Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 21st October, 1947.

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

QUESTIONS.

STATE PUBLIC SERVANTS.

As to Hindrance to Accepting Commonwealth Positions.

Mr. NEEDHAM (on notice) asked the Premier:

(1) What is the nature of the agreement between the Commonwealth and the State Government which hinders State officers accepting positions with the Commonwealth Government?

(2) To what extent has this agreement been applied?

(3) Are there similar agreements existing between this and other State Governments, and if so, which Governments?

(4) To what extent have these agreements, if existing, been applied?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) to (4) There is no agreement between the Commonwealth and State Governments or between this and other State Governments. There is a mutual understanding between all Public Service Commissioners that no appointment of a permanent officer in the employ of the Commonwealth or State will be made to another Public Service in Australia without prior advice of the intention to the Public Service Commissioner or Public Service Board of the service in which the officer is then employed.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ROYAL COMMISSION.

As to Evidence of Acting Commissioner of Native Affairs.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY (without notice) asked the Attorney General:

(1) Did he observe evidence given to the Royal Commission on workers' compensation by the Acting Commissioner for Native Affairs, appearing in "The West Australian" newspaper on Friday, the 17th October, 1947?

(2) Was this evidence given with his concurrence?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

I would like to examine the report which appeared in the paper. If the hon. member will put the question on the notice paper, I shall be glad to reply tomorrow.

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES.

As to Report of Tribunal.

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Has the tribunal, comprising the Chief Justice, the President of the Arbitration Court and the Public Service Commissioner, which was appointed to assess salaries and allowances of members of Parliament, etc., submitted its recommendations to the Government?

(2) When does he propose to make known the decisions of the tribunal?

(3) Is it his intention to introduce legislation during the present session to give effect to the recommendations?

The PREMIER replied:

The report has been received by the Government, and the matter is receiving consideration.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT (No. 4).

Leave to Introduce.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [4.34]: I move—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill for an Act to further amend Section fifteen of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, (63 Victoriæ No. 19).

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [4.35]: I rise to oppose the motion. The Attorney General has moved for leave to introduce a Bill for an Act to further amend Section 15 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899. I do not think there is any necessity for such a Bill to be introduced. There is already a Bill before the House dealing with practically the same thing. The House has considered it, and made certain recommendations, and I think it would be entirely wrong for it to give leave for the introduction of a similar Bill until the measure already under consideration is disposed of. We find that this Bill proposes to give the franchise to flat-dwellers and wives of electors. The Bill before the House does exactly the same, and it also does one other thing. This House has already instructed the Government to introduce a clause to abolish plural voting, but I understand there is nothing about plural voting in the Attorney General's Bill.

I am not prepared to vote for leave for the introduction of a Bill which has exactly the same purpose as that of one which has already been introduced. It does not matter to me whether that Bill was brought forward by the member for Northam or by the Government. I am not opposed to the contents, but object to two Bills with the same object being before the House. I think we should consider the Bill introduced by the member for Northam. The Government can secure all it wants from that measure. As far as claiming the monopoly of a desire to reform the Upper House is concerned, that is all "hooey," because long before I entered this Chamber members on this side attempted, year in and year out, to effect such a reform. But because the Premier in his Policy Speech at the last election mentioned this matter, the Government claims a monopoly. If anybody is entitled to make that claim, it is this side of the House, because it has been our policy for many years, and one which we have been trying to put into effect. I hope the House will not give the Attorney General leave to introduce this measure until consideration has been given to the Bill already on the notice paper.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth—in reply) [4.38]: All I need to say in reply is that this motion for leave to introduce a Bill to amend Section 15 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act does not state what the amendment is.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: But the bosses have told us. "The West Australian" spilt the beans.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am not responsible for "The West Australian" nor for "The Westralian Worker". The motion does not indicate the nature of the amendment. From prior discussions, members may draw any conclusions they please. All I would say is that whatever views the House has expressed by way of resolution in connection with this matter, I would consider it to be my duty to pay full attention to; but, as the motion stands, I submit it is one the House should entertain, and it would be unprecedented for members to refuse to allow it to proceed.

Question put and passed.

Bill introduced and read a first time.

BILL—STREET PHOTOGRAPHERS.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—CHILD WELFARE.

Recommittal.

On motion by the Minister for Education, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clause 20.

In Committee.

Mr. Brand in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 20—Power of Court:

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of paragraph (a) of Subclause (1) the words "or against" (inserted by a previous Committee) be struck out.

Those words were inserted in the measure in the early stages of the Committee proceedings and dealt particularly with the inclusion before the court of offences by adults against children, so that adult persons—that is persons not coming within the definition of "a child" under the Bill, when it becomes an Act—would be dealt with in the Children's Court. At that time I viewed the matter with some concern and I have in the meantime taken the opportunity of going further

into it than the circumstances appeared at that stage to warrant. I have no hesitation now in asking the Committee to confine the operations of the Children's Court to the other jurisdictions that are contained in Clause 20. The Royal Commission which sat in 1943 to investigate the care and reform of youthful delinquents stated, on page 5 of its report—

> The Committee does not think it was the intention of the State Children's Act that adult offenders should be tried in the Children's Court and disapproves of such practice.

When the amendment, to include the words that I now ask should be struck out, was discussed, it was represented that the effect of excluding from the Children's Court jurisdiction the trials of adults who had committed offences against children would result in those children, who had to give evidence in such cases, having imposed upon them undesirable conditions, in that they would be obliged to give evidence before a court or courts not constituted as is the Children's Court. If I remember aright, it was alleged that so far from the rules of evidence being applicable to child witnesses in the Children's Court they had, as it were, some further dispensation which made those rules of evidence not applicable to them. At that time I expressed the opinion—if I remember aright—that that was not so, and that it would be necessary for these hearings in the Children's Court to be merely preliminary hearings in the great majority of cases where the offence was of a serious nature, and that ultimately, depending upon the area in which the Children's Court might sit, the offender would either be taken for criminal trial at the Criminal Sessions of the Supreme Court, or alternatively, at the Quarter Sessions in whatever country place such Quarter Sessions might be held and that therefore, in the ultimate, the child would have to appear before such a court so constituted and testify accordingly, and that in any event the evidence given by such a child before a Children's Court would be subject to the ordinary rules of evidence and other considerations that would apply.

The primary object of deleting the words "or against" from Clause 20 of the Bill is to ensure as far as possible that a Children's Court shall be a Children's Court and not a hybrid affair. At present it deals with a mixture of children's and adult cases, which is not conducive to unhurried justice, in my opinion, in either type of case. A mental picture of the court list on any ordinary day might best illustrate my point. When he commences the morning session the magistrate usually glances at the court list and sees several cases of stealing, breaking and entering, neglected children, and then two or three unlawful assaults, perhaps. These latter are probably the adult cases and usually there are solicitors present, with many witnesses. It is only natural for the magistrate to hurry through the smaller cases in order to have as much time as possible available for the bigger cases. Then again, when dealing with juveniles, the court—as has often been stressed—is one of reformation rather than of punishment.

Passing from that atmosphere to the other—the trial of adults—the court must of necessity become one of punishment rather than of reform. It will therefore be appreciated that the man presiding on the bench must alter his entire outlook during the one court session. As things exist he must be able to change from a reformer of children, obtaining psychological and probation officers' reports, considering what would be in the best interests of the child before the court, to determining the most appropriate punishment for an adult offender. Much has been said regarding the baneful effect of the police court atmosphere on juvenile witnesses, should cases of offences by adults against children be taken from the Children's Court to the Police Court. If one follows this to its logical conclusion, that is, in most cases, the Criminal Court. Many offences against juveniles, such as rape and unlawful and indecent dealing, are so serious that, as I have said, only a preliminary hearing is given in Courts of Petty Sessions or—if this clause is not amended—in the Children's Court. This determines only whether there is a prima facie case against the accused and, if there is, the case is sent to be tried before a judge and jury.

If it is alleged that the police court atmosphere is so unsuitable for child witnesses, how much more so is that of the Criminal Court, from which we cannot in those circumstances withdraw them. The child there must face a judge and jury and all the panoply of law which exists—policemen in uniform, and everything in its judi-

cial and legal setting. It should be realised that whether the case is sent on by the Children's Court or the Police Court for trial, the preliminary hearing is practically identical, no matter which court takes the depositions. It is my considered opinion that the police magistrate would be as tolerant and kindly to a nervous child as would any other type of magistrate, but the rules of evidence must be adhered to in both courts, so it is only the setting that is somewhat different.

In the vast majority of cases, too, I think it would be correct to say that the plea is often one of guilty which, of course, obviates the appearance of any witnesses. It is the minor percentage of cases where the accused pleads not guilty and the witnesses have to be heard that we are concerned about. In practice a policewoman and lady probationer officer accompany the witnesses and help them in every way. True, there are policemen present, but the witnesses are police witnesses and have nothing to worry about in this respect.

In all cases in which adults are charged with offences against children, if dealt with in the police courts in future, it will remove all doubt that exists at present as to where such cases should be heard. We have also the cases where an adult is charged with obscene exposure in which the witnesses are frequently juveniles, and the question has arisen which court should hear such cases. I am informed by officers of the Children's Court that both types of courts have heard such cases. It is on record that adults charged with unlawful assault of a juvenile have indicated their intention to plead guilty and thereupon have been dealt with by the Police Court, although, under the law, they should have been dealt with in the Children's Court.

My contention is, and I have no doubt about it whatever, and neither had the Royal Commission in 1943, that the Children's Court should be free to deal with offences by children, and that the only cases where adults are concerned should be those dealing with the custody and maintenance of children, persons contributing to the neglect of children, persons failing to provide adequately for their children and those evading maintenance orders. Breaches of the Education Act are offences entirely concerned with children, although they may have been contributed to by their parents, and it may be that the parents themselves would be responsible for the charge being laid. So I ask the Committee to make this institution a court where the persons most concerned are children, to take away the hybrid jurisdiction that it has hitherto had, and to follow out the recommendation of the Royal Commission and the view I have expressed this afternoon and previously that the court should deal under Clause 20, paragraph (a), with offences by children and not with offences by adults against children.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I hope members will appreciate that the clause has been recommitted to enable the Minister to reverse a decision given by the Committee after due consideration of the point at issue. The Minister was beaten on a division. I stand exactly where I stood before. This provision has been in the Act for a very long time. No doubt it was originally inserted after careful consideration and with the deliberate purpose of ensuring that cases of offences committed by or against children should be heard in the Children's Court. Why was that provision enacted in the first place? Obviously to keep children, to the maximum degree possible, out of the atmosphere of police courts.

