or not.

5. That the Rural Relief Act be amended making it compulsory for the Director to issue to any farmer applying for same, a stay order covering for a period of seven years all secured and unsecured debts incurred prior to the date of the amendment.

6. That legislation be enacted by the State Parliament declaring null and void any arrangements between creditors and debtors by which a debtor has contracted himself out of any moratorium or other relief legislation, and that any attempt by a creditor to induce a debtor to enter into such contract be made a punishable offence.

7. That the State Government be asked to introduce legislation to relieve those farmers who for any reason are being, or have been, forced to leave their farms, of the personal covenant attached to them respecting the debts incurred in farming operations.

8. That the members for Yilgarn, Aron and Murchison be requested to immediately arrange for a motion for the adjournment of the House to draw attention to the disaster facing the farmers and the State generally owing to the drought, and to either initiate or actively support the legislation and other action embodied in the foregoing resolutions.

9. In order to prevent a wholesale exodus of farmers from the eastern districts, this mass meeting of farmers desire the Government to implement without delay a linking-up scheme of farms up to five thousand acres in order that such farms may be conducted as sheep properties. It is further of the opinion that only by providing the necessary capital for water conservation, fencing and stocking up with sheep can any saving be made of the heavy expenditure incurred in these dry areas. This meeting, realising that wheatgrowing over a number of years is a financial failure, is emphatically of the opinion that capitalisation should be based on a sheep-carrying capacity only.

10. This meeting desires the Government to provide facilities on the most generous lines for those farmers who wish to transfer to safe rainfall areas, and to provide properties on such a capitalisation basis as will permit them to engage in agricultural operations with a reasonable hope of success.

11. This meeting of farmers desires the Government, in allocating the linked-up farms, to give first consideration to settlers who are already in the district, and who have proved by trial the unsuitability of the district for wheatgrowing.

The Chairman of the Agricultural Bank, Mr. Donovan, has travelled extensively through the drought-stricken areas; and no doubt, with the money made available to him, will do the best he can for those concerned. The question is, however, what amount will be made available to him for the purpose. That is the great concern of many settlers at present. The following is a report of an interview with Mr. Donovan which appeared in the "West Australian" of the 17th October, and which supports the statements I have made:—

"There will be many complete crop failures in the areas north and east of Lake Brown and east of Merredin," the chairman of the Agricultural Bank Commission (Mr. S. B. Donovan) said in a statement yesterday on his return from a tour of the drought-affected districts in the north-eastern wheat belt.

The absence of rain during the past month, he said, had changed the State's crop prospects, particularly in the outer districts. The position in the affected areas had been closely watched by the commissioners during the past two months and the tour just completed was the third made by him during the past few weeks, the Geraldton district having been visited on the first trip.

"As to the wheat crop position," he said, "the crops in the Northam, Wongan Hills, Dowerin and Cunderdin districts, or areas within a radius of approximately 130 miles of Perth, are well up to average, some very fine crops being seen in those districts. Many crops inspected in the Wyalkatchem and Kellerberrin districts are quite good and should produce good yields but further north and east from those districts crops gradually fell away until in the areas north and east of Lake Brown and east of Merredin there will be many complete crop failures. The crops south of the Eastern Goldfields railway were found to improve as one proceeds southwards from the railway. Some anxiety is being felt at the moment concerning the possibility of pinched grain. The crops on the lighter land, however, should finish off quite satisfactorily, but those on the heavier land will, of course, be subject to such possibilities. The districts most affected by drought conditions are those which have suffered similarly during the past three years and, as a result, the progress of the commissioners' reconstruction-of-settlement proposals in the outer districts which provided for increased areas and a change over from wheat-growing to sheep raising and wheatgrowing, has been seriously affected."

Then the Chairman of the Commissioners went on to explain the position in regard to the water supply, and concluded by saying it was his intention to make another tour of the districts at an early date. What I have read satisfies me that the Bank Com-

missioners fully realise the serious condition of affairs existing at present. I am wondering, however, what amount of money will be made available for the purposes of relief. I trust I have made myself sufficiently clear and hope members will not consider that I have taken up an unnecessary amount of time in bringing this subject forward. The people who are so seriously affected are represented by all of us here and I, at any rate, am familiar with their good qualities. On many occasions they have brought their troubles to me, and I have rendered them all the assistance it was in my power to give. My heart really goes out to them, and I do my best to represent their difficulties in the proper quarter. To-day I have told members all about the misfortune that has overtaken a section of the community, and I can only express the hope that it will be possible for the Government to do something to alleviate the distressful conditions. I have no intention of dwelling upon the locust pest because I ventilated that fully on a previous occasion. I will, however, content myself by remarking that my predictions have proved correct. The pest is now to be found over a considerable area and my infant of that period has developed into a big child. It has hopped over many electoral boundaries, and doubtless we shall hear, perhaps during the discussion on the motion, something more about it. I think I have put the position before the House clearly and fairly, and I hope that every member will agree that he, and not excepting the member for Mt. Marshall, will support the Government in any action that it may be decided to take.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [5.5]: The hon. member must be quite aware that the Government is familiar with the existing condition of affairs in the areas to which he has referred. To think otherwise would be a reflection on him and on other members representing agricultural districts. Not once or twice, but on many occasions the Government has had brought under its notice the unfortunate position of the farmers in some of the agricultural districts. We as a Government fully appreciate what the success of the agricultural industry means to the people generally, and I think I can truly say that during the last seven or eight weeks I have

not failed each morning to look at the rainfall records and the weather forecasts appearing in the newspaper each morning. We all know the effect of the climatic conditions on our national income and prosperity. I can understand that the people in the affected agricultural areas consider their troubles to be overwhelming, and they feel they are likely to be forgotten when attention is drawn to the adverse conditions that are being experienced by others. I assure them that is not so. Members representing agricultural constituencies know what the Government has done, and what it is prepared to do, and under what conditions relief will be granted to those that have suffered severe misfortune, not only during the present year or last year, but unfortunately during the last three or four years. I assure the member for Mt. Marshall and members generally that the Government has no intention of letting down the agricultural industry, no intention whatever of abandoning those people who are the victims of misfortune. It is our responsibility to help them, and the Government will go to their aid again as it has done in the past; and if the position should be worse than it has been before it will be met with greater remedial measures. If I desired to dissemble about the matter I could say that the Federal Government should come to our assistance, that we should advance our claims in that sphere to the greatest possible degree and press for money to be made available for granting relief. Then we could have said that we had done all that could have been expected of us and that we had exerted all our influence in that direction. We could do all that if we desired to create the impression that the Government had no intention of doing much. It could create some sort of agitation and then say, "Yes, we agree that it is the responsibility of the nation to succour people who are in distressed circumstances." That, however, would only be letting the people down. We know that the Federal Government has been asked for assistance, that it considered the matter, and that it replied, "This should be the responsibility of the State Government; do not lean on us. When a section of the citizens is suffering misfortune, you must attend to it." It would not be much good our saying that we did not agree with that policy. We can do something, but we cannot

do as much as we would like to do. We cannot give all the assistance that people think they are entitled to receive, but we can and will do everything that is reasonably possible, and will meet the suffering settlers in a fair and, I might say, even a generous manner. I do not know that I can give any greater assurance that funds will be provided. As members know, the State itself has had to suffer reductions in loan moneys that have been made available, and further, we have not a surplus on revenue account. The agriculturists may be inclined to think that the money at our disposal has been allocated in other directions, and that the Government may forget those who are in distress. The Government has no intention other than to render help to those who need it. There is proof of this in what the Government has done during the past two or three years, and that should be sufficient evidence that those to whom the hon. member has referred this afternoon will be the first care of the Government. I suppose some members representing constituencies where men are on relief work, and some unfortunately on sustenance only, will think that those people have a greater claim for support. The member for Subiaco, for instance, is obsessed with the idea that a free milk supply for children is of greater importance, and should be dealt with in a proper manner. Other people believe that many things could and should be done by the Government. Unfortunately the Government is not in a position to render help to the generous extent that it would like to do. The agriculturists have received a fair amount of help, and I think we might say generous help. At the same time, nothing that we can do for them can adequately compensate those who are suffering from the effects of drought. All their labour has gone for nothing, all their hopes have been dashed, and the only result has been disaster. We cannot say to them, "As you should have had a 10 or 12-bushel crop, here is £1,000 to make up for it." What we can be expected to do is to see that those who are suffering will have their misfortunes shared by the rest of the community. Thus, whatever assistance is reasonably fair will be given. The member for Mt. Marshall the other day invited me and other members to attend a conference, but I do not think my attendance would have made any difference. All that the conference could have told us would

have been the facts as we have heard them related by the hon. member. We were all well aware of the acute position, and could not have been further enlightened. I am aware too, that the Bank Commissioners have been through those districts, and their duty, on returning to the city, would be to approach the Minister for Lands, or, in his absence—members are aware that that Minister has been attending a meeting of the Loan Council—come direct to me. In turn I would apprise the members of the Government of the position. It can safely be said, however, that if we went to Walgoolan or Beneubbin it would not be possible to learn more than we already know. The hon. member invited me to Beneubbin, and I think I should read to the House the letter I wrote in reply, because it epitomises the Government's policy on the matter. It is addressed to Mr. Felstead, Chairman of the Mt. Marshall Road Board, and reads—

I desire to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 21st instant, but I regret that, owing to a prior engagement, it will not be possible for me to attend the public meeting to be held at Beneubbin on Sunday next.

The Government is fully alive to the serious drought conditions prevailing in portions of the wheat belt. The Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank have not only received detailed reports from their branch officers, but have personally visited most of the affected areas. The prolonging of the dry spell has necessitated a revision of the estimated expenditure required to meet the position, and this will be completed within a few days.

In addition to the preparation of estimated expenditure in providing drought relief for the ensuing year, the Commissioners are having a complete stocktaking made by the Bank's field officers in each Agricultural Bank district. The stocktaking will cover not only settlers' requirements but will also provide complete information respecting stocks held by other settlers in order that the Bank clients' requirements as far as possible might be found locally.

During the past three years the sum of £344,415 has been made available by the Government for drought relief, this amount being in addition to refunds of interest and relief afforded settlers in other ways by the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank.

It is the definite intention of the Government to make relief available again this year to deserving settlers whose crops have suffered by reason of drought conditions. The Government has the utmost sympathy with those unfortunate people who, through no fault of their own, have been afflicted by an unprecedented sequence of droughts. Settlers whose cases are of a deserving nature may rest assured that they will receive every consideration.

As already announced, it is proposed to introduce shortly legislation to provide for a home consumption price for wheat, the proceeds to be distributed among wheatgrowers. The Honourable Mr. Troy has been making representations in an endeavour to have portion of the money distributed on an acreage basis or in some manner which will enable those people to benefit whose crops have been affected by the drought. You will be aware, of course, that this aspect of the scheme is under the control of the Commonwealth Government, with whom the final decision rests.

For some time Mr. Troy has been giving the matter of drought relief his personal attention. During his absence in the Eastern States he has been making further inquiries into the subject there, and on his return at the end of this week complete consideration will be given to the whole question.

I do not know that I can add anything to what is epitomised in that letter, which has already gone to the correspondent who forwarded the invitation to me through the member for Mt. Marshall. I have reports here from the Agricultural Bank. I could read them, but they contain information similar to that read from the Press by the hon. member. The Chairman of the Agricultural Bank and the other Commissioner who visited that area did not return to the city and maintain secrecy. They did not say, "We do not want to say anything about this because there might be a clamour for relief; therefore we shall keep silent." They brought the position immediately to the notice of the Government, and in order that all the citizens of Western Australia should be fully aware of the conditions, and realise that the Government would necessarily have to make money available for relief purposes, they gave a statement to the Press. I do not mind people in trouble having public meetings to discuss their difficulties. It is just as well that people faced with such conditions should meet together as companions in misfortune in the hope that some solution of their problems might eventuate from the meeting. I do not blame them for trying to persuade every member of Parliament, and the Premier, and anybody else, to attend such meetings, but the Government is fully aware of the position and would not be more aware of the position if some of its members attended such meetings. We have received reports from every field officer. We know the position, and that we shall have to help these people in their troubles. It is not a question of having to help them, or merely being willing to help them. The fact is that the Government is

anxious to be of assistance to people in misfortune who have done their job in attempting to produce wealth that will be of benefit not only to themselves but to the country generally. I do not know that I should detail what the Agricultural Bank has done, or the conditions prevailing in the affected areas, or the estimated expenditure on drought relief, or what has been done in regard to the provision of water supplies and in surveying the whole position in other areas, from which we may have to transport stock because of the lack of water and feed. All these matters are being considered and plans are being made to assist those people. All I can say is that what the Government has done in the past is an augury of what it is prepared to do in the future. If those people desire an assurance that no less assistance will be given to them than before, or that the assistance will not be given on such good terms as formerly because money may be scarce, I can assure them that money will be found to maintain the standard set in regard to relief expenditure.

The Government does not have to wait for people to tell it what the position is. We did not wait until there was a plague of grasshoppers before action was taken. When it became apparent that the pest might spread to other parts of Western Australia, we took time by the forelock and obtained supplies of poison bait ready for despatch to people immediately it was necessary for them to have it. The poison was forwarded on receipt of an application. As a matter of fact, people were asked to notify the Agricultural Department whether locusts were likely to appear in plague form in their district. I know, and the member for Greenough knows, that at Northampton it was perceived 12 weeks ago that the pest was likely to appear in plague form and to do incalculable damage. A telegram was therefore despatched, and before a week elapsed supplies of poison were forwarded to the district. Because of the promptness with which remedial action was taken, millions of those insects were destroyed before they were in a condition to do very much harm. A similar position prevails in regard to drought conditions. We have our finger on the pulse all the time and are devising remedial measures. We are anxious to find out what measures will be necessary to provide relief that may be required.

I do not blame members of the House for seeking an adjournment, but there is no necessity for it because the Government is fully aware of the position and is ready to render a reasonable amount of assistance wherever it may be needed. The Minister for Lands will be back in Perth on Saturday, and he will know what the situation is in the Eastern States, some of which are suffering drought conditions similar to ours. I know that the position in South Australia is not too good in many areas. I read in the Press yesterday that the whole position in New South Wales had undergone a change, and that a good season seems to be assured there. I hope it is. However, that was not the prospect when I was in New South Wales.

Mr. Patrick: The Australian estimate is 50,000,000 bushels less than that of last year.

The PREMIER: Yes; and it is necessary that in respect of the States that are suffering from adverse climatic conditions, uniform action should be taken. Mr. Troy would have been back to-day had it not been that he desired to consult with the Ministers controlling the agricultural industry in other States in order to discover whether it is not possible to render assistance to those suffering adverse climatic conditions as well as to wheatgrowers suffering from adverse prices. The Government asks people in the affected districts to make every effort to harvest as much as they possibly can. If there is a possibility of their getting only one or two bushels from an area, they are urged not to say, "This crop has gone; there is no use putting the harvester on to it." Everybody should try to help himself, and if he does he will not find the Government lacking in the provision of assistance.

MR. LAMBERT (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [5.25]: I am glad that the member for Mt. Marshall has submitted the motion, and it is particularly pleasing to note the generous and sympathetic attitude of the Premier towards people who unfortunately are suffering drought conditions at present. That is only what one would expect, and that sympathetic attitude towards those so afflicted is, I am sure, shared by the meanest unit in the community, and by all members of the House. As the Premier pointed out, the position is an awkward one to approach. In portions of my electorate drought conditions

have prevailed for six or seven years. Side by side with that are the low prices that have obtained. The problem should be approached from this viewpoint: that when any section of the community is suffering as those farmers are suffering, the responsibility for assisting it should be shared by the whole community. Some portions of the State, as the Premier has pointed out, are not so adversely affected as are those in the outer marginal areas of the wheatbelt.

To what extent the Commonwealth Government will be prepared to assist we do not know, but representations could be made. The people of the Eastern States should realise that Western Australia has a bigger responsibility than the more settled portions of the Commonwealth that have had an opportunity to take advantage of the economic conditions laid down by the Commonwealth Government. That greater responsibility is due to the commitments with which we in Western Australia are faced in our attempt to build up a young and undeveloped State. If Western Australia could become a manufacturing unit, and supply itself with the £12,000,000 or £13,000,000 worth of goods at present imported from the Eastern States, there is no doubt that the Government would readily be able to give relief to those suffering from adverse conditions. Apart from the broader aspect of wheat production in Australia on an economic basis, consideration must be given, in approaching the question, to world economic conditions. When one realises that there was a carry-over last year of 12,000,000 bushels of wheat, and that possibly the ordinary safe margin is only about 50 per cent. of that, one perceives immediately that that carry-over is responsible for the depressed prices of wheat to-day. That is only one aspect of the case. There are other aspects. For example, the Government has regard for placing farmers on a totally new basis. When wheat production began in Western Australia, a price was charged for land, and then the farmer was lent money to speculate upon two factors in wheat production—the seasonal factor and the market price. Those were the two dangerous and unstable elements upon which Governments preceding the Labour Party risked State funds. A corrective must be found for the present situation, and the only possible corrective is the giving of credit by the Government

and the adoption of a sympathetic attitude on the part of the Agricultural Bank. The moving of the motion by the member for Mt. Marshall was a necessary act. The hon. member has been through the districts affected, devoting week in and week out, at heavy expense, to visiting the farmers so as to keep himself closely informed of the conditions. Every member of the House will join in the Premier's assurance that the Government accepts full responsibility for those who are suffering to-day. Unfortunately it is not only the farmer himself, but also the wife and the children, far removed from the amenities of the city. I trust that the Government will find, either through the Commonwealth Government or the Commonwealth Bank or some other agency, the means of rendering full and fitting assistance. Let us hope that Providence will yet grant the outback pioneers some recompense for their work in developing the remote portions of Western Australia.

MR. BOYLE (Avon) [5.33]: I was indeed pleased to hear the Premier's definite and straightforward response to the motion of the member for Mt. Marshall. I acknowledge that neither side of the House is long in doubt after the Premier has made a pronouncement. In this instance his statement will bring renewed hope to from 2,000 to 2,500 settlers in the north-eastern portion of the wheat belt, and materially lessen their anxieties. The drought was not brought about by any Government, and no Government could evade it. Unfortunately, however, the results come right home to be dealt with by the Government of the day. I feel quite sure that the assistance previously given will be renewed. I noticed from some figures quoted in the Premier's letter to Mr. Felstead, of Bencubbin, that during the past three years a total of £344,000 had been advanced to settlers. I am sure it was an involuntary omission on the hon. gentleman's part when he failed to state that £117,000 of that total had already been repaid.

The Premier: I acknowledge that.

Mr. BOYLE: I desire that those men should be given credit for having repaid when they had a chance to do so. I have no doubt they will act similarly in future.

The Premier: That is their responsibility. They must play fair with the State.

Mr. BOYLE: Of course the moral responsibility resting upon the farmers to meet

their obligations is entirely dependent upon circumstances. I think they will try to measure up to that obligation, but the odds are greatly against their being able to do so. Western Australia is facing an unprecedented drought. The oldest inhabitants of the stricken areas cannot call to mind a sequence of four bad seasons. The misfortune that has occurred there is now assuming national proportions. Take the Merredin Road Board district. Up to two years ago, that district had over a long series of years returned an average of 12 bushels of wheat per acre. I mention this because I do not want those districts that are affected to be condemned as drought-stricken areas. They are not. This drought is something entirely new in the long history of the settlement of those areas. One has only to look at the returns from the Research Farm at Merredin to realise that the average production over a number of years amounts to about 14 or 15 bushels per acre. Further east, at Walgoolan, one farmer showed me returns over 12 years of 17½ bushels to the acre. I wish to impress upon the Government, and I wish it to go abroad, that these districts are not finished as wheat-growing districts. An idea is being called up that the districts in question should be abandoned. True, the settlers have been driven out of the Bullfinch area; and the miners' settlement at Southern Cross has been abandoned. But there must be a limit or a frontier beyond which we will not recede. That frontier is not further east than Boddalin.

The Agricultural Bank is doing a very good job in the circumstances. Last financial year, 1,110 applications for relief were dealt with, and 1,603 during the previous year. I believe I do not exaggerate when I place the figure for this year at somewhere near 2,500 settlers to be cared for by the Government. It is quite possible that a sum of £300,000 will have to be found. And it is not beyond the capacity of the Government to find that money. I am not now dealing only with Agricultural Bank clients. Probably the Government will find itself faced with many clients of other financial institutions, for it is quite on the cards that the Associated Banks may retire from some districts. It is also imperative that the Government, in the interests of the State, should take over the relief of these settlers. I am indeed glad to think that the Premier's statement will allay a great deal

of anxiety and worry in the drought-stricken districts. It was urged quite seriously at Walgoolan that there should be a wholesale exodus of the farmers from those areas to the South-West.

Mr. Withers: Hear, hear!

Mr. BOYLE: I presume the hon. member interjecting bears in mind the fact that abandonments of group settlements in the South-West already amount to 50 per cent. Nevertheless, there is a reasonable future for mixed farming in the areas now suffering. I do not know of many settlers who want to leave them. These are great settlers, pioneer settlers, fringe settlers. They only need to be assured that they will receive sufficient help to enable them to carry on. If they do, it will be an excellent thing for the State. In the Merredin district, which stretches from Tanamin to the eastern fringe, Agricultural Bank clients have this year put in 368,753 acres of wheat, 42,869 acres of oats, and 3,489 acres of barley—a total of 415,111 acres being seeded in that area. From the Government's point of view, £60,000 of wheat freight is involved in that cropping. The crop is not all gone, not by any means. North of Merredin I saw 1,100 acres of crop that will produce 10,000 bushels. The lighter soils have proved their value to the State this year, and will continue to prove their value. We are not always sure of getting wet seasons, but given a clay subsoil one is almost assured of a crop. From these areas a ray of hope shines. The year has been an unfortunate one. Last year was not a wonderful year, but it yielded to the State between 36,000,000 and 37,000,000 bushels of wheat. In the eastern districts the rainfall this year has shown a general decrease of three inches over the growing period, equivalent to one-third less. It means that we had very fair rains up till September, when we unhappily met a cut-out.

In the north-eastern districts things are indeed bad. I appeal to the Government to make speed with that linking proposition which has been put forward by the Agricultural Bank, but which seems to be going the way of the snail. Settlers who have been promised a linking-up are now impatient. The linking-up was made possible by the Land Act Amendment Act of last session. It means a good deal of renewed hope and confidence to the farmers, but up to the present it remains wrapped in mystery. On this subject I have had some figures taken

out for me by the Agricultural Bank. However, the assistance that would really assist the settler has been denied him. I refer to his request for local land boards which would include a representative of settlers. That is the aid which has been denied him.

Furthermore, the drought-stricken settler has made a definite request that his return per acre be brought up to £1; that is to say, with the Federal aid which I was glad to hear the Premier announce is likely to be granted on an acreage basis.

Hon. C. G. Latham: No. The Premier did not say that. He said that the Minister for Lands had asked for that.

Mr. BOYLE: That fact shows the Government realises that an acreage distribution would be a fairer distribution this year than a distribution on the bushel basis. I expressed that view at Walgoolan.

The Premier: But of course farmers getting fair prices for an ordinary crop do not think so.

Mr. BOYLE: There is such a thing as being fair. If the Federal grant of £800,000 is to be distributed on, say, 3,000,000 bushels sown of wheat, it will simply mean that some farmers may receive from 10s. to 12s. per acre while others will receive nothing at all. That would be most inequitable. Such a distribution gets away from the object of the legislation on the subject. The idea of the resolutions which have been passed asking for a return of £1 per acre is that the State Government should make up the balance of £1 per acre not realised from Federal Government aid and from the return represented by a five or six-bushel crop. On that basis the farmer would be enabled to carry on next year. That is a very moderate request which I support whole-heartedly. I am sure we can thank the Premier for the statement he has made this afternoon, because I believe it will go a long way towards restoring the confidence of the farmers located in those eastern districts.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [5.45]: While we do not desire to make political capital out of the misfortunes of our farmers, it is necessary that the attention of the House should be directed to their plight in order to instil some confidence into the minds of the people who are suffering so severely. If anything could be calculated to re-assure them, the Premier has given it in his statement. Anyone finding himself in the plight of those farmers in the marginal areas dur-

ing the last four or five years would be likely to become panicky. Members of both Houses, I understand, recently received a circular letter from the chairman of the Bencubbin Road Board. Last week-end a meeting was held in the Yilgarn-Coolgardie electorate. I agree with the Premier that we can do little except to impress upon the farmers that everything that can be done will be done to assist them. The statement the Premier has made this afternoon should certainly bring re-assurance to those unfortunate people. Their plight is not the fault of the Government or of any individual. Over a number of years a large quantity of wheat has been produced in those areas and the farmers have enjoyed prosperous times, but recently, through low prices and a scarcity of rain, they have suffered perhaps more than their fair share of calamity. We are anxious to show them that everything possible will be done for them.

I should like to point out the unlikelihood of the position being exaggerated. Accepting the information supplied by the member for Avon, I believe there are no fewer than 3,000 farmers who, this season, will get a yield averaging less than the estimated average for the State, which is lower than it has been for many years; I understand it has been calculated at eight bushels per acre. Allowing an average of 300 acres of crop for each of those 3,000 farmers—as a matter of fact, it would be a little higher—we have 900,000 acres of wheat that will be harvested for less than eight bushels per acre. It is estimated that the 900,000 acres will yield only about four bushels to the acre.

Not only is the drought causing trouble in those areas, but the low prices are occasioning much anxiety. While I now know of the proposal to grant assistance to the farmers who have suffered through drought, I wish to point out that a great many farmers who will harvest less than the State's estimated average are in a very bad way. I accept the statement of the Royal Commissioner, Sir Herbert Gepp, at page 48 of his second report, that the average cost of producing a bushel of wheat in Western Australia is 3s. 9½d. He took the average of 75 farmers scattered throughout the wheat belt. At the time he made his estimate, I suppose the average yield of the State was about 10 bushels. I am prepared to accept his statement, although I believe wheat can

be produced at probably a slightly lower cost. The generally accepted cost is about 3s. 1d.

Mr. Cross: The cost would be considerably higher with the very low price ruling.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am basing it on a State average of 10 bushels. If that is so, and the farmers are to receive only 2s. or, with the Federal bonus, 2s. 6d., there will be a very large deficiency in the revenue they will receive this year. While such misfortune hits the farmers, it also reduces the national income and adds to the burdens of the Treasurer. Members on this side of the House fully appreciate that point. I certainly do not envy the Premier the task that lies ahead of him in the direction of providing assistance. If it is proposed to give 10s. per acre assistance to the farmers—I assume that will roughly be the cost—the total amount involved will be not less than £450,000, which is a very large sum for the Treasurer to find, particularly at a time when the loan market is difficult. The problem, however, must be tackled. We on this side of the House are anxious to give the Premier all the assistance within our power. I was pleased to hear his statement, because I believe it will have the effect of allaying, to some extent at any rate, the suspicion lurking in the minds of the farmers that they are not to receive any assistance, but are to be left to face their troubles alone.

Let me now make a few references to the districts under discussion. As I have pointed out previously, the area on the eastern side of No. 1 rabbit-proof fence was, fortunately or unfortunately, settled years ago when there was a remarkably good season and the district produced the highest average for the State. I believe that Walgoolan siding sent away no less than 200,000 bags of wheat that season, the greatest quantity ever despatched from that siding. I do not want to say in this House that those settlers ought to be moved from those districts, but the opportunity should be given to those who desire to move, provided they can be placed in other parts of the State more favourably situated. A settler, in a letter to the Press, suggested that those farmers might be moved to the dairying districts. I am not going to advocate the adoption of that course. A very good wheat farmer might prove to be a very indifferent dairyman. Undoubtedly, dairying is totally dif-

ferent from farming in the wheat belt. A man who engages in dairying must have a liking for cows; he must milk twice a day seven days in the week. I know of no employment that is so exacting as dairying if success is to be attained. Unless wheat farmers have some knowledge of dairying, to transfer them from the wheat belt to the dairying districts might merely intensify the calamity for them. I believe that in some of the marginal districts, it would pay handsomely to increase the areas, as suggested by the member for Avon, and provide sheep. Those districts are not like the marginal districts in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Here there is always sufficient rain to produce some wheat, though the question remains of there being sufficient return to justify the cost of fertilising and working the land. I believe there is a reasonable prospect of farmers obtaining a living from those blocks. I hope that when the Government considers the matter, the possibility of doing something to place those settlers on a sounder footing will be investigated. Not only has the fact of the extraordinarily low rainfall for the year to be considered, but also the fact that the extraordinarily low prices ruling are adding to the difficulties of the settlers. The Premier said he hoped it would be possible for the settlers to harvest every bit of crop that was available. Provided they have the horses, that may be possible. On the other hand, it may be unprofitable with wheat at 2s. or less per bushel to harvest at all.