That is why various Acts of the sort provide that, in some instances, the magistrate of a children's court shall hear cases in his room, and frequently magistrates dispense with the usual formalities and their inquiries take the form of a heart to heart talk. The underlying principle is that, to the maximum degree possible, children shall be kept from the atmosphere of the ordinary courts. Some Acts provide that where the Children's Court is in proximity to the ordinary courts, special care shall be taken that the children are not in a position to observe what is taking place in those courts. Thus some places go to considerable length to ensure that children shall be kept unaware of the procedure of the ordinary courts.

If a case is first heard in the Children's Court and is sent for trial to another court, that cannot be helped, but a number of cases of offences against children can be finally dealt with in the Children's Court, and in those cases the children involved can be kept away from the atmosphere of the

ordinary court. We are dealing with offences against children, children who have done nothing to bring them before the court but who, because of the action of somebody else, are obliged to attend. The view has always been that, because children have had the misfortune to become involved in such cases, we should not make them attend court, but should endeavour to keep them from that atmosphere, and consequently, in the first instance, the cases are heard in the Children's Court and frequently are settled there.

If the offence is so serious that it cannot be dealt with in the Children's Court, the case must go to another court. We cannot avoid that, but we can avoid forcing into other courts a number of cases that could be settled in the Children's Court. This has been the underlying principle of child welfare legislation the world over and was adopted with the idea of keeping children from the atmosphere of the ordinary courts to the maximum extent possible. The Minister desires that a children's court should deal only with offences committed by children, but whilst that was his original purpose, he proved amenable to argument in one respect and agreed to alter the Bill to provide that affiliation cases should be heard in the Children's Court. Affiliation cases, of course, involve adults and to that extent adults will appear in the Children's Court.

Having given way on the point that the Children's Court should not deal with cases involving adults at all, the Minister is not obliged to go much further. He has asked that cases involving offences committed by adults against children should be heard in the Children's Court in the first instance, and that is most desirable for the reasons I have given. I would be prepared to go much further along the road with the Minister if he did not at the same time as he asked for this alteration also propose alterations for the setting up of the Children's Court. It was previously argued that the magistrate in charge of the Children's Court might not be a trained man in the rules of evidence and also that in dealing with cases involving adults he might, because of his lack of training, be disposed to take too lenient a view of some offences committed against children and consequently that such offences were not properly dealt with. There is merit in that argument if the magistrate of the Children's Court is not a trained man. The Minister is changing that, however; he is providing that a trained man shall be in charge. Therefore, he will have in the Children's Court a magistrate who can take his place in another court and hear cases according to the strict rules of evidence. Any weakness which might have existed in that respect will not now exist.

It might be argued that the magistrate would have others sitting on the bench with him who may not be trained; but I remind the Committee that the magistrate can overrule those sitting on the bench with him, his decision being final. The others on the bench will be there in a consultative capacity and to put forward their points of view. As the Bill provides that a trained man shall be in charge of the Children's Court, and as it is desirable that the basic principle of child welfare legislation shall remain, that is, that to a maximum extent children shall be kept in the Children's Court and not be taken to the atmosphere of another court, then for those two reasons I am not prepared to agree to the Minister's amendment. I hope the Committee will adhere to the view that it took previously, so that the Bill will be finally passed in the form in which it now stands and not in the way the Minister desires to alter it.

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

Ayes	22
Noes	18
Majority for	4

Ayes.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Murray
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Nimmo
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. North
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Doney	Mr. Seward
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hall	Mr. Smith
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Mann	Mr. Watts
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Wild
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Leslie (*Teller.*)

Noes.

Mr. Fox	Mr. Panton
Mr. Graham	Mr. Read
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Styants
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. May	Mr. Triat
Mr. Needham	Mr. Wise
Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Rodoreda (*Teller.*)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Hoar
Mr. Yates	Mr. Leahy
Mr. Nalder	Mr. Collier
Mr. Hill	Mr. Johnson

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 16th October.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [5.9]: I have been very interested in the speeches made in support of this Bill. In the course of the debate very important information was given and some very important reviews were made not only of the wheat industry in Western Australia, but of the international effect of agreements and trading in wheat as they might affect this State. I was very disappointed in the speech of the Minister in introducing the Bill. I am afraid that he did not give the House sufficient information about the details of it. One very important thing with a Bill of this kind is for it to be justified by convincing argument at the time of its introduction. Speeches have been made from the Government cross benches which gave close attention to the requirements of the wheat industry so far as this State is concerned, and the disabilities under which the industry is suffering because of certain attitudes and actions taken by the Commonwealth Government and the control of the industry by the Australian Wheat Board. Western Australia must be considered to be vitally affected by any attitude of the Commonwealth Government or a State Government to this industry.

Wheat is so vital a part of our internal economy that in 1939 it represented over 14 per cent. of our production and approximately 35 per cent. of our rural production. Any industry which plays so important a part in the welfare of the community by its contribution to the national income is one which must be given the closest consideration when legislation is introduced to control it. Wheat is so vital a part of the world economy that upon the scope of the trade in it, the availability of it and the price of it depend very often the well-being and welfare of many countries. In Australia there is no doubt that in the development of the States wheat has become an essential commodity and a matter for national concern, and when prices vary farmers are affected seriously. This Bill is based upon the recommendations of the Royal Commission which was appointed by my Government. That commission did not take full advantage of the opportunities that the terms of reference gave to it.

I regret very much that the commission, in following the course it did, did not attempt better to reconcile the conditions between the various States of Australia before it made so definite a recommendation as to prompt in this session the introduction of this measure. It is obvious from the commission's report, as will be noticed in paragraph 48, page 8, that it has much sympathy with the Commonwealth pool. It will be found, too, by an examination of the 15-point plan of the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation that, as the commission supported that plan, it strongly supports the control of wheat by an Australia-wide authority. I realise the force of the argument of members opposite that an approach on the lines of the 15-point plan of the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation might be rebuffed by the Commonwealth Government; but one part of this Bill and the Government's attitude to it gives me cause for grave concern. It is that at the time of its drafting the Government knew that, by a decision of the Premiers' Conference, there is to be a conference of State Ministers of Agriculture to consider the future control of wheat marketing under the Commonwealth (Transitional Provisions) Act.

The Government knew at the time of the introduction of this Bill that the Premiers had agreed that, if a plan something along the lines of the existing one could be continued, Australia-wide control of this commodity would be in the best interests of the country. But that was not mentioned by the Minister in introducing the Bill. It is obvious from the report in the local Press and in that of the Eastern States, that the motion carried at the Premiers' Conference made it perfectly clear that the Premiers supported a scheme on a Commonwealth-wide basis, that such matter should be referred to the State Ministers for Agriculture as quickly as possible, and that repre-

sentatives of the wheatgrowing industry be invited to submit their case. That gives me cause for considerable concern.

There is no question as to what the Premiers' Conference decided. All the Premiers re-affirmed their previous decision regarding the need for a Commonwealth-wide stabilisation scheme, and decided to have a conference of State and Federal Ministers for Agriculture in the near future to work out the details of a mutually satisfactory plan. Therefore, I am concerned as to why the Ministers did not discuss the necessity for this measure, if it becomes an Act, to have application in this State. As I intend to speak at some length on this subject I hope ultimately to be able to show that the introduction of the Bill, in a piecemeal fashion, attempting to control the Australian wheat industry, State by State, is not the correct approach at this stage. I want to make it perfectly clear—my past actions in various administrative capacities will justify my statement—that not at any stage have I had other than a very sympathetic attitude towards the wheatgrowers of Western Australia.

The Minister for Works: Would you say the same of the Commonwealth Government?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am speaking on my own behalf. My past actions will justify anything I may say in connection with this Bill this evening.

The Minister for Works: I would not dispute that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: My first great concern is the fact that the Government, through its Minister, introduced this Bill when the Premiers' Conference had decided —and our own Premier spoke to the motion —to support a Commonwealth-wide conference further to discuss arrangements for the handling and marketing of the Australian wheat crop, no matter where it was produced. There is a serious difficulty in introducing legislation of this kind, State by State. World circumstances vitally affect the prospect of success of an Australian stabilisation scheme, and no State is more affected than is Western Australia, so that our great concern should be to see, if possible, that all Australia is unanimous in the principles to apply in the marketing of our export quantities of this commodity. It is necessary that the House should have a clear idea of the difficulties, in a world-wide sense, associated with this industry over the past quarter of a century. There is no question that every time the wheat industry in this country has been in difficulties it has been a reason, and a very valid one, for any Government then in office to attempt to reconcile the difficulties, which were international, so that Australia could be expected to get a fair portion of the world trade at a fair price.

If we look at this matter with a long-range view, there is no question that it should be approached from the Australia-wide angle. The history of the difficulties of the wheat industry in Australia shows clearly that the roots of the trouble lie in the years immediately prior to and during the depression. If we go back even further we will find that in our earlier days, when we had under 7,000,000 acres of wheat—about 1914—we had a very small export surplus to worry about. Our net exports in those days amounted to 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 bushels, in a total world export of approximately 600,000,000 bushels. Our export, therefore, was not a matter of great concern; it was easily handled. In the years immediately following that period—in the years of drought when our total Australian yield went down to about 25,000,000 or 30,000,000 bushels—our farmers were in serious difficulties. It will be remembered by anyone who has given much thought to this subject that in spite of the series of drought years, when wheatgrowing was being sponsored by Governments as being an ideal method of settlement, shipping difficulties associated with the transport of our wheat, following the last war, gave to the farmers of Australia cause for great concern. It was at that time that compulsory marketing of wheat was introduced into Australia.