The Premier: Seed has to be taken into consideration.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: In many instances it will be cheaper to buy the seed than to pay the cost of fuel for driving the machinery. The Agricultural Bank officials know that fairly good seed must be used. Satisfactory results cannot be obtained from seed of small grain. I am pleased to have the assurance of the Premier that everything will be done that can be done, and agree that if every member went into the district we could do no more than the Premier has promised to do. We on this side will help the Premier, and will also keep him up to his promise.

The Premier: There will be no need for that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am glad to know that. When it is necessary to put the screw on anyone the rough edge is always revealed.

The Minister for Agriculture: You might help by asking for less money.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have promised to go to Bencubbin, although I know the position, and have had the experience. In the Narembreen district in the early days we were advised by city merchants that we could not be supplied with anything unless we paid cash. A few years later a farmer could get almost any machine he liked without paying a deposit, because the prospects seemed so bright.

Mr. Cross: You could not do that now.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: In these districts there is a chance of a quicker recovery than there is in the marginal areas of the Eastern States.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is very strong country.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The main thing is for the settlers to adopt good farming methods. That is a problem ahead of some Government. The settlers in these areas have heavy liabilities with very little prospect of meeting them. We can take that hurdle when we come to it. Meanwhile the Government will be called upon to provide a great deal more assistance than it did last year. The merchants are growing weary of supplying goods against liens with no prospect of ever being paid for them. I am extremely sorry that all these conditions have arisen, but we shall have to face things as they are. We on this side of the House can give the settlers an assurance that we have a thorough knowledge of the disadvantages and disabilities under which they suffer, and that we will help the Government in every way to assist in the carrying on of the industry.

MR. PATRICK (Greenough) [6.0]: I welcome the assurance of the Premier that everything that can be done will be done for these unfortunate people. There is no occasion to draw harrowing pictures of the conditions under which many of these settlers are living. Four years in succession they have sown their crops and reaped no return. Members can, therefore, easily imagine the condition into which these settlers have fallen. What is known as a north-eastern wheatbelt is not the only part of the State suffering from drought conditions.

The Premier: Unfortunately.

Mr. PATRICK: There is the whole of the eastern fringe of the Greenough electorate comprising practically all the country east of the Wongan Hills-Mullewa line, right through to Mullewa, the north side of Northampton, and the north-east side of the Northampton-Ajana line.

Mr. Cross: Is not some of that country outside the sphere of the Agricultural Bank?

Mr. PATRICK: I think the Agricultural Bank is interested in the whole of that district. I have here a letter from a settler at Koolanooka, on the east side of the Wongan Hills line, where the country is considered to be fairly good. Writing on the 24th September, of this year, the settler says—

I would like to draw your attention to the plight of a number of farmers on the eastern side of the line resulting from the worst season we have so far experienced. In a number of cases sheep have already been turned in on the crops, and it will only be a matter of a little while before others have to follow suit. Obviously this will not meet the super liens or provide seed for next year's operations. I suggest that a sum out of the flour bounty should be set aside for this purpose. It is apparent that a man who will strip 30 bushels per acre and would, so it is understood, receive 15s. per acre, is not in need of that so much as those who will get nothing or just their bare seed back. It may be of interest to state that on my place I have recorded 538 points. Of this 92 points have fallen in 19 falls of under 10 points, and could be classed as useless. Only on three occasions have we had over half an inch in one fall. The rainfall charts in the papers have been no guide this year, as approximately four miles away three to four inches more than the average have been recorded, with a corresponding improvement in crops. Trusting you will look into this matter and be able to make the prospect for carrying on a little brighter than is apparent.

I think the writer has correctly set out the position. Even last year, which was fairly good, many settlers told me that the railway seemed to cut off the rainfall. On one side of the line the conditions were good, and on the east side they were bad. I have here a copy of a resolution carried at a meeting at Mullewa, where the conditions are also bad. Apart from the drought, crops in the Mingenew, Yandanooka, Mullewa and Ajana districts, have been stripped by grasshoppers. One settler in Yandanooka informed me that he had 800 acres under crop, and did not think he would reap a grain of wheat. Farmers, therefore, have other conditions to contend with beside drought. We know that in 1914, which was the worst drought year

in the experience of Western Australia, the Government had to make available a large sum of money to keep the settlers on the land. Members will be interested to learn that in 1914-15 only 1,376,000 acres were under crop, as against 3,323,000 acres this year, so that there are now roughly 2,000,000 acres more under crop than in 1914. The probabilities are that this year the area affected by drought will be far more extensive than in 1914, because settlers have gone out much further to the east. From the standpoint of the price factor, I have prepared a very interesting table showing the bushels of wheat harvested, the average per acre, and the pool price for a number of years. That table is as follows:—

Year.	Bushels.	Average per acre.	Pool Price.
			s. d.
1930-31 ..	53,504,000	13.5	1 10½
1931-32 ..	41,521,000	13.1	2 8½
1932-33 ..	41,792,000	12.3	2 5
1933-34 ..	37,305,000	11.7	2 2¼
1934-35 ..	26,985,000	9.8	2 5
1935-36 ..	23,315,000	9.2	3 2¼
1936-37 ..	21,549,000	8.4	4 3
1937-38 ..	36,000,000	11.9	3 5½

The bushel return for 1930-31 was the record for the State and the pool price of 4s. 3d. per bushel in 1936-37 was the only decent price the farmers received during the period covered by the table. The Government Statistician reported that the position last year was the worst since 1914. Over the period of years I have dealt with, the average pool price was 2s. 9¾d. Interesting, too, is the fact that for the seven years prior to that period—that is to say, from 1922-23 to 1929-30—the crops averaged 11.36 bushels per acre and average price was 4s. 9d. per bushel. These figures will serve to indicate how farmers have had to adjust themselves to the altered position during the last seven or eight years. Assistance will be absolutely essential this year in order that fertilizer, seed, feed and sustenance may be made available for the settlers in the affected districts, and that will involve a large sum of money. I am not too sure that the Premier quite realises how large that sum will be when the final returns come to hand.

The Premier: I have had headaches over this matter for the last six weeks.

Mr. PATRICK: I am afraid he will have a worse headache yet.

The Premier: We have been arranging to buy various requirements.

Mr. PATRICK: One suggestion advanced regarding the marginal areas is to transfer the settlers to the South-West. I would not like to accept the responsibility of compulsorily transferring any of those settlers, but I would be quite prepared to give them the opportunity if they desired to go.

Mr. Withers: That is rather generous of you!

Mr. PATRICK: In my opinion, one step we should take is to make a survey of all the land under lease in the agricultural areas. The Agricultural Bank has quite a number of farms under lease in fairly reliable areas, but I do not know that it has many unoccupied properties on its books that could be made available to those settlers in suitable areas. In some instances, however, there are properties adjoining existing farms and a survey should also be made of unoccupied farms, whether under the jurisdiction of the Agricultural Bank or in the hands of other people.

I do not know that there is much more that I regard as necessary for me to say. I rose chiefly to draw attention to the plight of the farmers on the eastern fringe of my electorate, where they have been affected not only by drought but by the ravages of grasshoppers. I know the Premier appreciates the position: he cannot fail to do so. Nevertheless, I do not know that he quite realises the very large sum of money that will be required to alleviate existing conditions.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [6.10]: Before the member for Mt. Marshall (Mr. Warner) replies, I wish to express, on behalf of those members who sit on the Opposition cross-benches, our sympathy with the sufferings of farmers in the marginal areas. We have not taken part in the debate because we have nothing like the same measure of knowledge regarding the extent of those sufferings, nor have we the same measure of knowledge as to what should be done to relieve the position. Whatever course is adopted for the purpose of assisting these unfortunate people, we will be prepared to do all in our power to assist the Government in its efforts to achieve what I hope will be the required measure of relief.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
(Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [6.11]: That such a motion is necessary must be re-

garded as unfortunate. I appreciate very fully the position of members opposite who find themselves forced into moving the motion. I know it is not because they disregard the past efforts of the Government, or do not appreciate what has been done for the settlers who are in such unfortunate circumstances this year, particularly seeing that for some years past they have not experienced good seasons nor have they been able to secure adequate returns. In his remarks, the member for Mt. Marshall (Mr. Warner) was disposed to commend rather than condemn the past actions of the Government and to appreciate that whatever is reasonable in the present circumstances will be considered and, as far as possible, done in the interests of the farmers. In anticipation of the possibility of the season tapering off, I think I may mention to the House, without divulging information that I should not, that repeatedly when expenditure was under consideration by Cabinet, the Minister for Lands, with his known outlook, has stressed the need for anticipation of possible extra calls upon the Government, and has always insisted that we must not disregard the possibility of having to make available additional advances to farmers. He has repeatedly done that, and it is well known that he has always endeavoured to anticipate such difficulties. Perhaps it is as well to mention the outlook of the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank respecting matters such as that under discussion, and to point to the remarkable work they have achieved in the interests of the State. The Commissioners at this stage have been able to give us the fullest information that the State has ever possessed from the standpoint of a general survey of the agricultural position. In passing, I wish to refer to a point made by the member for Avon (Mr. Boyle) regarding the linking up of properties in the north-eastern wheat belt, and particularly to his remark that the work appeared to be progressing slowly. That work is progressing slowly, but most surely. The desire is not only to link up properties in desirable and suitable areas, but at the same time to have a reassessment of those areas and a writing-down that will assist those who will have an opportunity to select the properties. From the tone of the debate, I realise that it is by no means the desire of Opposition members that the motion shall be regarded as one of censure.

Mr. Warner: Definitely not.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:
The motion was not launched for that purpose.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:
Before the tea adjournment I had mentioned that from the tone of the hon. member who moved the motion and of members who supported him it was evident that the motion was not in any way one of censure, but that rather it was moved from the point of view of farmers who had expressed the desire that the subject should receive publicity, so that the people generally might be aware of the unfortunate position in which those farmers found themselves. Again, it is obvious from the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and other members of his party that they appreciate the Government's earnest desire to do not only the right thing in this instance, but to ensure that all those settlers who are unfortunately circumstanced should see some ray of hope for the future. One can quite understand the remarks of the chairman of the Mt. Marshall Road Board alluding to the "indifference" of the Government. One realises that his mental state, and the mental state of those living in the district, would prevent them from fully appreciating all the attention they have received and the sympathy inspired by their plight in persons not resident in the district. I realise that the stricken settlers feel themselves entitled to some publicity. The desire of the mover is not to castigate anyone; he rather sounded a note expressing appreciation that all that could be done had been done. The hon. member also expressed gratitude for the Premier's assurance that not any point that could be applied to benefit the settlers would be overlooked. As regards reconstruction of the area and the joining-up of blocks and their writing-down, we know all that work is proceeding. We know also that the work of the members of the Agricultural Bank Commission will assist the Government in coming to the right conclusion. Since there is nothing to defend on the part of the Government, I conclude by assuring members opposite that the right view will be adopted.

HON. P. D. FERGUSON (Irwin-Moore)
[7.33]: The restrained terms used by the member for Mt. Marshall in moving the

motion will, I feel sure, have convinced the Government that the hon. member had no desire to be critical of Ministers or to make political capital out of the unfortunate position in which many of our wheatgrowers find themselves. In my opinion the hon. member has rendered a valuable service to the wheatgrowers of Western Australia, and especially those in the drier areas, by ventilating their troubles through the medium of his motion. There is need for the deplorable state of the wheat industry in the districts affected to be brought to the attention of the Government and Parliament, and generally of the people of the State, because the public must be made to realise that it owes a duty to those wheatgrowers who are in distress. In the interests of the State as a whole, those areas cannot be permitted to be abandoned and hundreds of thousands of pounds of State money and private capital invested in them to be lost. One statement in the Premier's speech may cause wheatgrowers some apprehension. It was that the Government would treat the growers in the afflicted areas with the same generosity as they had received in the past. A good deal of persuasive eloquence would be needed to make wheatgrowers in those areas believe that in the past they have been treated very generously. There has been no generosity in the treatment of our wheatgrowers by this Government.

The Premier: You would not say the Government has been inconsiderate?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I would say that the Government has been parsimonious rather than generous.

The Premier: The Government has been more than just. The Government has been generous.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Government might be just without being generous.

The Premier: It has been more than generous.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: There has been no generosity in the treatment of our wheatgrowers at any time during the history of the settlement and occupation of the land.

The Premier: Absolute nonsense! If you want to debate the motion on those lines, I am prepared to take you on.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The Premier can do as he likes in that regard, but I still maintain there has been no generosity.

The Premier: Is the State to be more generous to anyone than it has been to the farmers?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: If the Premier wants me to argue on those lines——

The Premier: I do not want you to argue, and I do not want you to make unfair statements.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I am not making unfair statements. Some sections of the community have not been called upon to refund assistance that has been granted to them, whereas every penny advanced to the wheatgrowers has been charged up against them.

The Premier: You say, "The Government won't get it, anyhow."

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: In the present state of the industry a good deal of the money advanced will not be returned to the State, because it cannot be returned. Notwithstanding, it has been charged up to the individual settler.

The Premier: What is the good of that?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: The psychological effect upon the individual settler has been detrimental. A great deal of the money advanced has been repaid; but a great deal of it I am afraid can never be repaid.

The Minister for Works: There has been a great deal of writing down.

The Minister for Agriculture: There was £500,000 for sustenance.