A compulsory wheat marketing Bill was introduced under the War Precautions Act. When that Act finished, in an Australia-wide sense, and many States reverted to a voluntary pool, Western Australia continued the operations of the compulsory pool for a further year. Following that period there was a considerable expansion of the industry in this State—particularly between the years 1921 and 1930. Not only the farmers at that time, but the State as a whole enjoyed quite a substantial measure

of prosperity. Prices ranged between 4s. 3d. and 6s. 6d. a bushel during those years. Wheatgrowing proved an incentive for settling returned men on the land. Western Australia's wheat production trebled between 1925 and 1930. One of the unfortunate features of the expansion of the industry and the success of those engaged in it, was the tendency for land values to follow the production value of the land. We had the experience that after the extraordinary world harvest of 1927-28, which was more than 500,000,000 bushels in excess of the average for the previous five years, the commencement of the slump occurred.

If members study world wheat figures they will find that there was a succession of years about that period which gave a surplus over the required normal exports, and this became a serious embarrassment. Because of the decline in production at that time in many of the continental countries, almost every European country had a self-sufficiency policy in regard to wheat. I think members will find that France granted a bonus exceeding 7s. 6d. a bushel for home-produced wheat, and Italy, in an attempt to catch up on her production of wheat, was offering up to 10s. a bushel for the home-produced article. With the tremendous accumulation in the four great wheat exporting countries of the world, a serious decline occurred. Prices slumped from 6s. 6d. f.o.r. ports in 1925-26, to 2s. 10d. f.o.r. ports in 1932-33. Because of the serious circumstances affecting the Australian economy—because of our oversea debts and oversea funds—there was, in spite of these low prices, a "Grow More Wheat" campaign launched in each wheat-producing State, and the farmers, who could not produce wheat at anything approaching the price then offered for it, found themselves in more serious difficulties still. Unfortunately, that decline affected at least 50 per cent. of our farmers who had liabilities based upon the prices received from 1921 to 1930. That became a reason for intervention by Governments.

Members who were in this Chamber in the year 1933 will recall that there were rarely absent from the corridors of this House people, with some interest in wheat, who were anxious to place before the Government or the Opposition, or anyone who would listen to them, a case for the urgent need for moratoria and all sorts of adjusting legislation which would give to them a breathing space, at least, and an opportunity to attempt to stabilise their affairs. The Commonwealth Government submitted what appeared to be at that time very reasonable proposals in regard to a guaranteed price. The Commonwealth Minister of the period—I think it was Sir Earle Page—submitted a plan for a guarantee of 4s. a bushel, f.o.r. sidings. That Bill was defeated in the Senate. The Commonwealth Government made several attempts at that stage to secure a guaranteed minimum price. Two of its Bills were defeated in the Senate. Then the Wheat Advances Bill was introduced, guaranteeing a price of 3s a bushel. That was fixed when Australia had its record crop of 213,000,000 bushels. Objection to that proposal was raised by the Commonwealth Bank. I think I am right in saying that the Commonwealth Bank Board stated that it would cost 6¼ millions to finance the scheme, and it reported against it. Since the bank would not find the necessary money, nothing was ever paid under the Bill. From that stage, the question of moratoria legislation was dealt with by all the States.

Many plans were put before the Western Australian Parliament because of the plight in which the wheat farmers found themselves. The serious effects were not confined to the average farmer; there were repercussions because of the expansion of settlement into outer districts which have since become known as marginal areas. This State, in common with South Australia, had all sorts of problems. There was the problem relating to the general fall in wheat prices in the markets of the world, and that of the difficulties associated with attempting to settle land in the outer districts. Although some of the sidings in those areas have record figures, in regard to despatches—Mukinbudin has a State record for one year—the average some years ago over a five-year period was under four bushels per acre. These difficulties therefore came to us in Western Australia, side by side, at a very critical stage in the history of wheatgrowing locally.

If there ever were chaos and confusion in that industry, such as that now forecast in regard to the Bill before the House, it was in those days. I remember reading a

report of a Premiers' Conference held, I think, in 1932, when a bonus of 6d. a bushel was offered to the wheat producers of Australia. In the early part of the year that attempt was made to keep the farmers on their properties. That was a time when the issue of fiduciary notes was suggested and that proposal, which was introduced in the House of Representatives, was also rejected in the Senate. Thus up to that stage, during the years when the wheatgrowing industry of Australia enjoyed such a substantial expansion, there were some very serious periods in its history—this was not a matter for the State Government, which is an important point to be borne in mind regarding all the remarks I intend to make concerning the Bill before the House—and not only were State Governments embarrassed in any attempts they made to assist those engaged in the industry, but the demand for finance, for action both internally and externally, was such that it was beyond even the Commonwealth Bank or the Commonwealth Government at that time. Conditions almost alarming obtained immediately after that offer of a bonus of 6d. a bushel and about that time an additional amount above that bonus was offered to the extent of 4d. a bushel.

There was a very important development at that juncture. Australia was seeking ways and means for the revival of the wheatgrowing industry. A scheme was put forward by Mr. John S. Teasdale of Western Australia for an export price of 3s. a bushel at sidings, provided areas under cultivation were reduced by 20 per cent. The proposal was introduced from that angle and it was the first real attempt to link a guaranteed price with a controlled acreage. At that time Mr. Teasdale's proposal was objected to, but ultimately, after many years, it became the basis for consideration not merely in respect of wheat, but concerning all other commodities, so that where those concerned enjoyed guaranteed prices the rule has consistently been that there should always be rigid control of production.

In my study of this subject and in the references available to me, which were voluminous, and listening to the evidence tendered in all States of Australia on this particular subject, I am prompted to state that the first attempt at the introduction of a soundly-based guaranteed price was embodied in the suggestion put forward by Mr. John Teasdale, but his proposals were rejected at the time. Over those difficult years an attempt was made not only by Australia but by all wheat exporting countries of the world, to arrive at a satisfactory international agreement. Conferences took place in Rome and London, at which representatives of the four countries concerned met and tried to arrive at some conclusion as to what arrangement should be made. It was necessary for there to be agreements on the acreage basis, on the production basis and on the basis of what should be the guaranteed price to producers in the several countries.

It was not until 1933 that the first international agreement was signed. It embodied provisions for the export quotas, reductions in production and reductions in the import countries, all based on the decisions of the international conference. The export quota for world trade was fixed at 560,000,000 bushels and for 1934-35 Australia's share was 112,000,000 bushels, Argentine's 108,000,000 bushels and Canada's 268,000,000 bushels. America was given the small share of 84,000,000 bushels. Australia at that time promulgated the proposal for rigid control to obtain in the States producing export wheat. That arrangement went on for a considerable time, but Australia in the year when she was allocated 112,000,000 bushels, was only able to produce for export 88,000,000 bushels. On the other hand Argentine, which had the advantage of a fairly big crop, found that, because of deficiencies in other countries, she was able to export in excess of the quota allotted to her on the basis upon which she signed the agreement. As a result, Argentine sold, in excess of the quantity allotted to that country, approximately 27,000,000 bushels more than would have been possible if the agreement had been adhered to.

At that time world prices again began to tumble down and I think it was in 1933 that the world parity for wheat was 3s. a bushel. It was necessary under the Wheatgrowers' Relief Act, passed by the Commonwealth, to do something substantial in the interests of the wheatgrowers of Australia. The required amount of bonus was paid by prescribing in legislation that was introduced a flour tax of £4 5s. a ton and, strangely enough, for an in-

crease in customs duty of 6d. a lb. on tobacco and also an increase in the rate of income tax. It is obvious that during those years up to 1934 Australian Governments were very seriously impressed, first of all, with the necessity of keeping wheatgrowers on their properties; secondly, with the need to maintain the Commonwealth's part regarding the international quota of wheat so as to meet the world's requirements for that commodity and, thirdly, with the necessity of raising millions of pounds to achieve both objectives.

Once the Royal Commission on wheat was appointed, it found some rather startling things in connection with the industry in Australia. As I mentioned by interjection the other night, the commissioners found that 20 per cent. of the wheat farmers at that time could not produce wheat at under 4s. 8d. per bushel, and that 20 per cent. could produce it profitably at 2s. 9d. a bushel, or less. If we were to bring those figures up to date, we would reach, approximately, the amount suggested by the member for Irwin-Moore as representing the cost of production today. I think we would learn following the percentages found by the Royal Commission on wheat and bread, that there would still be a percentage of the wheatgrowers of Western Australia who are not producing wheat profitably at 5s. 5d. a bushel on today's costs. That is one serious difficulty in any attempt to align prices and costs, because efficiency and the average farmer's capacity must be the prime considerations. Although very many of those men who were a great source of worry to Governments in those earlier days have left the industry, either voluntarily or by force, we would still find today that a substantial proportion of the farmers cannot produce wheat profitably at an average price that would make many others very prosperous

I think the work of the Royal Commission on wheat and bread was one of the most outstanding inquires ever made concerning what is one of Australia's important basic industries. That commission advanced some strong recommendations and attempts have been made to put them into operation by Governments, which have gone far along the road to rehabilitating the industry. The commission recommended a flour tax, a quota and Government assistance, the setting up by the Commonwealth of a wheat board and the setting up of State wheat boards as well. It further recommended very strong and immediate action to facilitate debt adjustment. Of the legal obligations which Governments found involved in the terms of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission, the implications were very serious—and they still are. The difficulties associated with Commonwealth and State adjustment of any marketing plan mean that not only is Section 92 of the Constitution in the way, but the fact that the only authority with the right to control exports is the Commonwealth, is also a consideration. We find that unless there should be an amendment of Section 92, there will continue to be very serious obstacles in the way of the accomplishment of the desired objective.

In setting up any legislation of this sort, the State controlling authorities, in view of the Commonwealth powers vesting in it authority over exports, will be very seriously embarrassed and handicapped in almost all their operations. I would not like, although I intended to make mention at some length of the subject, at this stage to enter upon a discussion of the problem and members may be relieved to know that I intend to finish my remarks before the interval for tea. If we were to analyse the legal implications that a Bill such as that under discussion could promote, I think it could be safely said that unless we can secure concerted action by the States interested in wheat marketing, we in Western Australia may find ourselves in serious difficulties in handling matters under a compulsory State pool. I do not desire to engage in a detailed analysis of the varying prices which vagaries of the seasons or world demands have promoted. Suffice is it to say that since 1934 there have been such violent fluctuations in the wheat markets of the world that any scheme devised for State action could indeed be very dangerous.

I think we have very sound evidence from the happenings in this industry during the years of war and the effect that hostilities had upon it, because immediately prior to the war the State Premiers, in attempting to reach agreement with regard to State quotas of allocations based on the proposed international agreement, engaged in very violent scenes at a conference that was held to deal with the problem.

I remember when Mr. Menzies was Prime Minister making a statement which had for its foundation the many millions of pounds the wheatgrowers of Australia had received from the Commonwealth Government. Mr. Menzies, in the Legislative Chamber of the Victorian Parliament before Premiers assembled made it clear that the Commonwealth could not continue to make substantial grants to the wheat industry, and that the States would have to find means to assist in that direction. The proposals of the Commonwealth then received very short shrift from the Premiers and the States which had a preponderance of export in their wheat production. In Western Australia, it is more and more an intense problem because we have, as I think the member for York pointed out the other evening, as much as 90 per cent. of our production of wheat available for export.

The war had two very important effects and influences on the wheat industry. In the first place, there was no certainty that Australia could find a market for its exportable surplus. The major European markets were lost, and those who were desirous of shipping wheat were unable to obtain ships in which to export it. Then we had the very serious repercussions against our industry in the fact that the United Kingdom could import from Canada at a very much cheaper rate and over a very much shorter distance than it could from Australia. There were large stocks of wheat available in Canada and the United States at that time. Secondly, during that period the prices ruling in the world were at a low level. In August, 1939, the Williamstown price was 2s. 2½d., in September of the same year it was 2s. 6¼d., in October of that year it was 2s. 9d., and in November, 2s. 11d. a bushel.

Hon. N. Keenan: Was that in sterling?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That was Australian. Those were the prices f.o.b. Williamstown, that being the port on which the standard price of Australia was computed. At that stage there began to accumulate in the Australian States tremendous quantities of wheat. I recall discussing with the representatives of Bulk-handling Ltd., the Australian Wheat Board and the military authorities in 1942, in which year there was a large accumulation of wheat, the prospect of burning millions of bushels then stored at Fremantle and commencing to be stored at Bassendean. The only prospect the military authorities could see of preventing that which could not be exported from falling into the hands of the enemy was to destroy it. At that stage, the farmers had become very seriously concerned as to how they would carry on.

Mr. Ackland: Did not that suggestion come from the military authorities, not from the farmers?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes. I have said I attended a conference at which the military authorities were present and at which this suggestion was made. The military authorities were determined that some way should be found to burn in one stack at Fremantle hundreds of thousands of bushels of wheat. At one stage there was stored in Western Australia more wheat than this State will produce this year, and stored, moreover, close to ports. Under Commonwealth pool control, with an assured price, all sorts of schemes developed —the 3,000-bushel limit and a limit of price accompanying it; arrangements for an acreage compensation to farmers who could not sow wheat because of their inability to obtain super; and discussions in which I took a considerable part and from which this State benefited to the extent of hundreds of thousands of pounds, approaching half a million in one year, and representing compensation paid to Western Australian farmers, whereas such payments were not made to farmers in any other State.

I mention these matters, without doing so in any great detail, to give the House some indication of the serious circumstances which could accompany a fall in the value of wheat if the responsibility for the fall became a State matter. We have before us a Bill based on the recommendations of men appointed—men who can speak with authority in regard to the wheat problems of this State and to a considerable extent the wheat problems of Australia—to investigate these questions. We have other authorities differing from their point of view. We have the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation and two organisations in this State which are now the Farmers' Union, who definitely and deliberately opposed a State pool, and went solidly, and I think almost without exception, in support of a

Commonwealth-wide pool. That being so, I think the Government should give very serious consideration, of its own volition, to taking steps as a Government to endeavour to sort out between the States of Australia the problems which affect the different States.

For some years, during the period when attempts were made to have an international wheat agreement signed, I took part in many Australia-wide conferences in an endeavour to resolve the difficulties, the difficulties of internal economy, which were raised by the different States, and which meant very much to them in the retention of the acreage then in wheat production and the retention on the land of the farmers then engaged in that industry. Unless we are prepared to approach the matter in that way, I fear that this Bill could bring to Western Australia very serious repercussions if it became law, the control vested in authorities delegated by the State to handle wheat as agents for the State, but the State to be responsible for all the costs which must come when a shrinkage in price occurs.

Mr. Perkins: This is only a marketing Bill.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I know that. I also know that in this Bill, which the Minister for Agriculture very meagrely explained—

The Minister for Agriculture: I spoke to the Bill. Do not make any mistake about that. I did not wander all round the world.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If the Minister knew anything about the subject, he would know, and, I hope, appreciate the importance of the analysis I am endeavouring to give to the House concerning the effect on the industry in this State of any shrinkage in world prices. There is in the Bill the right of the Government to delegate its authority and control of the handling of wheat to agents. One may properly assume that efficient agents and authorities would be Bulk-handling Ltd., and all of its associations. I cannot find very much objection to that when I consider the background and the capacity of that organisation to handle this particular commodity. The point I am strongly stressing is that although the present price of wheat would, years ago, have been thought fantastic, and may well be fantastic, and despite the fact that there is a prospect for a year or two of continued very high prices, this is a period during which Australian States should attempt to resolve their difficulties and differences which they discovered when analysing the problem at a time when wheat was 2s. or 3s. a bushel.

There is always a reluctance to handle problems of this sort when things are buoyant and prosperous, but there is always the thought that ultimately there will be a fall. During the next 12 months or so we have a prospect of the four big wheat-growing countries of the world increasing their production. I am certain that when the difficulties of Central Europe are sorted out and once it again becomes a factor in the purchasing of large quantities of wheat from the four big exporting countries, Australia, being in competition, will find the situation very much more difficult even if there are still difficulties associated with the shipment of grain.

The Minister for Agriculture: We shall have to reduce the cost of production, and we shall not get that on the basis of a 40-hour week.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That is beside the question. We have the prospect this year of a range of wheat production in Australia of up to 180,000,000 bushels, at a price which even those who represent farming districts and may themselves be farmers will agree is approaching the fantastic, a price which may cause them to be fearful lest cost of production will follow it. That price may be reflected in land values, and it may be the cause of a tumbling down of commodity values and lead to the ruination of many people.

The Minister for Agriculture: Prices are approaching that stage in the case of other commodities.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That is so in the case of some commodities. Wheat and wool are today at prices that are making a great contribution to Australia's income, and at the same time that very circumstance is giving rise to great concern on the part of those engaged in production in those industries. The advice I have from authoritative sources is that all prospect of an international agreement at this stage has broken down. It has broken down on the price factor. Argentina is also a country where grave

concern is felt because of present high values. That country not only hopes to retain the advantages of its existing marketing system in any period of inflated prices but also the advantages of the monetary adjustments which its export concessions of goods produced within the country give to it in the world marketing of wheat.

I do not say this in any unpleasant manner, but it is unfortunate that the Minister became hostile when I surveyed the matter from the only angle from which we can survey it, namely, the world-wide angle. I suggest to him and to others who are interested that they should study the plan put forward by the international authority de Hevesey who, in his book "World Wheat Planning," gives an outline which I think should have the consideration of all Australian Governments. Briefly, his scheme envisages an agreement between the major exporting and importing countries to allocate export quotas for import into European countries only, and in this respect differs from other plans. A very short analysis of that proposal shows very substantial advantages to Australia, not only in the markets to the north but also the markets of the west, where Australian wheat can, in competition with any other country that is also producing wheat, find a ready market at prices that will be satisfactory.

I drew the attention of two ex-Ministers for Commerce—Mr. Scully and Sir Earle Page to the recommendation of Mr. de Hevesey. I am certain that so far as the State and the Commonwealth are concerned it contains proposals which could give to us an agreement involving, to our advantage, millions in our big wheat harvest years. This Bill proposes to set up a compulsory pool in Western Australia and make arrangements for such obvious necessities as payments for premium wheats and all the things that are necessary to be paid from the proceeds of the pool and for an average return to all farmers contributing to the pool. The machinery provided is simply the right of the Minister to have agents acting for him in the handling of the commodity. The appropriate sections of the Bulk Handling Act are suspended, and Co-operative Bulk-handling Ltd. is not to be pressed to meet, or it is not to be responsible for its commitments under the Bulk Handling Act. Instead of that, it will perform the same functions as it now performs, only as agent for the State.

In other words, Bulk-handling Ltd., acting as agent for the State, will not be obliged to enter into a bond or undertaking for which the appropriate sections of its own Act makes it responsible; but the State undertakes the responsibility. To sum it all up, I think we could all readily agree that if it were possible to secure the maximum protection and certainty for the wheatgrowing industry of this nation it would be per medium of an international agreement. That would be the best thing that could happen.

Mr. Perkins: You would have to be sure the agreement would be kept.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Exactly. I said, if it could happen! The worst thing that could happen would be no control at all and a return to a haphazard system of free marketing with agents canvassing district by district for growers' wheat. Going from the worst to the best, I think that the next thing that would be least in the interests of the wheatgrowers would be a State pool. If an international agreement is not possible, the best thing that could happen for the wheatgrowers of Australia would be the concurrence of all States in an agreement which would not only enable a State compulsory pool to operate but would not conflict at all with the Australian Constitution and would give to the growers what they are seeking—a fair and just return for their commodity.