The Premier: The Government which has been charged with harshness to the wheatgrowers has treated them very generously.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I do not wish to delay the House on this aspect, but I again deny the statement that there has been any generosity shown to the wheatgrowers. If I may be allowed to continue, I will say that the Premier's reply will go a long way to ease the apprehension now in the minds of settlers in the stricken districts. It is the most encouraging statement that has been made so far. If the motion of the member for Mt. Marshall has been responsible merely for drawing forth that statement from the Government, it has served a highly useful purpose.

The Premier: My statement went forward before ever this motion was launched.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I am glad the settlers will have the Premier's letter at an early date, before the season has any further detrimental effect on their outlook than it has had up to date.

The Premier: The hon. member gave me the letter only the day before yesterday.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I raise no complaint about that. I believe that the Premier's speech of to-day will have a heartening effect on the people who are experiencing such a difficult time owing to lack of rain. I believe they will realise that the Government has a desire to be fair to them. That is only right, in view of the splendid way in which they have served the State by sticking to their farms through extreme difficulties extending over many years. On that account the State does owe them something. If the suggestion made by the Premier to-day is carried out, it will satisfy a very considerable number of them.

Mr. Cross: They know they have our practical sympathy, do they not?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I have a great deal of faith in the seasonal conditions of the wheatbelt of Western Australia. On the average I believe our rainfall is more reliable than that of the wheat areas of most of the States, and because of that I am of the opinion that we cannot afford to allow a large percentage of our wheatgrowing areas to be abandoned. If there are a few farmers in the extreme marginal areas who consider they are wasting their time and that of their wives and families in those dry areas, they should be given an opportunity to move into some other more favourable locality. From the report presented to Parliament by the Agricultural Bank Commissioners I gather that there are 2,101 abandoned properties in the hands of the Bank, and 791 leased properties. If a percentage of the farmers in the marginal areas wishes to go into safer districts, there seems to be an excellent opportunity to transfer some of them to the reverted properties in the safer rainfall areas, provided, of course, that the individuals so transferred are not burdened with a debt that they have no hope of repaying. Such a burden of debt would have a very serious effect on the wheatgrower who has experienced several years of drought.

In Western Australia today 30 per cent. of the 3½ million acres under crop is producing crops something like the sample I have in my hand. There is no grain, or next to no grain, in that sample, and the little there is, is so pinched that it would never be received into a grain pool.

The Premier: What about a sample like this I have got?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Probably that sample came from Irwin-Moore and this from Mt. Marshall. As a matter of fact, I think the Premier must have got his sample from the manure-heap at the back of the new building he opened at the University this afternoon. There are a million acres in Western Australia, the returns from which this year will be so low that the farmers will have no chance of paying to the Agricultural Bank any interest, or to the merchants or the Bank or those who have supplied their super and sustenance requirements any of the advance so made. They are the people who are going to call upon the Government for assistance.

The Premier: Oh hear my cry!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: What will satisfy them is a definite statement from the Government that they can count on receiving sufficient sustenance to enable them to carry on for another year and to seed the land they have already fallowed. To prepare that fallow has cost them a considerable sum of money. A good deal of the land I have seen for myself is in good shape for seeding next year, and it would be a thousand pities, and against the interest of the State, if that land were to be allowed to remain idle.

I mentioned just now that this appeared to be a favourable opportunity to transfer to other areas some of those settlers who wish to be transferred. That would also give the Government an opportunity to link up two, or perhaps in some instances three farms in the very driest of our marginal areas, and the settlers could be allowed to make sheep-raising their main activity instead of wheatgrowing, as has been the case in the past.

The Premier: You know, I suppose, that the Agricultural Bank is doing that.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: As pointed out by a previous speaker, the Bank is doing it, but not at a very fast rate. I should like to have two or three of the properties in those localities where the water supply is assured—which does not apply in every instance—linked up so that they might return a sufficient income to a man who is prepared to make a living by sheep-raising and the growing of a small area of wheat. There will, of course, be a return to good seasons. I have no recollection of there having previously been four dry seasons in

succession. I can recall 45 or 50 seasons in Western Australia, and never have I known of four successive bad seasons. Of course, we will have bad seasons again periodically—

Mr. Cross: Jeremiah the Second!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: —but we are due for a run of good seasons now, and if we have a few good years, the people in those areas will be entitled to any benefit accruing to them as a result of those good seasons. I hope that the necessity for shepherding the resources of Western Australia will appeal to the Government, and that the Government will realise that the best interests of the State will not be served if there is any considerable exodus of farmers from those areas. I doubt whether any of those districts is too dry for mixed farming pursuits to be carried on with reasonable success, in a reasonable season. On that account I consider that the member who moved the motion has rendered a service to Western Australia in so doing.

MR. WARNER (Mt. Marshall) [7.48]: Having received a definite assurance from the Premier, I beg leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

QUESTION—DAIRYING INDUSTRY.

Butter Imports, Names of Importers, Increased Levies.

MR. DOUST asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, How many boxes of butter have been imported into Western Australia during the months of August, September, and October, 1938, respectively? 2, What are the names of the principal importing firms? 3, What is the cost to the dairy farmers, due to increased levies during each of the above months?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, August, 1,481 boxes; September, 1,249 boxes; October, 940 boxes approximately; total, 3,670 boxes. 2, Brown & Durcan, Perth Ice Company, Sara & Cook, Collyer, D. F., McGlew & Co., Manning & Co., W. & M. Clarke. 3, The loss during August was £2 a cwt. The returns for September and October are not yet available, but it is expected to be the same as October, namely £1 a box.

LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ACT SELECT COMMITTEE.

Newspaper's Error.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [7.49]: I wish to draw attention to an error that appeared in the Press yesterday in connection with the report that was presented to the House dealing with the recommendations of the select committee which inquired into the provisions of the Legal Practitioners Act. The report that appeared in the "West Australian" is not quite correct, due, no doubt, to a typographical error. Dealing with the recommendation of the committee concerning the annual practice fees, the newspaper report represented the committee as stating, "It is necessary to have a minimum annual practice fee of £5, as at present provided in the Act." That is just the reverse of the actual recommendation of the committee. The error occurred through the newspaper having omitted the prefix "un" from the word "necessary," consequently imparting a totally different meaning to the recommendation from that intended by the committee. I make this explanation because I feel certain that the Press will be anxious to correct the mistake.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £1,200,000.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1. Financial Emergency Tax Assessment Act Amendment.
2. Financial Emergency Tax.
Introduced by the Premier.
3. Interpretation Act Amendment.
Introduced by Hon. C. G. Latham for Mr. Watts.

BILL—RETURNED SAILORS AND SOLDIERS' IMPERIAL LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA, W.A. BRANCH, INCORPORATED (ANZAC CLUB CONTROL).

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [8.53] in moving the second reading said: This Bill proposes to make two amendments to the Workers' Homes Act. The first is to give the board independent borrowing power. The Act, as originally passed, gave the board this power, but it was subsequently withdrawn by an amendment of the Act passed in the same year. Although I have searched the records of Parliament and "Hansard," I am unable to find the reason for that amendment. It is now considered, however, to be of advantage to the community to restore the power. The recent depression has made it clear that, in times of restricted Government loan money, the board is liable to be starved for finance if it has to rely solely on that source for its capital. The capital made available to the board from time to time is as follows:—

	£
Original appropriation, 1912 ..	525,500
Subsequent appropriations—	
1927	50,000
1929	25,000
1931	2,870
1932	41,295
1933	2,816
1934	35,000
1935	35,000
1937	50,000
1938	10,000
Total	£776,981

Since the inauguration of the Workers' Homes Board, 3,562 approvals have been granted for buildings costing £1,694,760. That has been made possible by the return of capital since the board was established in 1912. The annual advances made by the board amount to about £72,000. The following table shows the allocations for the years set out hereunder—

1935-36, 115 houses,	£72,270
1936-37, 88 houses,	£61,203
1937-38, 103 houses,	£72,287
306	£205,760

From July to September of this year 70 approvals have been granted for houses costing £38,630. Unfortunately, times of restricted Government borrowing often coincide with times when the board experiences difficulty in securing repayment of

advances. The board at such times has therefore little money available for further building, possibly just when a depression in the building trade might make it highly desirable for work of this nature to be undertaken. It seems to me that at present, when the Federal Government is entering upon huge defence expenditure, State Governments will experience great difficulty in obtaining loan money. Increased expenditure for defence purposes will undoubtedly make it increasingly difficult for the State to obtain finance. Members must bear in mind, too, that every million pounds borrowed by the State is circulated within the State and so tends to stave off bad times. The Workers' Homes Board has had a successful career. I do not think any money advanced by the board has been lost.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The Government has written off some amounts.

The PREMIER: Yes, but those losses were made up by small profits which the board made.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That might be so.

The PREMIER: The difference between the charges for the money borrowed by the State and that lent by the board allows for the cost of administration and a slight proportion of loss. The proportion of loss has been so slight that, generally speaking, the money advanced to the board is represented by tangible income-earning assets in possession of the board. If we cannot obtain loan money to enlarge the board's activities, it seems desirable to give the board borrowing powers, particularly if the State's loan expenditure is to be restricted. Had the board this power, we know that it could borrow. There will be many occasions when money will be available to the board direct—money that the Government will be able to secure for it.

Let me reiterate that Western Australia is placed at a serious disadvantage compared with other States in the competition for loan money. Most of the other States have many semi-governmental bodies, which borrow independently of the Government and which do not have to be financed from Government loan money. Harbour works, tramway boards, water and sewerage boards are examples of the authorities that raise their own capital in some of the other States. In Western Australia, however, all these activi-

ties rely upon the Government for their financial requirements. That is one reason why comparisons of our loan expenditure with that of other States are frequently misleading. When loan expenditure is calculated at so much per head of the population we are held up as having been unduly extravagant.

Mr. Seward: I hope you are not going to try to make up the leeway.

The PREMIER: I am pointing out that we have a very high per capita loan indebtedness because almost all the money required for public activities here has been borrowed by the Government, whereas in the other States those activities are financed by semi-governmental authorities whose borrowings do not appear amongst those of the State.

Hon. N. Keenan: But after making that adjustment, we are still the highest.

The PREMIER: Yes, but without the adjustment our borrowings per head of the population appear to be abnormal. We have no privately-owned tramways in Western Australia, though the systems at Fremantle and Kulgoorlie are not owned by the Government. Tramways, gasworks, electric light works, harbour works, water and sewerage works in the other States are financed by semi-governmental authorities, and they have independent borrowing powers.

Some members might think that the conferring of borrowing powers upon the Workers' Homes Board is tantamount to an attempt to circumvent the Loan Council's control of loan expenditure. That is not so. Even if the board were granted independent borrowing powers, the proposals would still be submitted to the Loan Council. The proposed borrowings by semi-governmental authorities in each State are submitted to the Loan Council and approved before the loans are floated, but this applies only to loans in excess of £100,000. The Workers' Homes Board would hardly be likely to borrow anything approaching that sum in any one year. If depressed times returned, if we experienced another drought next year—I sincerely hope we shall not—the amount of loan money available to the States would be small on account of the Commonwealth's requirements for defence, and we would probably be unable to obtain money for the Workers' Homes Board unless it had borrowing powers. The extent to which the semi-

governmental borrowings have increased is indicated by the following figures:—

	Approved Loan Raisings for States.	Approvals for semi-governmental borrowing.
1936-37 ..	£19,200,000	£6,315,000
1937-38 ..	14,475,000	9,110,000
1938-39 ..	12,000,000	10,439,000

Three years ago the proportion of semi-governmental borrowing to total loan raisings was one-third, whereas last year the amounts were nearly equal.

Hon. N. Keenan: Have you the figures for New South Wales?

The PREMIER: No, but they are very high. Water, sewerage and other boards not dependent upon the Government for their loans have borrowed very largely. In New South Wales there are water boards in many of the large country towns, and some of the capital moneys have been repaid to the Government and by it utilised for its own purposes. However, while Government borrowings have steadily decreased, those for semi-governmental authorities have increased in greater proportion.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It would be far better for us, if we can, to continue without borrowing money and paying interest on it.

The PREMIER: Yes, but I am pointing out that the borrowings by Governments are decreasing, while the decrease is counterbalanced by the fact that semi-governmental authorities are borrowing more. The States are compelled—I hope the member for Murchison is listening—by the people that control finance in Australia to reduce borrowings, though semi-governmental authorities have increased their borrowings.

Mr. Marshall: The last figures I saw from New South Wales showed that 60 per cent. of the Government revenue went in interest and sinking fund payments, leaving only 40 per cent. to carry on the services.

The PREMIER: I repeat that there is no desire to circumvent the Loan Council. The money that the board would require probably would not be obtained from the money market of Australia. The highest amount of new capital that has been provided for the board in any one year is £50,000, so that, generally speaking, there will be no need to submit its proposed borrowings for the approval of the Loan Council. If the board had increased capital, additional money in the shape of repayments would be flowing in, thus permitting the board to increase its

activities. There are many avenues through which the board will be able to obtain money. I instance the McNess Housing Trust. Members will appreciate the fact that the desire is not to spend speedily all money that will be derived from the generous benefactions of the late Sir Charles McNess. Rather is it the desire to carry on the good work that can be undertaken and yet always have some money in hand for the purpose of building homes for deserving people. If all the money were spent in one year, those who are entrusted with the expenditure of the money might be confronted with even more necessitous cases in which they would desire to provide people with homes, and yet would have no funds at their disposal for the purpose.

Mr. Stubbs: Is very much money involved?

The PREMIER: As the result of the benefactions of Sir Charles McNess, over £50,000 will be handed to the trustees for expenditure in connection with this very worthy object. Naturally the trustees will not rush in and spend all that money at once, and some of it could be utilised to great advantage by the Workers' Homes Board. I presume we are justified in anticipating that Parliament will pass the Superannuation Bill. Immediately that measure becomes operative, a fairly substantial sum will be accumulated each year and that money will be available for investment. That money, too, could be loaned with advantage to the Workers' Homes Board, which is carrying out such excellent work in providing houses on exceedingly liberal terms. The investment of such funds in that manner will prove satisfactory. The Bill provides that the funds of the board shall be such moneys as are appropriated by Parliament for its purposes and such moneys as the board may borrow under the provisions of this legislation. The rate of interest to be paid on borrowed money and the rate of repayment will be prescribed by the Treasurer. That will always be done in accordance with the ruling rate of the money market. Naturally, we would not desire to charge clients of the Workers' Homes Board a higher rate of interest than is necessary to cover the cost of administration and the small losses that may be incurred. To date the board has been able to complete each year's operations without making any loss. Members will agree that the board is an

admirable institution that is doing wonderful work in providing homes for people who otherwise would never have an opportunity to obtain them.