That, I think the House will agree, would be the most important happening in the history of wheatgrowing in Australia: to have an agreement between the States—never mind the Commonwealth for a moment—just as if an international agreement were in existence; to arrange for a fluctuating quota for export even as high as our best year, approaching 200,000,000 bushels—an agreement which would provide for percentages of production to go to an export pool. Then I think that if this State could take the lead in that connection—and that is where I submit this commission was leading to; that is what I would hope it had based its conclusions upon—instead of an approach in this manner which might bring to us insularity and hostility from wheatgrowers in other

States, it should deal with the subject in a different manner altogether.

I cannot agree with the suggestion that unless this Bill passes there will be chaos and confusion in the industry. There cannot be chaos and confusion this year, and there cannot be chaos and confusion in the industry in the marketing of the coming crop. Therefore the time is very opportune for the governmental and wheatgrowing representatives, with or without the Commonwealth, to endeavour, in Mr. Teasdale's words, to hammer out a plan appropriate to Australia.

Mr. Perkins: You cannot do it unless the Commonwealth will play ball.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We can do it if all States agree before going to the Commonwealth. I remind the member for York—and the Premier will appreciate the truth of this remark—that the strongest weapon the Commonwealth has in dealing with the States is the differences between the States; and the Commonwealth plays up to that at every conference that is held. I repeat that if at the conference of Ministers of Agriculture, which is to take place shortly to try to solve this problem of wheat production and marketing, the Australian States do not agree, there will be no agreement between them and the Commonwealth. That is why, in answer to the member for York, I submit that the foundation of a satisfactory agreement in regard to wheat would be possible if all the Australian States would first unite in formulating a plan to suit all Australia. Then the approach to the Commonwealth would be safe and sound.

If this Bill is passed this year and is placed on the statute-book it may conflict with the desires and intentions of other States. I hope that aspect will be considered by our Minister for Agriculture and his opposite numbers in other States, so that if a conference is called soon the States will know what they expect from the Commonwealth; and if they act with a united front in the best interests of the wheat industry of Australia, I am certain we will be nearer an agreement based on allocation of export quotas which would be satisfactory to our producers. I will make no comment on the attitude of the Australian Wheat Board in regard to advances or in regard to any of the things of which, by delegated authority, they have control. All I wish to see, and all the majority of members here wish to see, is a satisfactory scheme which will give to the wheat farmers of this community stability and an assurance of continuity of progress, and good prospects in the future. Since it does not matter one scrap whether this Bill be passed this year or not, I hope the Government will give consideration to the points I have raised and endeavour to take the lead in an Australia-wide sense in an effort to try to level out all the differences between the States so that when an approach to the Commonwealth is made by the States it will be on a solid foundation.

MR. REYNOLDS (Forrest) [6.10]: To my humble way of thinking this is the most important Bill introduced so far this session. It is most important because it is a socialistic measure. No one can deny that. To me it is important also because it embodies something that has been a hobbyhorse with me for the last 22 years. Away back in 1926 I advocated a compulsory pool. I was laughed at, and scoffed at, but I went on advocating it for a number of years. Finally, I was told it was too idealistic; that I should not allow my altruism to run riot. In 1931 I began to advocate other measures for getting what I considered to be a just price for our wheat. We have just listened to a very interesting dissertation by the Leader of the Opposition which, to me, was very informative, and gave some indication of the great opportunities that were his when he was handling this question of wheat and also no doubt when he was chairman of the Rural Reconstruction Commission. I would like to make one or two observations with regard to the remarks of one or two other members. When speaking onthe Bill last week, the member for Wagin said that the Labour Party was opposed to a State pool and to a voluntary pool and that the totalitarian Commonwealth Government wanted to give the farmers any old price dictated by Caucus. That is absolutely fallacious.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That was in a letter he read.

Mr. REYNOLDS: I do not know whether it was in a letter. This is not a party Bill and we can use our own discretion on the matter. So far as a compulsory pool is concerned, the Labour Party has never opposed

such a suggestion. As a matter of fact, I have often heard the proposal lauded in the Labour movement. I think that the voluntary pool was a stepping-stone to this socialistic movement. That pool served a very good purpose and, if more farmers had supported it, they would have been better off and the State would no doubt have been wealthier in consequence. Concerning the allegation that Caucus dictated the Commonwealth scheme, I point out that in April of this year at Sydney the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation adopted a 15-point plan. Many members have heard about that plan, but I doubt whether many on either side of the House could mention half a dozen of the points. I happen to have the plan before me; and because it is so vitally important that these 15 points should be known and recorded and because I want to make one or two remarks concerning them, it is my intention to deal with them seriatim.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. REYNOLDS: The Australian Wheat Growers' Federation is a formidable body, recognised to be one of the most powerful wheatgrowing organisation in Australia at the present day. The president is Mr. H. S. Roberton, of New South Wales, while the vice-presidents are Messrs G. Evans of Victoria, W. F. Nicholls of South Australia, and K. Jones of Western Australia. I believe that Mr. Jones is chairman of one section of the Farmers' Union. Members have heard a good deal about the 15-point plan. No. 1 point states:—

> The A.W.F. to take all necessary steps with the Commonwealth and State Governments to implement an equitable wheat stabilisation plan.

That is what the present Commonwealth Government is endeavouring to do. Point 2 states:—

> This Conference requests the Federal Government to set up a Commission of Inquiry, on which wheatgrowers shall have adequate representation, to ascertain the cost of producing a bushel of wheat. The figures used to be indexed in a similar manner to the index in cost of living figures. The guaranteed floor price to be the cost of production as determined by the Commission, with provision for a review every year to relate the price to any rise or fall in the cost of production.

As members know, some four months ago the Commonwealth Government appointed that Commission. It has taken evidence in other States and its chairman, Mr. Justice Simpson, arrived in Western Australia last week. He said he deplored the negative attitude and apathy of farmers in not replying to the 6,000 questionnaires sent out in this State.

Mr. Ackland: Have you seen a copy of the questionnaire?

Mr. REYNOLDS: Yes. Of the 6,000 sent out only 723 were returned. In a statement from Bruce Rock, according to this morning's issue of "The West Australian," appears the following: —

> Replying to an inquiry as to the reason for the poor response Mr. Connelly said there was no doubt "they had been dumped by the Farmers' Union."

That is an accusation and Mr. Connelly must have something to substantiate it. When the Commonwealth Government is endeavouring to do the best it possibly can for the wheatgrowers, it is unfortunate that they are not assisting by supplying the necessary information to enable the commission to arrive at a satisfactory decision as to what is a just and fair price. Naturally the farmers want a just and fair price for their wheat, and as an old wheatgrower it is my duty to endeavour to see that the grower does receive a just price for his wheat—a price just not only to the grower but to the consumer also. Point No. 3 reads:—

> The scheme to provide for a guaranteed floor price to be based upon and maintained at the determined cost of production provided that the cost of production shall include a remunerative wage plus interest on the capital involved.

That seems to be a reasonable request and no doubt in the various costs prepared in the past that has been taken into consideration. Years ago I think the figure allowed was £156, or £3 per week, but that has now jumped to £7 10s., which is no doubt a reasonable figure. Point 4 reads:—

> That under the wheat stabilisation scheme the first payment be 5s. 2d. f.o.r. ports bulk basis, until such time as the cost of production price be determined by the Wheat Industry Cost Inquiry Commission.

So it is based on the 5s. 2d. Point 5 reads:—

> The stabilisation scheme commence with the next harvest after the scheme commences, and be for at least ten years.

I think that is a wise provision. If the farmers can be assured of a reasonable price

for the next ten years I should not mind being a farmer again. Point 6 reads:—

That the home price for wheat for human consumption in Australia be retained upon its original principle, viz., "cost plus" but subject to immediate and periodic review and adjustment in accord with fluctuation in cost.

That seems to be a good idea, and they probably got it from Mr. Menzies, who gave the manufacturers of Australia a cost plus system and the farmers a bankruptcy system. Point 7 reads:—

That we oppose any sales of wheat for internal use at concessional prices by ministerial direction excepting wheat used for human consumption, unless the A.W.B. is re-imbursed to export parity by the Government.

That also seems a reasonable provision. Point No. 8 reads:—

That a stabilisation fund be created and contributed to by growers in years when the realisation exceeds the guaranteed price and drawn upon to maintain that price in the years when realisations fall below the guaranteed price, and that the amount of such grower contribution should be 50 per cent of the excess above the determined guaranteed price, with a limit of 2s. 2d. and that any deficiency be made up by a grant from consolidated revenue.

I notice that in this report provision is made for that, and it is suggested that it is a good idea. Point 9 is:—

The reserve fund to be controlled by trustees appointed by the Australian Wheat Growers Federation and the Australian Wheat Board and invested to earn current interest rates.

That is where the State pool conflicts with this idea. I believe in a State pool and have long advocated it, yet I would like to see a Commonwealth scheme inaugurated. I think that if this Bill becomes an Act it will be used to induce the other States to come into line, and that then there will be a correlation of the various State pools in order to have a Commonwealth body controlling those pools for the sale and disposal of wheat.

The Minister for Agriculture: That would be the object of the scheme, if the Commonwealth steps out of the picture.

Mr. REYNOLDS: Yes, if the Commonwealth steps out of the picture, but, as the member for Gascoyne said, there are difficulties about getting an export license, and the Commonwealth has that power. Point 10 is:—

The Federal Government be requested to introduce legislation with the object of giving the A.W.B. the necessary statutory powers to assume full control of the registration, licensing, acquisition, care, sale, distribution and export, in conjunction with the Wheat Stabilisation Board, and the financing and marketing of Australian wheat, together with power under the authority of the Commonwealth Treasurer to negotiate the necessary advances direct with the Commonwealth Bank.

That is a contentious provision. Nevertheless, I am relating these 15 points because this is a most important Bill and I think members should be conversant with the objects set out in this plan, which has so often been referred to. Very few people know what the points are and I do not think the member for Irwin-Moore could repeat the 15 straight off. Number 11 reads:—

The plan to be controlled by a board, the majority of members to be elected by a ballot of licensed wheatgrowers in each State. That the board comprise two grower members from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, and one grower member from Queensland. That one grower member from each two member States retire at the end of two years, the remainder at the expiration of three years, such members to be eligible for re-election. Thereafter tenure to be for two years.

The provision regarding Queensland seems liberal, as that State rarely produces more than 1,000,000 bushels of wheat per year. Point No. 12 is important:—

That a compulsory referendum be taken of all licensed wheat growers before any stabilisation scheme becomes operative.

I notice that under the provisions of the Bill growers have opportunity of voting in 1951, but they are not afforded facilities for a referendum, such as many people today think should be taken on the question of nationalising the banks. Point No. 13 reads:—

That the A.W.B. be not subject to Ministerial direction in the exercise of their function to sell the wheat to the best advantage unless the Board be reimbursed for any losses on concessional sales either internally or for export.

Point 14 provides:—

A properly constituted authority shall be set up to determine and provide for a refund to growers who have equity in the fund, if for any reason they are arbitrarily forced to cease growing wheat.

Point 15, the last, reads as follows:—

That provision be made for the issue of further farm registrations, and permanent licenses with preferences to returned personnel and farmers' sons.

That is a wise provision in a way, but it would exclude a lot of men who were not

able to fight oversea. The Minister, when moving the second reading, referred to the difficulty experienced in financing wheat pools and said that a large amount of money was involved. In order to finance wheat pools, power is proposed to enable the board to sell futures and the Minister mentioned that this was very risky business. The buying and selling of futures is a practice that I deplore; the system seems to be all wrong because it gives the bulls and the bears operating in a foreign wheat pit the right to control the price of our farms whether they be at Merredin, Miling, Mullewa or anywhere else.

The Minister for Education: They do that when they have no wheat behind them.

Mr. REYNOLDS: That is the unfortunate part about it. That is what happened in 1930.

The Minister for Education: This board would not do that.

Mr. REYNOLDS: I realise that there is a wise provision to prevent it. The farmers were caught in 1930-31 to the tune of £700,000 because the various merchants went round and advised them not to dispose of their wheat. They told the farmers that the price would go up and displayed graphs to illustrate that the position was similar to that which had existed in 1924-25. They said, "Do not dispose of your wheat now because it will touch over 5s." The tragedy was that, within three months, the price touched about 1s. 7¼d. a bushel. I had 33,000 bushels and it involved me in a loss of about £3,429.

Mr. Leslie: You must have received an advance.

Mr. REYNOLDS: Yes, an advance of 3s. 3d. or 3s. 6d. The only way we can overcome that position—I have always advocated it and did so publicly at a Wheatgrowers' Conference in 1931—is to fight for international co-operation to regulate production, marketing and prices. Whether that will ever be achieved, I do not know, but it is something we ought to aim at. If nations can co-operate to produce wartime requirements, surely they can co-operate for the production of peace-time requirements at a reasonable price for both the grower and the consumer.

I thought that the member for North-East Fremantle gave a very logical speech that contained many pearls of wisdom. He said that even the fall in the price of wheat did not restrict production. On analysing the figures, I find that that is so. Taking the five pre-depression years, 1924-25 to 1929-30 —I am quoting from the Western Australian Wheat Pool figures, which are reliable—the average production was 33,000,000 bushels a year and the average price 4s. 8d. a bushel, while in the post-depression period of 1930-31 to 1934-35, the production averaged 40,000,000 a year and the average price was 2s. 4d. a bushel.

Mr. Ackland: Do you know how much of the world's wheat Western Australia produces?

Mr. REYNOLDS: That is only about two per cent. of the world's production. We export about 80 per cent. of our crop and retain 20 per cent. So, despite the fact that the price averaged only 2s. 4d. a bushel in the five post-depression years, production increased by an average of 7,000,000 bushels a year. The only solution to the problem of prices is to have a State pool with probably an international background. I recall that in 1930, when the price of wheat fell, the then Prime Minister, Mr. Scullin, exhorted the wheatgrowers of Australia to grow more wheat and still more wheat, and told us he would guarantee us 4s. a bushel. The reason he gave was that all primary production had to be stimulated in order that Australia might be able to meet its interest obligations and pay for necessary imports in the shape of machinery, oil and so forth.

The farmers responded magnificently and fortunately in that year the weather man assisted admirably with the result that we in Western Australia produced close on 53½ million bushels, but when the legislation which was to honour that promise—the Labour Government endeavoured to honour it—had passed the House of Representatives where there was a Labour majority and went to a Senate with a National-Country Party majority, it was defeated by two votes and the two Senators responsible for the defeat of the Bill, to my way of thinking, were two Western Australian Country Party men, the late Senators J. M. Carroll and E. B. Johnston. Had that Bill been passed, it would have benefited the wheatgrowers of Australia greatly and would have saved tens of thousands of farmers from the humiliation, poverty and distress they suffered.

The member for North-East Fremantle also said that any plan to guarantee a price for wheat must also provide for a limitation of production. That is only too true. I remember years ago when the first subsidy was introduced for the benefit of canegrowers in Queensland. After making reserves of sugar, production should have been limited to the expanding needs of Australia, instead of allowing the farmers to grow any acreage they liked. Had the farmers been restricted, we would have been spared the tremendous annual debt to make up the difference between the home consumption price and the world parity price. Western Australia before the war contributed to the canegrowers of Queensland a bonus equivalent to 5d. a bushel for every bushel of wheat grown in this State. If we are to have a guaranteed price, there must be a limit to the production. Otherwise the scheme would become too burdensome and would break all and sundry.

In September, 1930, I attended a meeting at York addressed by Mr. Menzies, who had been appointed Prime Minister, and the Mayor, in an address of welcome, referred to the position of the farmers, and said that something had to be done urgently to afford them relief. He said that what the farmers wanted was a guaranteed price for their wheat. Mr. Menzies, in the course of his speech, said that farmers could have had a guaranteed price for their wheat at any time prior to the advent of the National Party to power, but they did not ask for it because they did not want to embarrass or harass the National-Country Party coalition. Mr. Menzies added, "Now that I am in power, however, you ask me to give you a guaranteed price. I shall do what I think is right, and if you are not satisfied, you can turn me out." They certainly did turn him out. Mr. Menzies, having given that promise throughout Australia, desired to honour it. When speaking on the Bill, he said—

> I am now able to announce that we have arranged not only that the amount shall be 2s. 10d. per bushel for bagged wheat and 2s. 8½d. for bulk wheat less freight, thus, giving an average return of 2s. 6d. per bushel on bagged wheat at country sidings, but also that advances shall be paid in an amount as soon as practicable after delivery of the wheat. I say that these financial proposals represent not only a fair but a very generous approach to the problem by the Government.

That is what Mr. Menzies promised the farmers back in 1939 and today, despite the fact that at that time wool was realising about 10d. per lb., and baconers were about 60s.—

Mr. Ackland: What was world parity for wheat at that time?

Mr. REYNOLDS: About 1s. 10¾d.

Mr. Ackland: What is world parity today?

Mr. REYNOLDS: I shall give that later. I did not interrupt the hon. member when he was speaking, and I remind him that I can play that game as well as he can and perhaps to greater advantage. When the Menzies Government was nearly defeated in 1940, the Party thought it would have to change its policy, so it introduced a wheat stability plan. That was an infamous plan because it insisted upon the production of Australia being limited to 140,000,000 bushels. The price, as I said, was 3s. 10d. a bushel, but from that amount had to be deducted all the charges, such as receiving, handling, railway freights, storage, and placing the wheat on board f.o.b. Therefore, the farmer actually received about 3s. per bushel. The member for Irwin-Moore, in his speech on this subject, referred rather scornfully to the socialistic Commonwealth Government. I point out to that member that no Government has done more for the primary producer and the people than has the Curtin-Chifley Government. That Government served the people most faithfully and to good purpose.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They know that.

Mr. REYNOLDS: Of course they do.

Mr. Ackland: It is not worth while interjecting.

Mr. REYNOLDS: No! We have heard various discussions about the cost of producing a bushel of wheat. It so happens that I have a most up-to-date report on that subject. It was prepared by Professor Wadham and presented by him to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court while he was giving evidence on how the 40-hour week would affect the cost of a bushel of wheat. The report is most interesting, because it takes into consideration the 40-hour week.

Mr. Leslie: A 40-hour week for farmers?

Mr. REYNOLDS: No, the cost of the 40-hour week for everyone.

Mr. Leslie: It does not matter about the farmer!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. REYNOLDS: As a matter of fact, the farmer is taken into account. The hon. member is right. The 40-hour week for the farmer is taken into consideration. I am pleased the hon. member mentioned it. Professor Wadham is a man of outstanding knowledge and ability as far as the wheat industry is concerned. He was associated with the Jopp Commission which most thoroughly investigated the wheat industry in 1933-1934. The commission based the cost of production on the cost for 1931 and 1932. In view of his outstanding knowledge and capacity, Professor Wadham ought to be able to put his finger on any inflated or fictitious cost such as is sometimes submitted in the course of examination. The Wheatgrowers Commission in 1931 and 1933 stated the labour cost at 1s. 1½d. and allowed for an increase of 150 per cent. I know the member for Mt. Marshall has not seen this report.

Mr. Leslie: Professor Wadham has a one-track mind.

Mr. REYNOLDS: The member for Mt. Marshall has one track, the wrong track; Professor Wadham has the other track, the right one. He stated the labour cost as 2s. 9.75d. Interest was the same as in 1931, 8d.; but if I remember rightly interest in those days was 6½ per cent., whereas today the maximum rate for an overdraft is 4¾ per cent. He allowed the same figure, 8d. For maintenance of machinery he allowed about a 50 per cent. increase on 5¾d., making it 8.625d. Rates, land tax and insurance were set down at 2d., with a 25 per cent. increase. However, it is not my intention to bore the House with these figures. In 1931 and 1933, the Wheat Commission showed the cost at 4s. 3d., less the amount allowed for sidelines, 9d., making the next cost 3s. 6d. f.o.b., from which in those days about 10d. was of course deducted. The new schedule, as I said, includes the 40-hour week.