The second amendment in the Bill is contained in Clause 4. At present the Act provides that a deposit of £5 shall be paid by leasehold clients. The board feels that, with regard to applicants who are on the lower ranges of income and who desire to secure one of the cheaper types of wooden houses, the requirement to provide a deposit of £5 is often a real obstacle. In those circumstances, if the board had the power it could fix a nominal deposit of, say, £2 or £3 or some other suitable amount. That would meet the position of men who receive the basic wage or thereabouts and who have two or three children to support. Naturally, a man in that position would desire to secure one of the cheaper types of homes and, in contradistinction to the policy of landlords generally, the board definitely gives preference to people with children. A man in receipt of the basic wage might be perfectly solvent and yet the payment of £5, together with other additional expense involved in securing that amount, might represent a tremendous obstacle. The board desires to assist that type of person to secure his freehold property. Naturally it will take such men many years before they will be able to secure the freehold, but, nevertheless, the clients of the board have a real feeling of ownership and pride of possession in their homes.

Mr. Sampson: A man would not pay a deposit unless he was sincere in his desire to purchase a home.

The PREMIER: That is so.

The Minister for Mines: He might be sincere, but not have the money.

Mr. Stubbs: Some municipalities do not desire to have wooden houses constructed in their areas.

The PREMIER: Unfortunately, that is correct. If that tendency continues, the House may have an opportunity to deprive local authorities of the power to declare brick areas.

Mr. Marshall: It is time you dealt with that.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The Government could exclude portion of a municipality from the operations of the Municipal Corporations Act. We did that with regard to the University.

The PREMIER: And that may become necessary. I think it will be necessary.

Mr. Cross: Such a provision should have been included in this Bill.

The PREMIER: We have been able to utilise the money raised so far for the purposes of the Workers' Homes Board without resort to that action. Nevertheless, it will become necessary very soon unless municipalities are prepared to set aside some portion of their areas, where homes may be erected of a type that men in receipt of small wages can afford to purchase. It does not matter whether the house be built of wood, brick, stone or galvanised iron, the point is that the building is such that the man can afford to buy. If a municipality claims to exist only for the better class people and does not desire persons in ordinary circumstances to live in its area, deliberately shutting them out, Parliament should take steps to bring the municipal authorities to their senses. We should have a measure of control so that some people may be prevented from being so exclusive that men in receipt of small wages will be pushed out into the bush where the cost of transport may be so high that they will find it almost as expensive to live there as if they resided in the middle of the city.

Again, when the board arranged to erect houses on the goldfields, it was decided to collect deposits of £15 from clients. This was done at the request of the people of the goldfields who were anxious to induce the board to erect homes there. Although that was done, the board had no legal right to demand the deposit of £15. We regard the stability of the goldfields as assured for many years to come, particularly in Kalgoorlie and other older centres where the indications are that the mines have lives of from 10 to 15 years ahead of them. Even when their block of reserves are exhausted, the mines give promise of being able to continue for some time. Nevertheless, it is generally conceded that there is necessity for the repayment of capital to be undertaken in a slightly shorter period than applies in other more stable country areas.

Mr. Styants: We do not complain about that.

The PREMIER: That is so, but, as a matter of fact, the board has no authority to make that arrangement. The goldfields people do not complain and the board is

anxious to meet their wishes. Should the Bill be passed, the board will be able to adopt that course with statutory authority. The Bill proposes to give the board discretion in fixing the leasehold deposits and if that is agreed to, difficulties such as I have mentioned will be overcome.

The Government gave serious consideration to including in the Bill an amendment to enable the board to build cheap houses and let them at a weekly rental to workers in receipt of low incomes, with the object of ultimate purchase. It will be remembered that a proposal to this effect was submitted last year, but the Bill was lost in the Council. Not only did members of that Chamber express their opposition in a very marked manner by throwing out that Bill, but they also amended the Loan Bill from which the provision for the necessary funds for that work was struck out. It was decided that it would be futile to introduce such a proposal again. There has been no indication that the Council has changed its attitude, and we do not want to quarrel with members of the Upper House with regard to the present Bill, which is a reasonable measure that both Houses can accept. Last year the Upper House expressed its opinion, but the Bill on this occasion is framed without embodying the provision to which such strong exception was taken last session.

Mr. Sampson: You really desire that this Bill shall pass?

The PREMIER: We desired that last year's Bill should pass. When a Bill contains two or three distinct principles, one of which is shown to be unacceptable to the Legislative Council, it is wiser to introduce a further Bill without the unacceptable provision than to risk losing the Bill as a whole because of its inclusion. Probably the Bill would be lost if the Council persisted in the attitude it adopted last year, and so the Government does not desire to take that risk this time. That is all I need to say regarding the Bill. Its principles should commend themselves to members of this House, and those of the other branch of the Legislature. I trust the measure will pass, and thus enable the board to exercise a greater and more beneficent activity even than it has done in the past.

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

BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 20th October. Mr. Withers in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clause 5—Amendment of Section 11:

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after the clause had been partly considered.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A question was raised whether an inspector's instructions as to scaffolding or gear in a well could be enforced. On the advice of the Crown Law Department I ask the Committee to delete the whole of Subsection 2 of proposed new Section 11, and to insert a comprehensive new provision to stand as Subsection 4. This involves the re-numbering of the present Subsections 3 and 4 as 2 and 3, respectively. The proposed new section will then render it possible to enforce the inspector's instructions as I have indicated. I move an amendment—

That Subsection (2) of proposed new Section 11 be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: For the purpose already mentioned, I move an amendment—

That the following be inserted to stand as Subsection (4):—

Where any inspector gives any notice prescribed by Subsection (1) or Subsection (3) of this section he may at the same time or any other time order any persons forthwith to cease to use or to work in connection with or near the scaffolding or gear or the well, as the case may be, until such directions or any order on appeal therefrom have or has been complied with. Any such order of an inspector may be rescinded by him.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have not seen the amendment previously. It gives the inspector tremendous powers. True, if a builder feels aggrieved because of the order of an inspector he may appeal; but how long would it take for the appeal to be heard? Would it mean discontinuance of work for a considerable period? The intention of the deleted subsection seemed to be that work should be permitted to go on until the appeal had been heard. Should an inspector become annoyed with a builder, he might issue an order, and a week or a fortnight might elapse before the matter was heard and determined.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The subsection which has been struck out pro-

vided for enforcement of the inspector's orders. If an inspector finds that a regulation as to scaffolding is not being complied with, he must give instructions that the matter be put right. If it is put right, work proceeds. If the builder does not wish to remedy the defect he has the right to appeal, but certainly he has no right to continue work on dangerous scaffolding. That was always intended. Otherwise it would be useless to have inspectors. Moreover, the new subsection applies to gear in a well. The member for Williams-Narrogin pointed out that there was no power to enforce the inspector's instructions in the case of a well. I understand that the need for this power became apparent some years ago, when two or three fatal accidents occurred during the sinking of sand wells in the metropolitan area. The need exists for supervision and somebody should have the power to give instructions for the use of proper scaffolding or gear in the sinking of wells. That is why the provision was inserted.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I have never seen any scaffolding used in the sinking of a well. As there is timber going down the well from the top, no scaffolding is needed.

Mr. Doney: A sand well must be timbered.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: An inspector would seldom interfere with the sinking of a well. This provision crept into the measure because of the scare that occurred on the occasion to which I referred. What I am particularly concerned about is the scaffolding on a building. However, the provision is in the Bill. I do not know that there would be any inspector whose duty it would be to supervise well-sinking, but those responsible could be told that they would have to put in safe gear and scaffolding. I do not know that any particular inspector would supervise such work. The inspectors we have are fairly busy already in regard to the scaffolding on buildings.

Mr. SEWARD: A point raised when the clause was before the House last week was that the inspector had power to stop work on the well if he considered that timbering was necessary. Subclause (5) gives the contractor or the owner the right to appeal against the inspector's decision, but gives him only seven days in which to make up his mind whether he will appeal or not. If he decides to appeal he must do so to a

police magistrate. In the city, police magistrates may readily be available but that is not so in country areas, and there was no provision setting out what was to happen between the time a man decided to appeal and the time the case was heard. The sub-clause before us overcomes the second difficulty. The Leader of the Opposition has pointed out that the other difficulty remains, namely, the difficulty of obtaining the services of a magistrate in a country district to hear an appeal. For instance, the magistrate in the Great Southern area resides at Albany. His district extends throughout the Great Southern, and it might be a month before he could hear an appeal, during which time the work would be held up.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is very little alteration in respect of inspection of any building outside the 25-mile radius.

Mr. Doney: Anything over 15ft. whether in the city or the country is subject to inspection.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But there is a 15ft. limit outside metropolitan areas, whereas all limit has been removed within the metropolitan area, so there is a great difference.

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

Clause 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Amendment of the Schedule to the principal Act:

Mr. DONEY: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of sub-paragraph (iii) of paragraph (d) the words "builders' labourers" be struck out with a view to inserting the words "hod-carriers."

I can understand that a change might be desirable in regard to the ladders used by hod carriers. They carry heavy loads, and the matter of spacing between the rungs is of some consequence to them. Uneven spacing might be dangerous. That would not necessarily be so in the case of ordinary builders' labourers. The rungs are 9 or 10 inches apart. I do not suppose the Minister has had any complaints in that regard. In the case of hod carriers, however, there might be a sound reason for reducing the space to 8½ inches all round.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think the term "builders' labourers" is the modern name for hod carriers.

Mr. Doney: It would include a number of other labourers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Ladders must be made safe for carpenters' labourers who might be carrying something up one of them. All builders use these ladders and it is an advantage to have them uniform. The builders themselves do not object.

Mr. Doney: I am in a position to say they do object.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I should think the builders' labourers would object. It is a very hard job climbing a ladder with a load on one's shoulder, and to make the space 8½ inches would mean more steps.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The provision has been drafted carefully by experienced men.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I don't suppose they have ever climbed a ladder, with a load of bricks on their shoulders.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not an authority on the correct spacing of rungs, but this provision was drafted by the best authorities.

This was agreed to both by the builders' labourers and the contractors. The builders' labourers made representations for uniform ladders to the chief inspector.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I wonder why 8¾ inches was not inserted in the Bill instead of 8½ inches.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member can move an amendment to alter the figure.

Mr. DONEY: If the amendment is passed, the ladders at present in use will have to be scrapped. To change the spacing of the rungs from 9 inches or 10 inches apart to 8½ inches apart would weaken the ladder, because additional holes would have to be bored in the uprights. The reduction to 8½ inches is reasonable for the hod carrier, but we must make provision for other builders' labourers also.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I inquired into that matter and was assured that a uniform type of ladder was now being constructed with the rungs spaced 8½ inches apart. The object is to obtain uniformity in all scaffolding gear.

Mr. Doney: I should say 9 inches is the average.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It will comfort the member for Williams-Nar-

rogin, I may inform him that the Bill will involve very little alteration in scaffolding gear.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If the ladders at present in use must be altered in consequence of this provision, the uprights will have to be rebored and so the whole ladder will be weakened, as the member for Williams-Narrogin said. So that builders will not be put to loss by having to scrap the ladders at present in use, we should provide that ladders to be constructed after the passing of the Act shall be made to comply with the Act. Uniformity is, of course, highly desirable, but we should not obtain it at great expense. I hope the Minister will consider the point I have raised. I have no desire to delay the Bill, otherwise I would ask him to report progress.

Mr. DONEY: This is the first time that I can recall having to ask the House to take no notice of the views expressed by the Leader of the Opposition. I am forced to do so now. I have sought information from people who know a great deal more about this matter than I do, or, judging by the tenor of the debate, than does any other member. I am informed there is a big difference between the terms general labourer and hod carrier. General labourer includes hod carrier, but the reverse does not apply. Only about 50 per cent. of general labourers are hod carriers. The Minister might be satisfied to provide that the spacing of the rungs shall be 9 inches instead of 8½ inches. I hope he will report progress so that further inquiries may be made.

Mr. THORN: A spacing of 8½ inches is ridiculous.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is to strike out the words "builders' labourers."

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

Ayes	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	19
				—
Majority against	..			4
				—

AYES.				
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Sampson			
Mr. Hill	Mr. Seward			
Mr. Hughes	Mr. Thorn			
Mr. Latham	Mr. Warner			
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Welsh			
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Willmott			
Mr. North	Mr. Boyte			
Mr. Patrick				

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Coverley	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Cross	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Fox	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hegney	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Styanis
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Millington	Mr. Wise
Mr. Needham	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Panton	

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.		NOES.	
Mr. Doust	Miss Holman		
Mr. Stubbs	Mr. Troy		
Mr. J. M. Smith	Mr. Nuisen		
Mr. Mann	Mr. Hawke		

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We should provide that the spacing stipulated shall not apply to any ladders now in existence.

The Minister for Works: No.

The Minister for Mines: Would you include those manufactured and unsold?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: They should be excluded. Time is necessary to draft a suitable amendment. Perhaps we could provide that after the passing of this measure no ladder shall be made except in conformity with this provision. Otherwise unnecessary expense and waste will be occasioned. I move an amendment—

That after the word "labourers" in subparagraph (iii) the words "shall be spaced at eight and one-half inches (8½ inches) centre to centre" be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What does the hon. member propose to insert in lieu of the words to be struck out? Perhaps a certain period could be provided. The subparagraph is merely an addition to Regulation 16, which stipulates the types of ladder permitted. The information at my disposal shows that this was approved by the Chief Inspector of Scaffolding, whose business it is to observe and determine what is advisable. There is no standard to-day.

Hon. N. Keenan: The ladder used on these premises has spaces of nine inches between rungs.

The Minister for Mines: That is an old-fashioned ladder.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: And it is not used for work on scaffolding. Members will agree that it will be advantageous to standardise ladders.

The Minister for Agriculture: This will not affect the ladder you use in hanging your pictures.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It will affect every ladder in the State.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, only those used in connection with scaffolding. This provision will apply only to those ladders.

Mr. Hegney: Has the inspector power to burn or destroy ladders not up to standard?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We have not that power at present, but we will be able to deal with that phase later. The time has arrived when a standard ladder for use in connection with scaffolding must be provided. That is merely common sense. A wider space than that specified in the Bill affects men carrying heavy loads, such as hod-carriers. As a result of experience, it has been found that 8½ inches is a comfortable and reasonable space between rungs.

Hon. N. Keenan: Why the extra half inch?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Experts sometimes fix arbitrary figures, and in this instance I am quoting expert opinion. Does any member of this Committee wish to pit his expert knowledge against that of the Principal Architect and of the Chief Inspector of Scaffolding, who advise that the proper space is 8½ inches? Further than that, I am advised that practically all the building contractors have constructed their ladders to that standard. The experts advise me that if the amendment is agreed to, it will occasion very little alteration in existing equipment.

Mr. Doney: That would be all right if the statement were correct, but it is not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This improvement seems to have popularised itself already. No one objects to it, and the standard fixed is 8½ inches.

The Minister for Mines: Why not compromise and make the standard between eight and nine inches?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know from experience that it is difficult when working to step from one ladder with eight-inch spaces on to one with nine-inch spaces between the rungs.

Mr. Warner: After this, if the ladder has nine-inch spaces, it will be declared black.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. DONEY: Can I move to make the space nine inches?

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot now accept such an amendment.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 8, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1938-39.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 25th October. Mr. Hegney in the Chair.

Vote—Chief Secretary, £17,663:

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. F. C. L. Smith.—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [9.12:] These Estimates refer to a department which covers the administrative activities of the head office and of the following sub-departments:—Fisheries, Native Affairs, Registry and Friendly Societies, Prisons, Harbour and Light and Jetties, Mental Hospitals, and the Observatory. Various other activities of a miscellaneous nature also come under the control of the head office.

The Correspondence Despatch Office was established 24 years ago, its main object being to facilitate the transmission of inter-departmental correspondence, files, etc., and a reduction of general expenditure. It acts as a central depot for the exchange of departmental correspondence, conducts Government mail services to 45 country towns, and has a messenger delivery service to all firms and private residences within a certain radius of Perth, Fremantle, Kalgoorlie, Boulder, and Bunbury. During the year 1937-38 further country despatch offices were opened at Cunderdin, Gnowangerup, and Pinjarra, with an estimated annual saving to the Government on postages of not less than £150. The opening-up of further centres at Corrigin, Wongan Hills, and Dalwallinu is now under consideration. The officer in charge of the Correspondence Despatch Office is also in charge of the bulk of the cleaning arrangements of the various departments, and this co-ordination of the cleaning services has reduced the cost to the Government and increased the efficiency of the work.

The work of the Department of Native Affairs continues to grow, mainly through the reliance placed upon it by the increasing number of natives needing help and advice

at its hands. Out of some 26,300 natives, approximately 16,000 are more or less directly in touch. The social work of the department has increased tremendously, relating as it does to almost every phase of human endeavour. So far, any additional moneys available above normal requirements have been devoted to provision for the sick and to the control and discovery of disease. This phase of the matter has been constantly kept in view during recent years. The medical inspection throughout the North continues, with consequent hospitalisation of natives at Wyndham, Derby, Broome, and Port Hedland, and clinics as an adjunct at Munja and Moola Bulla stations. Trained nursing staffs are attached to all these places. The northern medical services generally are assisting to their utmost. At certain centres in the North-West, owing to the increasing coloured populations additional activities are imperative. Besides some 60 paid officers of the department, there are throughout the country 102 protectors assisting in administrative matters. Then there are three cattle stations in Kimberley and the native settlement in the Midlands, besides six staffed feeding depots and 66 rationing stations. The inspection work is to be continued in the Kimberleys, and also elsewhere as far as practicable. Hon. members who have read the report of this department laid on the Table know that it includes a highly valuable report on the inspection by Dr. Davis. As I have indicated, this work is to be continued.

At Moore River native settlement, at present the only settlement in the South-West, with a capacity limit of 500 people, many improvements have been made. These include an additional training centre for children, cottages for the people and the provision of an up-to-date electric light and water scheme throughout. The acquisition of land for another settlement in the South-West is in progress, and yet another settlement is contemplated in the eastern districts. Drought conditions in the North have militated against the native cattle stations earning substantial profits, but last year Moola Bulla practically paid its way, and Munja has produced considerable revenue by the initial cultivation of certain tropical products.

Numerous calls upon the department made by a people gradually emerging from a primitive state towards a civilised condition,

and the consequent reactions upon the public generally which such a condition brings about, impose upon the staff a task which taxes it severely, and which should ensure to it the sympathy and good will of the public in the discharge of a difficult duty. The increases cover only most urgent services, and do not admit of any considerable expansion of the department.

The activities of the Registrar General's branch cover Registry, Statistical, Friendly Societies and Government Actuary, and Commonwealth National Health and Pensions Insurance Act, 1938. I think most hon. members are aware of the activities of these sub-branches, but I desire to refer in some detail to National Health and Pensions Insurance. The passing of the Commonwealth Act will not directly affect the friendly societies registered under the Friendly Societies Act of this State. It is probable, however, that all the friendly societies granting the usual sickness and disablement benefits will form separate organisations for registration as approved societies under the National Health and Pensions Insurance Act. These approved societies will, however, be entirely separate and distinct from the registered friendly societies. If it is found that many of the members of friendly societies who are compelled to enter an approved society under that Act do not desire to retain full membership in the friendly society, then certain reserves in the friendly society will be liberated; and it will be necessary for such friendly societies to prepare schemes to deal with the liberated reserves. It is very hard to estimate what effect national insurance will have on the activities of the friendly societies. Perhaps the membership of existing friendly societies will be reduced, but I do not think the societies generally anticipate that such will be the case. Members of friendly societies have some consideration for their individual welfare and some appreciation of the desirability of the insurance which the societies extend to members. Those persons will continue to remain members of friendly societies and to enjoy the benefits that those societies offer, apart from participating in whatever benefits are derived from the National Health and Pensions Insurance Act introduced by the Federal Government. The Registrar General is, however, watching the interests of friendly societies and he has had a number of conferences with

the officers of those organisations. Quite probably a short amendment of the Friendly Societies Act will be required soon and that matter is receiving consideration.

The Prisons Department last year dealt with a daily average of 197 prisoners at Fremantle, and at the Pardelup Prison Farm the number was 49. The system of classifying prisoners has been maintained and every care is taken to segregate youthful and first offenders from the habitual criminal class. Efforts are made to reclaim prisoners, and those efforts are not confined only to first offenders. Encouragement is extended in every case where any desire to improve himself is shown by a prisoner. Many prisoners seek to become efficient workmen in the available occupations, and when prisoners are released assistance is afforded to them whenever possible to help them to rehabilitate themselves.

Mr. Sampson: Is sufficient work found for them to keep them going?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I think so.

Mr. Sampson: That is good news.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The increased scale of gratuities continues to be a great improvement and the prisoners take more interest in their tasks and avail themselves of the opportunities to become efficient in tailoring, carpentry, bootmaking and printing.

The Minister for Agriculture: They learn printing, do they?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: They do, and that is a matter that should interest the member for Swan. Any hon. member who has been to the Fremantle prison and had an opportunity of seeing the work turned out in the various branches I have mentioned will agree that the work performed is very good. This indicates that the men are under efficient supervision, and that they have opportunities of learning a trade. The value of the remunerative work performed at the prison during the year was £3,814, being an increase of £381 over 1936-37. At the Pardelup prison farm there are 49 prisoners under the supervision of four officers, including the officer in charge, and the men are engaged on afforestation work, clearing for agricultural purposes, apple-growing, sheep-breeding and dairying. Developmental work is being carried on steadily and the land is cleared for the putting down of pasture. The Pardelup drainage is progressing satisfactorily; a flock of

sheep is being built up, and the wool is considered to be of a high standard and the returns are satisfactory. The value of the remunerative work performed there during 1937-38 is estimated at £6,224, an increase of £597 over the figure for 1936-37.

The activities of the Harbour and Lights Department include the control of the various ports embracing the port lights, beacons, buoys, etc.; the administration of the Jetties Act, 1926, including the departmental work at the jetties at Carnarvon, Onslow, Point Samson, Broome, Derby and Wyndham; the control of pilotage services at Albany, Bunbury, Busselton, Geraldton, Wyndham, Esperance; and the administration of the State Navigation Act and the Boat Licensing Act. The revenue and expenditure of the department is governed to a very great extent by the fluctuation of production in the North-West, mainly in respect of cattle, sheep and wool. The cargo handled at north-west ports has increased greatly in recent months, particularly at Derby, where a motor locomotive has been substituted for horse traction, which has been in existence since the port was under departmental control. The erection of the new timber jetty at Point Samson has resulted in the abolition of lighterage at that port, as vessels now berth at the jetty which has a berthage accommodation of 350 feet on two sides and a depth of water of 22 feet at low tide. Motor haulage is also in force at this port. Pile dolphins on which will be erected A.G.A. flashing lights are being erected in Denham Channel at Shark Bay in place of the light buoys now in position. These beacons being higher will be a vast improvement on the light buoys and will be more easily picked up by masters navigating this long channel by day or by night.

The drought conditions experienced throughout last year were reflected in the trade at the various North-West ports, particularly at Carnarvon, where there was a considerable reduction in the shipments of wool and cases of bananas.

The following institutions are under the control of the Mental Hospitals Department:—The Claremont Mental Hospital, Green Place Mental Hospital, Whitby Falls Mental Hospital, Lemnos Soldiers' Hospital, and Heathcote Reception Home. On the 31st December, 1937, 1,476 persons were certified as insane in this State as against 1,451 on the 31st December, 1936, an increase of 25.

Mr. Sampson: Do you blame the Government for that?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: During the year the number of deaths was 67 and the discharges were 84, of whom 67 were discharged as recovered. The Claremont Mental Hospital is still overcrowded but with the employment of three additional attendants, and a rearrangement of accommodation, the position has been relieved to some extent in the male ward. Newer forms of treatment for mental illness have been undertaken and been found to give promising results in cases of recent origin. The treatment necessitated an increase in the medical and nursing staff. The Heathcote Reception Home is now to a greater extent fulfilling its purpose.

Hon. N. Keenan: Oh, is it?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The member for Nedlands might be interested to know. One never knows just what might happen to one in this world, so that people who are unfortunate enough to have to avail themselves of the facilities of the Heathcote Reception Home are not people to be ridiculed.

Hon. N. Keenan: That is not the point.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Those unfortunate people should not be ridiculed, because, after all, none of us knows when we ourselves may be in a mental condition that will necessitate treatment at the Heathcote Reception Home. This home is intended for new and recoverable cases, and, with the new methods of treatment for mental disorders, the institution is able to cope with a larger number of patients, for the reason that their stay in the home is of shorter duration. During the year the number of admissions was 340, of which 64 were re-admissions. Of the cases discharged, 172 were recovered or relieved and 38 not improved; 21 patients died in the home and 111 were transferred to hospitals for the insane. The number of patients in the Heathcote Reception Home on the 31st December, 1937, was 86, a decrease of two from the number on the 31st December, 1936.

The operations of the Observatory are always of interest to members. The State time service is automatically transmitted hourly by the Observatory to the Railway Department, the General Post Office and the broadcasting stations, from which it is transmitted all over the State. Shipping

and lighthouses are advised at 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. by means of the Applecross radio. Some watchmakers also receive the hourly signal; and, of course, there is the daily time gun that most of us hear. A signal is sent to the operating room at the G.P.O. for instant despatch to all telegraph stations. Wireless time signals are also received nearly every day from Bordeaux and Rugby (Greenwich time). Copies of seismological records are distributed to about 30 co-operating centres throughout the world. During the year 267 earth movements were recorded, of which 115 were severe earthquakes. The science of seismology is becoming of increasing importance in the elucidation of the structure of the earth and in the detection of the presence of domes, which are often associated with oil.

Member: That is important.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, most important. It is only of recent years that domes have been associated with the presence of oil. That has been recognised by a company operating in the North-West of our State. Where there is a dome, oil may be present. We all hope that oil may be discovered. This method is practised extensively in Canada and the United States. Time tables are compiled by the Observatory that are of particular value to shipping on the North-West coast. During the year, the predicted tide tables for 1929 at Port Hedland were compiled. Members will realise, therefore, that although the Observatory is from time to time subjected to criticism, it is doing very useful work. I venture to say that the information it supplies to various shipping services, the Railway Department and other activities throughout the State, is very valuable and much appreciated. Owing to the illness of the Government Astronomer, the viewing of celestial objects through the big telescope was confined to the first half of the year. The number of visitors was 708, and they visited the Observatory on 52 nights. The educational value of such visits to schools, societies and the general public is undoubted. The general information furnished by the Observatory includes tables of sunrise and sunset, moon phases and moonrise and moonset. Those tables are distributed to the Press, various institutions and persons, also to the main airways services that ask for them. Astronomical, seismological and general scien-

tific information is also made available to the Press as occasion arises. Aneroids and other instruments are tested at various times. Electrical and wireless apparatus enables Observatory officials to speak direct to any part of Australia and report on the weather and forecasts.