The wages cost per family was 1s. 1½d. in 1931-32; it is now 2s. 9.75d. Under this new schedule it is 7s. 7d. per bushel and there is an allowance for returns of 1s. 6d. That was based on last year's cost and the price of farm products last year. Since then, however, costs have jumped considerably and the net f.o.b. price is 6s. a bushel. I notice in the statement prepared by the Primary Producers' Association that the estimated capital of an average farm is £5,000; but when Miss Rowley was giving evidence that sum became £10,000. The base for the cost of the farm was fixed at £10,000. That would include the cost of machinery. There is another item which I know members will enjoy. The figures were prepared by Mr. Russell, the general treasurer of the Farmers' Union, before the Wheat Commission was appointed by the Commonwealth Government. He gave the following figures as the actual cost of the plant at today's prices, which were obtained from H. V. McKay, Ltd., and Lynas Motors:

	£
3½-ton Ford truck	721
Mercury sedan	798
Sungeneral plough, 12-disc (by screw lift)	143
18 Sunduke scarifier, with screw lift tractor hitch	106
12-Section stump jump harrows ..	65
20-Run Sunlea 8 in. wheels tractor hitch screw lift	211
16-disc drill	115
8 ft. binder, pneumatic wheel ..	170
12 ft. p.t.o. header, with bagging platform	480
W.D. 9 McCormick tractor, with extras and dual wheels	1,150
Sundries, including hay-baler, chaff-cutter, rake, T-bar roller, wool press and other shearing shed requirements, bulk bin for truck cart, tools, etc.	500

He bases his price on an average farm capitalised at slightly over £11,000. Whereas in 1945 the base was £5,000, today it is £11,000.

Mr. REYNOLDS: Yes. There is such a thing as a fair and just price, but we must be fair and just to the consuming public. If we overload the public they will certainly squeal. In this Parliament we should be fair, reasonable and sensible. I wish to quote another interesting item. I have just read about the tremendous cost of a plant, over £4,000, the tota leost of the farm being over £11,000. The average acreage sown to wheat in Western Australia is 330 acres and the average yield, 11.95 bushels. But the total yield in bushels sold in 1945 was 4,272 bushels, whereas the wheat sold totalled 3,678 bushels, leaving a discrepancy of 594 bushels. As the area sown would be 330 acres, naturally the farmer would require only 330 bushels, so probably the difference

went to feed pigs. In criticising these figures one would naturally require supporting evidence. It is not my intention to be critical of wheatgrowers' costs because I have a shrewd suspicion of what they actually are. To my sorrow, I produced 70,000 odd bushels over a period of five years for which I received a little over 2s. 1d. per bushel.

We heard the member for Irwin-Moore say that the present Commonwealth Government is socialistic. These are some of its socialistic activities during the past five years: It has given aid to the primary industries to the extent of £71,500,000; over the last five years it has made available £10,500,000 for the purchase of superphosphate, thus enabling farmers to buy their superphosphate at almost pre-war rates. Besides doing that, the Commonwealth Government also subsidised cornsacks to the extent of £3,500,000. The member for York said that farmers had been robbed of many millions of pounds, but the figures I have just quoted throw a totally different light on the subject. There are many other points I could discuss; however, my object is to support the Bill. I would rather have a Commonwealth measure and a stabilised price; but failing these, I would rather have a State pool, which I think would be a wonderfully good thing. I remember the difficulty, long years ago, that the voluntary pool had in getting finance to carry on its operations. That goes back as far as 1925. Members will no doubt recall that Sir Denison Miller died in June 1923.

The following year the Government in power passed an Act dealing with the Commonwealth Bank. The Commonwealth Bank then, instead of being a people's bank, immediately became a banker's bank; and when the farmers of Western Australia applied confidently to it for finance to enable them to carry on, they were told that the conditions were so and so. The pool authorities thought the conditions intolerable and consequently applied to the private banks, who in turn imposed the same conditions. The pool authorities then applied to the Co-operative Wholesale Society in England, which supplied the money. The money was placed to the credit of that society in the London branch to be transferred to the Perth branch. However, that money was transferred equally to each of the five associated banks, but not to the Commonwealth Bank. This transaction cost the farmers 3¼d. per bushel.

Mr. Mann: You should not talk such rot!

Mr. REYNOLDS: It is not rot, and I challenge anyone in this House to deny what I say.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. REYNOLDS: In that year, the pool handled 4,000,000 bushels. I know all about it. It cost 1s. a bushel to transport that wheat to England, but for merely transferring money it cost the farmers 3¼d. a bushel. It was sheer robbery. I support the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay—in reply) [8.17]: I thank members for the support they have given to this measure. It was particularly refreshing to hear the member for Kanowna speak for the Bill. The member for Mt. Magnet who, I understand, has spent most of his life chasing the golden weight—

Mr. Triat: You are misinformed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: —made a good contribution to the debate. He gave the farmers some good advice when he said they should look after their machinery. Several members have spoken to the measure, and they roamed far and wide over the continent when dealing with the wheat question, and, to some extent, went outside the Bill. Actually speaking, there has been no opposition to the measure. The member for North-East Fremantle expressed doubt as to whether it was essential for it to be introduced at the present time, and so also did the Leader of the Opposition. But, rather than there be any doubt, the right procedure is to place this measure—not on the statute-book because it will not be until proclaimed—but somewhere—

Mr. Rodoreda: In the lock-up.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. It should be passed in case the Commonwealth Government withdraws from wheat marketing. By doing so we will, to some extent, be prepared to deal with our own wheat harvest.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: This Commonwealth Government would not let the farmer down.

Mr. Leslie: What!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: As I explained, the intention of the Government in introducing this measure is to have some security in case the Commonwealth withdraws from the scheme. I also made it very clear that if the Commonwealth Government is prepared to continue with wheat marketing, that is the scheme we want. The member for Irwin-Moore expressed the opinion, and rightly so, that the farmers should get a bigger share of the price being obtained today for wheat. We all feel that way.

Mr. Triat: How much should he get?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That has been debated very fully in this House, and I have my opinion.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What is your opinion?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: He should get 5s. 6d. plus 10 per cent. on the price wheat is bringing today. He is entitled to that. The Leader of the Opposition said that we did not know exactly how high the cost of producing wheat would be in the near future. That is so, because of the changes taking place and the extra costs that will be added to the expenses of the farmer. We cannot forecast the exact cost of production. But I do want to make the point clear that the idea behind the introduction of this legislation is to be prepared. I hope the Commonwealth Government will not drop the marketing of wheat, because it is the authority most capable of handling the matter.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You can depend on it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: What we want is a Commonwealth scheme. I know that through my experience of the marketing of dried fruits. We have our State boards, but we have a Commonwealth board which controls the exports, and in the whole set-up we have a fairly successful marketing scheme. I want to see that with wheat.

The Minister for Education: On a fairer basis.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Let the Minister make his own speech.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Leader of the Opposition twitted me with having made a very poor attempt in introducing the Bill.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He said, meagre.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. My reason was that the Bill is merely dealing with the marketing of the wheat crop. It does not deal with stabilisation or farming operations. It makes provision for the handling of the farmer's wheat when he delivers it to the siding, and I stuck religiously to that. I did not depart from my notes because I did not and do not think it behoves a Minister to set out to stonewall his own Bill.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He should explain it adequately.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I did that. I appreciate the contributions to the debate. Quite a lot of valuable information on the wheat industry has been submitted, and it will be on record. Such information will be useful in any future activities that we may undertake in connection with wheat. I want the House to understand that this is a precautionary measure, and it will not be proclaimed if the Commonwealth Government is prepared to handle the Australian wheat crop. That Government is the most capable and competent authority to handle our wheat, for the simple reason that it has the control of our finance to a large extent. The Commonwealth Bank played a big part in financing our primary products throughout the war.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It is a pity we did not have our State Savings Bank.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, it is a pity. But there is another bright star on the horizon—our rural bank.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And well up on the horizon too.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. It is liable to be a most important institution in this State. At any rate, I am hoping it will be.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Another socialised institution!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Commonwealth Government, from the point of view of finance and of chartering shipping, and in other respects too, is the most competent authority to handle the wheat harvest of Australia.

Mr. Mann: You do not trust the Commonwealth Government today, do you?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not want to be led away from the Bill. For the information of the member for Beverley, I am talking of Governments. I am not talking of the present Commonwealth Government in particular. He should understand that, because of his long experience in this Chamber. In conclusion I hope I will not be accused of being too brief on this occasion. I do appreciate the reception given the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 15—agreed to.

Clause 16—Powers of board; how exercised:

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would like the Minister to explain why he has made these particular provisions with regard to voting, and so on.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: According to my information, this clause contains the same powers as are contained in similar clauses in other measures. It does not depart from other Bills on the same subject that have been introduced.

Mr. Triat: What about paragraph (c)?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is the usual procedure. Is there any special point that the member for North-East Fremantle wants cleared up?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There are several points. There is a departure in as much as the board is to appoint its own chairman. When it is provided that the chairman shall have a deliberative and a casting vote, it is usually done when the authority constituting the board appoints the chairman. The Minister proposes that the chairman, once elected, shall have two votes if there is an equality of votes. That person may, at some time or another, find himself in the position of having two votes as against one vote of any other member, with the result that he will be able to decide the policy of the board. That is bad in a matter of this kind, and I hope the Committee will not agree with it. It would be preferable, in the event of an equality of votes, for the matter to be decided in the negative so that things could remain as they were until a sufficient number of members of the board were present to enable a decision to be arrived at, without one man having to exercise two votes. The position would be bad enough if the chairman were a man specially selected for the job and appointed by the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Would not the same position operate if the Government were to appoint the chairman? Where would the difference come in?

Hon. A. H. Panton: It is undemocratic for one man to have two votes and perhaps decide an important issue.

The Minister for Works: But did not that apply under some legislation introduced by members opposite when they were in office?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I cannot see that the position would be better if the Government were to appoint the chairman.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It would not be so bad then.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think there is anything to fear in this proposal because the board will be handling wheat matters that may require a decision very quickly. They will all be interested in wheat, and will act in the interests of the growers.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (c) be struck out.