The Fisheries Department, which was previously under the control of the Premier, has now been brought under the control of the Chief Secretary, except as to activities under the Game Act. The former Chief Inspector, Mr. Aldrich, retired from the Public Service in August last, and his successor is Mr. A. J. Fraser, formerly of the New South Wales Fisheries Department. During the ensuing year it is intended to make a comprehensive survey of the fisheries resources of the State to determine the best means of developing the fishing industry and encouraging production and also to stimulate the tourist attractions of the State by a progressive policy of trout acclimatisation. Fishing ports and suitable freshwater streams will be investigated for these purposes. The number of fishermen's licenses issued during 1937-38 compares very favourably with the number issued during the preceding year. The production of fish, based on information available for the two years, was as under—

Fish, 1936-37	..	..	45,460 cwt.
1937-38	..	..	49,247 cwt.
Prawns, 1936-37	..	..	4,104 gallons.
1937-38	..	..	8,755 gallons.
Crayfish, 1936-37	..	..	32,479 dozen.
1937-38	..	..	48,363 dozen.
Crabs, 1936-37	..	..	14,610 dozen.
1937-38	..	..	13,359 dozen.

The estimated value of the 1937-38 production is £157,000.

Only one whaling fleet operated off our coast during the 1938 season, as the second of the two American fleets that operated last year was unable to contain the consent of its Government. Such consent is essential under international law. Unless whalers flying the flags of other nations come to this coast in 1939, there is every probability that no fleet will operate off our coast and Western Australia will forego a large item of revenue. The fleets pay a license fee for the factory ship and each chaser, and also a royalty on each barrel of oil won. During the year 1937-38 the revenue from whaling was £4,578.

Mr. Sampson: Is there no report regarding the gilgie industry?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The diminishing demand for pearls and pearl-shell in the world markets is the reason that the pearling industry cannot be said to be flourishing, despite the fact that the actual production has not suffered any great diminution. There is every reason to believe, however, that several Japanese pearling vessels have made exploratory visits to the pearling grounds outside the territorial waters adjacent to the North-West coast in the vicinity of Broome, and it would appear that experienced divers in and about Broome have been canvassed for the fleet, which it is rumoured will visit these grounds next year. The fisheries launch "Koorooldhu" has now been equipped with wireless, which greatly adds to its utility.

The Game Act covers the taking and exporting of birds and animals, the collection of royalty on marsupial skins, the licensing of persons to take kangaroos for food purposes and authorities to destroy game doing damage to property. Those are all the notes I have from the Chief Secretary on the various departments under his control. Perhaps I should apologise for having been under the necessity of practically reading the notes, but that was inescapable on account of my having to present the Estimates of departments other than my own.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [9.41]: This is a very interesting department, of which the fullest information should be made available to members. It is a department in which there is opportunity for considerable reform. The time is long overdue when chronic and harmless patients in the mental hospitals should be afforded an opportunity to work on a farm. Some time ago a proposal was considered to take over land far south of Fremantle in an area that is practically unsettled, but where the land is excellent for the growing of vegetables and other produce that should be of great advantage to the Hospital for the Insane. Undoubtedly the provision of a reasonable amount of work, particularly for those who have been accustomed to work, would relieve the awful tedium and monotony of the day. Many patients at the Hospital for the Insane would welcome an opportunity to work on a farm of this kind. Unfortunately the project has not been proceeded

with. I would not charge the Minister or any departmental officer with lack of sympathy, but the plantation of fig trees established at the Hospital for the Insane in 1923 has lacked attention. The area has gradually diminished.

The Minister for Mines: The fruit-fly has spoilt the fruit.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am glad that that interjection did not come from the Minister for Agriculture.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot discuss fruit-fly under this vote.

Mr. SAMPSON: But the Minister for Mines stated that the figs at Claremont are of no service because of the prevalence of fruit-fly.

The CHAIRMAN: That does not entitle the hon. member to discuss fruit-fly under this vote.

Mr. Cross: Get a few grasshoppers!

Mr. SAMPSON: The hon. member imagines that he has a monopoly of fruit-fly in his district.

Mr. Cross: No, the fruit-fly is in the Swan district.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am beginning to hope it is no longer in the Swan district, because the Minister has been active in controlling the pest. I had a good deal to do with the arrangements for planting the fig trees at Claremont. Unfortunately they have not been cared for, and the area, under fig trees is gradually diminishing. There is no better fruit than the fig, and it is important that a supply of fresh fruit be maintained in the interests of the health of the patients. I was led to speak of the figs because of the importance of fruit and green vegetables in the dietary scale of the patients.

The Minister for Agriculture: Not fig leaves?

Mr. SAMPSON: They have not been used for that purpose. I hope the Minister will impress upon the officials the importance, from a humanitarian viewpoint, of providing a farm which would give those patients who desire work an opportunity to work. If they were permitted to work, they would be more likely to return to normality, and the production of vegetables and certain fruits would be useful for the patients.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Is not there a farm at Whitby Falls?

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, but that farm is for a special type of patient. I understand that at Whitby Falls, as at other mental homes, the accommodation for patients is taxed to the limit.

The Minister for Mines: Considering the price of vegetables, do not you think we have enough mental patients already?

Mr. SAMPSON: But we ought to consider the value to the patients of the work of producing the vegetables. The Minister works in his flower-garden. If he did not do so, would he be as fit as he is to-day? If a farm were provided, the condition of many of the patients would greatly improve; to give them opportunities to work would be a kindness to many of them, and, in addition, the produce from the garden would ensure a supply of certain foods of which mental patients do not get sufficient. The last thing I would suggest is the raising of commodities for which there is no market, but the patients would consume the produce that was raised and it would be provided at no cost to the Government. One other point is that the Claremont Hospital for the Insane is overcrowded. If the farm were established, that congestion would be relieved and the value of the space thereby saved would be in excess of what it would cost to establish the farm.

The Minister for Mines: They would want representation on the Onion Board.

Mr. SAMPSON: I believe the Minister in charge of the Lunacy Department will agree with me that that proposition is worthy of investigation. There is a distinct need for it, and the work would have a doubly beneficial effect. The minds of patients would be relieved and the work would be useful. I will leave the subject of our mental hospitals after referring briefly to the importance of looking after the fig trees that I have mentioned. The department should either look after them or destroy them. I am afraid the departmental officials made up their minds long ago that the trees should be destroyed. They are growing on land where there is a limestone deposit, and I believe the Minister for Agriculture will agree with me that that is excellent country for fig trees. I trust he will do me the courtesy of instructing one of his inspectors to ascertain why it is that the fig trees planted in the grounds of the Claremont Hospital for the Insane for the benefit of the patients,

are not allowed to develop. I do not exaggerate when I say that from 60 to 70 per cent. of the trees have been grubbed out.

Mr. Patrick: Because of fruit fly?

Mr. SAMPSON: I will not accept that as an excuse, for the Minister would not allow such a charge to be levelled against him. To do so would imply ineptitude and disregard for public interests on the part of the Agricultural Department, and I do not think that is the position to-day, although without doubt it was so earlier in the piece.

The Heathcote Reception Home is an institute of great value, and many men and women might to-day be certified cases held in the Claremont Hospital for the Insane, were it not for its establishment. There again additional accommodation is required, which I hope will be provided. When attention is devoted to that task, I hope whoever is responsible will see to it that the place is not further placarded as an institution. The big tower that was erected on the site seems to me to stamp the buildings at Heathcote as an institution. I would have preferred, as did Mr. W. C. Angwin when he was a member of this Chamber and took a keen interest in lunacy matters, a home somewhat along the lines of Enfield in South Australia.

The Minister for Agriculture: You have been to quite a lot of these places.

Mr. SAMPSON: I have. I understand the Minister, and I have not experienced any difficulty in getting along with those who are more or less—

The Minister for Agriculture: Well, we understand each other!

Mr. SAMPSON: To deal with our prisons for a moment or two, I was glad to hear from the Minister that plenty of work is available for those who are incarcerated.

The Minister for Mines: You seem keen on work for everyone to-night.

Mr. SAMPSON: If there is one need specially felt by prisoners it is that they shall have plenty to do. They prefer it. The day is a long trying period for any man who has insufficient work to undertake.

The Minister for Mines: Is this more of your experience?

Mr. SAMPSON: The Minister for Agriculture comes from Queensland and he will remember that just outside Brisbane there is a large mental home.

The Minister for Agriculture: Have you been there too?

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes. Goodna is a very fine mental hospital, and the officer in charge, who was good enough to take me over the institution, said his difficulty was not to obtain work but how to get through all the work he was able to provide for the mental patients. To revert to prison matters, not far from Enfield in South Australia there is a big quarry where the prisoners are able to work. They are also allowed to grow vegetables and everything possible is done to encourage the prisoners to cultivate the habit of working. That system enables the men when released from prison to secure work outside. Any system whereby insufficient work is available means that prisoners become unused to work and when released they are a greater menace than before. I was pleased, therefore, to hear that the prisoners in this State have plenty of work to do. I sincerely hope that is so.

I have visited Pardelup, and I can congratulate everyone associated with that institution on the progress made, the fine atmosphere that pervades every branch of the work and the behaviour of the prisoners. The men are not really treated as prisoners, but are, so to speak, on parole. Their work is carried out with enthusiasm and ability. All possible help should be rendered the prisoners, and their conditions made such that when they leave gaol they will have finished finally with the penalty attaching to the misdeeds for which they were held. I trust they will be so dealt with that, when released, they will be able to obtain work, or, better still, to take up land for themselves.

With regard to the Fisheries Department, I admit I do not know very much about its work, and perhaps it is due to lack of knowledge on my part that I have never been able to understand, nor has any Minister ever advised us in this House, why our own people cannot successfully carry on the fishing industry. To judge from the price of fish, splendid opportunities exist for persons desiring to establish a good paying business. Unfortunately, however, the Italians catch the fish and the Greeks sell them; the Australian does not come into the picture. The same observation applies to the whaling industry. In fact, the position seems to be the same throughout all industries connected with fish. On odd occasions a trawling company has been established here, and has failed. Again, a fishing company was estab-

lished in the North-West. That company could not carry on; why, I do not know.

Mr. Doney: That was at Point Cloates.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes. I hope the Minister in charge will give consideration to the subject and ascertain whether it is not possible to encourage Australians to engage in the industry. It is not my desire that the Government should establish another State enterprise; but if it is possible to put up some proposition whereby Australians will be encouraged to fish, and to enter into the fishing industry as regards both catching and selling, we shall make some progress.

The Minister for Justice: What shall we do with the other people?

Mr. SAMPSON: We can do with more people, and with more fish. We are starved for fish.

The Minister for Justice: We are not starved for fish.

Mr. SAMPSON: I tell the Minister we are. Fish is a very costly food. Now, I have expressed my appreciation of Pardelup, and I have made some remarks in regard to Fremantle prison. Before leaving the subject I must mention that the Minister referred with some aplomb to the establishment of a printing class in the latter prison. It is pleasing that the prisoners should have some work to do, and why not printing work? Further, the Fremantle prison has its own newspaper; in fact, it has had one for years. That is a very good thing. The paper gives the prisoners information which enables them to keep in touch, to some extent at all events, with the outside world. That is excellent, because otherwise when they come out it is made clear to a stranger that they must have been segregated from the world for some time, as they are not in touch with any matters of world interest. It is a good paper. The printing branch of the Fremantle prison, such as it is, presents an example of obsolete machinery and type. I do not know why our prison printery should not be conducted on the same lines as the San Quentin printery in California. There the plant is modern.

The Minister for Justice: California has a bigger population.

Mr. SAMPSON: True; but while the Fremantle prison need not have a big plant, it might have one reasonably up to date. At San Quentin prison, out from San Francisco, is to be found an example of modern print-

ing machinery, and the prisoners do excellent work. I should say that upon release they would be able to hold a job in a modern printing office.

The Minister for Justice: In some newspaper offices there is a lot of old machinery.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes. They are lucky to have any machinery at all. I appreciate the information given by the Minister, and I hope that some of the suggestions made will be considered practicable and will be carried into effect.

MR. McLARTY (Murray - Wellington) [10.6]: I was glad to hear the Minister say that the Chief Inspector of Fisheries will do something to encourage the breeding of trout in Western Australian waters suitable for them. I saw some specimens at the Harvey Show recently. Trout breeding has really not been going on long, but there were some splendid specimens shown at Harvey—an indication that our south-western streams can be stocked with the fish. Unquestionably, if that is brought about—and I believe it will be—a great deal will have been done to encourage tourist traffic in Western Australia. The grant of £150 made available for this purpose during the last year or two is not sufficient. I would tell the Chief Inspector of Fisheries that anything he feels inclined to do to encourage the breeding of trout will receive full support from the Fish Acclimatisation Society. Moreover, in the South-West there are numbers of organisations interested in the subject, and they would readily co-operate with the Chief Inspector. I am glad, and I can say those organisations are glad, that we have a Chief Inspector who is interested and is desirous of helping them. I hope the Minister for Justice will bring under the notice of the Chief Secretary the need for a larger grant of money.

I wish to say something about the Fisheries Vote generally. The fishing industry and those engaged in it are, I venture to say, deserving of more consideration than they have received in the past. It seems that the Fisheries Department will issue as many licenses as are applied for, irrespective of whether the fish are there to be caught or a living is to be made. In my district there are now about 100 men engaged in fishing. That number is sufficient for the fish available in the waters in which the men carry on their occupation. I would not favour the

taking away of licenses from men who already have them, and I would also agree that the sons of fishermen should receive licenses if they want them; but the granting of an unlimited number of licenses does not give fishermen a chance to make a living. Besides, it encourages illegal fishing.

The Minister for Justice: Illegal fishing?

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, netting in closed waters. Those engaged in the fishing industry are entitled to a living wage. We all know what the life of a fisherman is like. It cannot be described as an easy life by any stretch of the imagination.

The Minister for Justice: One would not think, therefore, that so very many would be attracted to the industry.

Mr. McLARTY: When a man applies for a license he states the waters in which he intends to fish and I would make this suggestion—

The Minister for Justice: Who is to be the judge of what markets are available?

Mr. McLARTY: The Chief Inspector should be a judge as to whether there are sufficient fish in the waters in which a man proposes to operate and he should also have an intimate knowledge of marketing conditions. The fisherman to-day has to take what is given him. He has an unsatisfactory marketing system and as his product is highly perishable he has no option but to take what is offered him. There is no question that fishermen have been exploited in the past. Some organisation of the fishing industry is necessary. The men engaged in fishing in my electorate are Australians. The member for Swan stated that those engaged in the industry were all foreigners.

Mr. Sampson: I said those engaged in deep-sea fishing.

Mr. Patrick: They supply the bulk of the fish.

Mr. McLARTY: That is so, but the men to whom I refer, numbering from 80 to 100, are all Britishers. At times they find it exceedingly difficult to make a living and because they are fishermen they experience difficulty in obtaining relief work. These men should receive some protection and no further licenses should be granted until those already in the industry are assured of making a reasonable living. The Minister would have no serious difficulty in ascertaining whether they are doing so. As the member for Swan has pointed out, a large number of foreigners is engaged in fishing in this State and if we are not careful the

time will rapidly approach when we will not have any of our own people in the industry at all. I was asked recently at a largely attended meeting of fishermen to bring their position before Parliament. I am taking this opportunity of bringing before members the disadvantage resulting from the issue of an unlimited number of licenses. The Act states that licenses may be issued at the discretion of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries, but it appears to be only a matter of making an application for a man to be able to obtain a license. The industry has not had that interest taken in it to which it is entitled. That lack of interest has been due to the fact that it has been difficult for the department to obtain money. The Fisheries Department appears to be always short of funds. I think it can be claimed that the department has always been starved. I stress the fact that something should be done to encourage our own people to remain in the fishing industry.

The Minister for Justice: What do you suggest?

Mr. McLARTY: I suggest limiting the licenses, for one thing, and ascertaining what the position of the market is and what quantity of fish is consumed locally. That would be a starting point. If the Bureau of Industry and Economic Research is established this is one of the matters that might well receive its early attention. The Minister would be well advised to make inquiries as soon as possible with a view to these men being afforded assistance. It has been pointed out that fish is a very necessary food, and I believe that a marked improvement could be effected in the present marketing conditions. New methods of marketing fish have been adopted in Sydney. The Chief Inspector of Fisheries in this State is a recent arrival from Sydney and I suggest that he might be able to give certain information as to the latest methods of marketing and distributing fish.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [10.16]: This is apparently the only vote that enables us to go on a fishing expedition in this House. The fishing industry is the only matter I wish to discuss. I am still concerned about the need for the provision of transport for fisheries inspectors. I raised this matter last year and the Premier advised me over his shoulder that something would be done in that connection. I do not want to go over

the whole ground again, but I do know that the fisheries inspectors have not the road transport facilities they should have to enable them properly to supervise the waters under their control. It is difficult for them at times to proceed over long distances unless they can obtain a lift from a friendly traveller who has a motor car at his disposal. I do not want to labour the question, but the Government should treat it seriously with a view to ensuring that the inspectors who have such onerous duties are provided with proper means of transport.

Another matter that perturbs me is the appointment of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries. In Mr. Aldrich we had an admirable Chief Inspector for many years. On his retirement there was apparently no one in Western Australia capable of succeeding him. I do not know Mr. Fraser, but he must have been a capable man or he would not have been appointed to the position.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The Government would not have appointed him otherwise, would it?

Mr. WITHERS: That is so. The point I make is that there should be facilities in Western Australia for the scientific training of our own inspectors so that they might be qualified to occupy the office of Chief Inspector. That such promotion is possible has been demonstrated by the experience in other departments. When it became necessary to appoint a new chief officer of the fire brigade we were able to secure the services of a man who had been trained in Western Australia and who was capable of filling the position. I hope that the same will apply to all other departments and particularly to this one. We have very efficient and capable young fishing inspectors in this State and they are enthusiastic men; but when it comes to appointment to the high and honourable position of Chief Inspector, although they may think they have the qualifications, they have not been trained along scientific lines to understand all the ramifications of the industry. The fishing inspector in the South-West, with his headquarters at Bunbury, has taken a great interest in his work during the period in which he has been an inspector. Soon after his appointment he conceived the idea that it would be possible to breed oysters in the estuarial waters at Bunbury. He experimented in that direction and I read in the newspapers the other day that the oys-

ters are doing very well. That was unheard of in the past. We are still importing oysters, but possibly we shall establish them in our own waters. I understand he is experimenting with whelk, which is a type of shell-fish that encourages bream. If that is so, angling in those waters will be better than it is now.

Another matter I desire to mention was touched on by the Minister. I refer to boat licenses. The member for Murray-Wellington also spoke on the subject. Boat licenses must be obtained by people before they can take up the trade of fishing. Numbers of boats are licensed in my district, and many fishermen have taken out licenses. These men, however, have no facilities to land their fish. I refer particularly to the deep-sea boats. I have placed this matter before the Public Works Department with a view to having facilities provided at Bunbury, such as a jetty, so that the fishermen may land their catches there. Although the boats are licensed at Bunbury and the fishermen proceed south to make their catch, they must take their boats to Fremantle, where facilities are provided to land the catch. The men must then return to Bunbury and set out once more for the fishing-grounds. If landing facilities were provided at Bunbury, the men could land their catch there, send it to Perth by our railways, and be back on the fishing-grounds in the time it would take them to land the catch at Fremantle. They lose a great deal of time. Having paid for their licenses, they are entitled, we consider, to facilities to land their catches at Bunbury. That is all I have to say on the vote.

MR. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [10.23]: I desire to add a few remarks on the Chief Secretary's Estimates. Before doing so, I wish to pay a tribute to our recently retired Chief Inspector of Fisheries, Mr. Aldrich. I have been in close touch with Mr. Aldrich in his official capacity for the past 12 or 14 years, and have found him a very efficient officer and a capable administrator. He was courtesy itself to the general public with whom he came in contact. It will be difficult to replace him. I have met the newly-appointed Chief Inspector of Fisheries, Mr. Fraser. We are to be congratulated on the choice of Mr. Fraser to replace Mr. Aldrich. He appears to know

his business thoroughly and is very interested in his work. I ask the Minister to request the Chief Secretary to give Mr. Fraser the opportunity to make an early visit to the northern portion of the State, mainly because of the rather peculiar position existing there. He would gain much first-hand knowledge of the pearling industry and of the possibilities of a fishing industry on our north-west coast. I hope the Minister will impress upon the Chief Secretary the necessity for Mr. Fraser to take the earliest opportunity to make such a trip; because, as was indicated by the Chief Secretary's notes, the pearling industry is not in a prosperous condition at the moment. A visit from the Chief Inspector of Fisheries would probably be helpful both to the industry and to the Government.

The suggestion has been made that the fishing industry has been sadly neglected in this State. I believe that to be so, but it is no fault of the Fisheries Department or its officials. The fact is that the Australian does not find the fishing industry attractive enough to engage in. Very few Australians engage in the fishing industry for a living. The suggestion was also made that restriction of licenses might help, but I do not think so. Licenses are issued to fishermen to fish in certain restricted areas of our waters. It is unnecessary for a fisherman to secure a license to hawk or sell fish in the metropolitan area. If the issue of fish licenses is restricted, the probability is that the supply of fish will be reduced and the price increased. That would not help us much.

As the member for Swan has said, some attempts have been made to start a fishing industry on the north-west coast, and he inquired the reason for their failure. In my opinion, failure was due mainly to lack of capital. The people who embarked upon the industry were not possessed of sufficient capital to give the venture a fair trial. A few energetic people, who knew the vast quantities of fish that could be caught easily on the north-west coast, did make the attempt to establish themselves in the fishing industry there. They did not realise, however, that capital was necessary to furnish refrigerated factory ships and provide cool storage accommodation in the metropolitan area. Then there was the difficulty of marketing the fish. The fish market is controlled by people of other

nationalities. If some of our own people had the necessary capital to purchase trawlers and factory ships and to provide cool storage accommodation in the metropolitan area, I believe they could successfully engage in the fishing industry on our North-West coast.

I do not desire to delay the House, but I want to add a few words in reference to the Department of Native Affairs. First, I congratulate the Government upon the improved conditions that it has made available for the medical inspection and attention to the health of natives, particularly in the northern part of the State. There are native hospitals at Wyndham, Broome and Munja, and a leprosarium at Derby that is second to none. If those people who level so much criticism against the Government on the score of neglect of the natives took the trouble to visit those places, they would have little or no room for criticism. A medical officer has been appointed to travel throughout the State and inspect natives for various diseases. Members will appreciate that for one medical officer to do all that is necessary in such a large State is impossible. Though the whole problem has not yet been cleaned up, conditions have been improved to a considerable extent, and I hope that in the course of time the medical officer will be able to effect still further improvements.

The Minister, when introducing the Estimates, said there were certain managers and honorary inspectors in the North-West. In my opinion, the department is still short of a necessary officer to assist in the work, namely, a travelling inspector. When the Act was amended in 1936, provision was made for a travelling inspector, and one was appointed, but after approximately six months his services in that capacity were dispensed with and he was transferred to the station of which he had formerly been in charge. If an efficient officer were appointed, much could be done for the benefit of the natives, and the department would be saved quite a large amount of money. His duties would consist of attending to the half-caste population, which is becoming quite a problem in Broome, and he could act as an employment officer. He would be able to remove much of the misunderstanding that exists between the Commissioner of Native Affairs and the employers who wish to utilise some of the half-caste population for work-

on their stations. There would be ample work for this officer to do, and he would justify his salary if he did nothing beyond establishing closer contact between employers and the Commissioner. I do not wish to be drawn into a criticism of the Commissioner.

The Minister for Justice: We did have a travelling inspector.

Mr. COVERLEY: But he was expected to carry out the duties of travelling inspector while holding the office of manager of the Moola Bulla station, which is a thousand miles from Broome. He is a most capable station manager and has done excellent work for the Government during the last 15 or 20 years. It was not right to take him from that position and make him travelling inspector. He is now definitely back at Moola Bulla station, and the office of travelling inspector is vacant. That position should be filled as soon as possible, and I hope my suggestion will be passed on to the Chief Secretary. I repeat that if this official did nothing more than clarify the position of the half-caste and establish closer contact between the employers and the half-caste population, he would have earned his salary.

Before the Act was amended in 1936 quite half-a-dozen half-caste boys were employed in ordinary seamen's duties on the pearling luggers, but since the passing of the amendment empowering the Commissioner to prohibit any single half-caste boy from being employed on a seagoing vessel, he has refused permits to pearlers to employ half-caste boys. Those six half-caste boys have been thrown out of employment, and will now be a charge upon the State until the Commissioner reverses his decision and grants permits for their re-employment. Something similar has occurred with female half-castes. A number of these girls were employed in cool drink shops, for which they received probably £1 a week and their keep. Since the passing of the amending Act the Commissioner has refused them permission to carry on those duties, and they, too, have become a charge on the State. If we had a travelling inspector with a knowledge of what is required, he would be able to perform valuable service, help the Commissioner to see reason, and assist those half-caste people to earn a living.

There is another justification for the appointment of a travelling inspector.

When the Act was amended, permission was given to the half-castes to apply for exemption from the Act. When a half-caste desires exemption he has to write to the Commissioner, and has to wait probably six to 12 months while the Commissioner makes all sorts of inquiries to determine whether the applicant is a fit and proper person to receive exemption. A travelling inspector, with authority to act, or even without such authority, would be able to collate the information and help the half-caste to obtain exemption much more expeditiously than is possible at present. I think one of the objects of the amending Act was to uplift half-castes from the aboriginal state and assist them to live according to white standards. We would be doing a service to the half-caste population if we appointed a travelling inspector to assist in getting employment and obtaining exemption for those people.

The Minister told us that the revenue from the Government stations had not been as great as previously on account of drought. Of course drought affects cattle stations as well as agricultural areas, but I believe that the drought referred to by the department applied to the growing of peanuts at Munja. Successful crops of peanuts have been grown on the native reserve there, but the industry has been handicapped through having no facilities to convey the peanuts to the metropolitan market.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Have they tried selling them to the natives?

Mr. COVERLEY: I do not think the natives buy them; they help themselves. I do not blame them for doing so.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Neither do I.

Mr. COVERLEY: Since the establishment of agricultural activities at Munja, the natives have learnt to take watermelon and other seeds and plant them round their various water holes. The result is that now, when they go on their "pink eyes," they have the benefit of fruit and vegetables. The increase in the educational standards of the natives from this point of view becomes more apparent year by year. The phase I want to stress to the Minister is that at present the peanut crop at Munja represents between 20 and 30 tons per annum. The peanuts are conveyed to Broome by a lugger that can carry three tons per trip and makes one trip per month. It takes quite a time before the whole crop can be trans-

ported to the metropolitan market. When the first six or eight tons of peanuts are marketed, they bring a fair price. Then the Queensland and Chinese nuts make their appearance on the metropolitan market, with the result that by the time the balance of the Munja peanuts are available, there is a glut, and reduced prices rule. That difficulty could be overcome if the crop could be marketed earlier so as to avoid the competition of the Queensland and Chinese nuts. If that could be done, the financial results would be much improved.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.14 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 1st November, 1938.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Geraldton Sailors and Soldiers' Memorial Institute (Trust Property Disposition).

- 2, Mullewa Road Board Loan Rate.
- 3, Pensioners (Rates Exemption) Act Amendment.
- 4, University Building.

QUESTION—SOLDIERS' INSTITUTE.

Lease to Australian Broadcasting Commission.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What portion of the old Soldiers' Institute in Stirling Square is leased by the State Gardens Board to the Australian Broadcasting Commission? 2, What is the period of the lease? 3, What is the rental paid under the lease by the Australian Broadcasting Commission?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Exactly the same as the returned soldiers occupied. 2, Three years, with an additional two years' option. 3, £850 per annum.

BILL—MORTGAGEES' RIGHTS RESTRICTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Hon. J. Nicholson and read a first time.

MOTION—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT.

To Disallow Regulation.

Debate resumed from the 27th October on the following motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter (East):—

That regulation No. 19, made under the Workers' Compensation Act, 1912-1934, as published in the "Government Gazette" on the 30th September, 1938, and laid on the Table of the House on the 12th October, 1938, be and is hereby disallowed.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [4.38]: The motion seeks the disallowance of regulation No. 19 made under the Workers' Compensation Act and published in the "Government Gazette" of the 30th September last. That regulation deals with the payment of weekly compensation to a worker totally or partially incapacitated for work as a result of injury. Although the First Schedule prescribes the amount of weekly compensation payable to an injured worker, the regulations have not previously required such weekly payments to be made as and when they accrue and be-