The board is to consist of five members and, should an important matter have to be decided and all members be present, a majority could be obtained. Should there be only four members present, then the decision would be arrived at by the chairman and, on an important matter, it would be the decision of one man and not of the board that would operate. If the chairman were specially selected for his knowledge and qualifications and he were appointed by the Government, there might be something to be said in favour of the proposal, but the board is to appoint its own chairman and so one board member, with two votes, could determine the issue.

The Minister for Railways: What would you propose as a substitute? Supposing one member were absent through illness?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If there should be an equality of votes, the question should be decided in the negative so that matters would remain until a full attendance of board members could decide the issue. Very few Bills have been introduced with such a provision.

The Minister for Works: There have been some.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Very few.

The Minister for Railways: Suppose an important point arises that requires quick decision! You could not wait for a week or a fortnight.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That would be better than for one man to be in a position to decide the issue.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I support the amendment. The proposal in the clause is a departure from the usual practice in relation to boards. Almost invariably, the chairman is given a deliberative vote only. To allow him a casting vote as well is not sound practice. I do not know why the chairman of this board should have more power than the President, Speaker and Chairmen of Committees of this Parliament or the President and Speaker and Chairman of Committees of the Commonwealth Parliament. The proposal is utterly undemocratic. If the amendment be agreed to, the working of the board will not be affected adversely. As it is, the paragraph would place too much power in the hands of one man, who might decide the issue at the most important meeting of the board throughout the year.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I hope the Mininister will accept the amendment. I have never agreed to chairmen having a deliberative vote and a casting vote as well, seeing that it is quite undemocratic. The Minister for Railways introduced a Bill the other night that provides for exactly what we are asking now. At a meeting of members of the proposed directorate to control the railway system, the Bill provides that in the event of equal voting the question shall be decided in the negative.

The Minister for Railways: But the position is not likely to arise there as in this instance.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: That directorate will deal with assets valued at millions, and surely what is good for them should be good enough for the chairman under this Bill!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The paragraph was included so that, should matters of emergency arise necessitating quick decisions, they could be arrived at. However, I will accept the amendment, particularly as the position is adequately covered in paragraph (a).

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would not speak again were it not for the interjection by the Minister for Railways with regard to the provision in the Railway Act Amendment Bill which he introduced. He wanted to know what would happen if one member of the board were sick. I ask him: What will happen should one of the members of the directorate be sick?

The CHAIRMAN: That is not a fair question, seeing that we are not discussing the railway Bill, but a wheat Bill.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Perhaps I can get the answer when we are dealing with the railway Bill again. Obviously, the same thing will happen.

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

Clauses 17 to 43, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—WAR RELIEF FUNDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—OPTOMETRISTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 16th October. Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 59:

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on Clause 3 to which the member for

Kalgoorlie had moved an amendment as follows:—

That after the word "amended" in line 1 the words "by deleting the words 'shall be a British subject and' in subsection (2), lines two and three" with a view to inserting the following words:—"by inserting after the word 'subject' in line two of Subsection (2), the words 'or an ex-serviceman or a worker who served in the Merchant Navy or Merchant Marine of an allied nation during the period of World War II."

When the debate was adjourned I asked the hon. member to have a look at the wording of his amendment to see whether it was quite satisfactory.

Mr. STYANTS: I have had a look at the wording and I cannot see anything wrong with it. The Bill proposes to strike out of Subsection (2) of Section 59 the words "shall be a British subject, and." My amendment proposes to retain those words and to add other words. I can see nothing wrong with the wording.

The CHAIRMAN: I think it will be quite in order to delete the words after "amended," but, the further portion of the amendment appears to need re-wording to meet the desires of the hon. member. So far as I can see the latter portion would need to read "by inserting after the word 'subject' in line two of Subsection (2) the words" and so on.

Mr. STYANTS: I think the amendment as it appears on the notice paper is wrongly set out, in that the inverted commas are in the wrong position. They appear before the word "after" and they should not be there. If they are disregarded the amendment reads incorrectly. It is apparently a printer's error. The object of my amendment is to retain in the Act the words "shall be a British subject, and" and to add other words which would make the subsection read as follows:

Every applicant for a certificate shall be a British subject or an ex-Serviceman or a worker who served in the Merchant Navy or Merchant Marine of an allied nation during the period of World War II.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Kalgoorlie has moved that in line one, after the word "amended" the words "by deleting the words 'shall be a British subject,' and in Subsection (2), lines two and three" be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I would like to hear from the Minister why the Government wants to strike out the words "British subject." I do not see why we should do that and allow different foreigners to secure these jobs.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The member for Kalgoorlie stated that his objection to striking out the words "British subject" was that it would mean that Southern Europeans would be permitted to become qualified drivers and drive winding-engines at some of the big mines in the goldmining industry of this State, and that it would also permit Germans to do so. With those sentiments I am in entire agreement. I do not want unnaturalised Italians or Germans driving winding-engines. What I do suggest is that if the Bill is allowed to go through there will still be ample protection in the Act to see that that does not occur. The Act not only deals with winding-engines but also with internal combustion engines of as low a horsepower as six. But it provides that before any person can qualify for a certificate he must satisfy a board of examiners and Section 54 states the personnel of that board, which is to consist of the Chief Inspector of Machinery and two qualified persons, one of whom shall hold a winding engine-driver's certificate under this Act or a certificate equivalent thereto. That board has the right to grant or refuse a certificate on any grounds it deems advisable, and that gives the protection desired by the hon. member.

I cannot conceive of such a board granting an engine-drivers' certificate to an unnaturalised Italian or German, otherwise I would not agree to the amendment. I suggest that under some circumstances the board might wish to grant to an unnaturalised person an internal combustion engine driver's license, or perhaps a boiler attendant's certificate. The combustion engine referred to in Section 54, Subsection 4(g), and the boiler are as follows, "Any boiler comprising six horsepower or any internal combustion engine the combined cylinder area of which consists of or exceeds 200 square inches." I understand that that is about six horsepower. Though the question of nationality would not arise if a man wished to obtain a license to drive a motorcar, if the engine were taken out of that car and used as a stationary power plant such a person, as the law

now stands, could not get a license to drive it. The Act provides that any person who has obtained a certificate in any other State, may, without examination, obtain a certificate in this State.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Then we had better amend our Act, to prevent that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In three of the other States a license can be granted to any suitable person, irrespective of nationality.

Point of Order.

Mr. Graham: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I want to know what is being discussed at present. I thought we were endeavouring to elucidate the amendment moved by the member for Kalgoorlie, but the Committee has not yet been informed of it and until that point is clarified I suggest that we can hardly debate the matter.

The Chairman: The question before the Committee is that all words after the word "amended" be struck out. I take it that the Minister is speaking on the desirability or otherwise of those words being struck out.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I do not think the Minister has given a satisfactory explanation.

The Chairman: Order. The Minister has the floor.

Committee Resumed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have given an explanation which should satisfy anyone who is reasonably logical.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Now you are looking for trouble.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: An Act of Parliament should be logical in its provisions, and this measure would not be logical if, by going to another State and obtaining a certificate there a foreign national, under the provisions of the measure, could then obtain a certificate in this State, while not being able to obtain it directly here. The board gives ample protection and there is no need to deprive it of power to permit a suitable neutral—perhaps from Switzerland or America, not an ex-Serviceman or a merchant seaman, but a man who served in the workshops in America during the war—to obtain a certificate. I submit that the amendment is not necessary.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I do not agree with the explanation given by the Minister. If it is good enough for such a man to come here and get a job of that kind, it should be good enough for him to become naturalised.

The Chief Secretary: He cannot do that for six years.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Does the Minister wish such a man to get the cream of the jobs within that time? There is a good deal of difference between a boiler attendant and the man who drives the big winders on the mines. Such jobs as that should not be open to foreigners who are not naturalised. They could wait until they are naturalised before obtaining such jobs. A boiler attendant is in a different category from the man in charge of a big first-motion winding-engine.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The Chief Secretary said that the board, with its discretionary power, gives ample protection. That is so, provided the words "British subject" remain in the measure. If we strike out those words it will surely be obvious, even to the Chief Secretary, that the board would then say "Parliament has decided to strike out the words 'British subject,' and our discretionary power now extends a great deal further than it did." That is what I would say, if I were on the board and Parliament suddenly struck out those words. We are dealing with an industry that does not employ a great number of men. There are ample men—and particularly ex-Servicemen—available for these jobs.

I can visualise many engines, on timber-mills and elsewhere, that would provide ex-Servicemen with light jobs, suitable for those who have perhaps lost an arm. If we are to amend the measure we should make provision for men of that class. I understand that the Bill was first introduced because of a case of an American ex-Serviceman who was qualified to be an engine-driver but who, because he was not a British subject, could not get a certificate. Then somebody produced a Dutchman who was an ex-Serviceman in the same position. The amendment would overcome the difficulty in respect of those men. I suggest to the member for Middle Swan that he now has an opportunity to show what he thinks of returned Servicemen.

The Chief Secretary: This does not alter the preference.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Let us provide for preference in this Bill. We want to cater for the men on the lower deck, too.

The words have been in the Act for 26 years and the board has had discretionary power within the terms of the phrase "a British subject." I am not prepared to delete those words in view of the migrants who may be coming here, particularly for an industry in which there is not a large number of vacancies.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The reasons given by the Minister were insufficient. His chief reason was that because there is an American Serviceman in our midst, and there may be another man, we should strike out these vital words. That would be catering for one or two individuals, and we should not legislate for individuals. I believe in the greatest good for the greatest number. Members appear to be overlooking the danger to which we shall be exposed if we eliminate those protective words. We may find men of foreign nationality coming in and handling important machinery to the danger of human life. Much has been said about preference to returned men, but there is a Commonwealth Act to give them preference, though daily we read in the Press of appointments being made without reference being observed. The amendment should be accepted. We are grateful for the assistance America gave us during our time of peril, but that is no reason why we should alter our legislation to suit one or two members of that nation. They are welcome to our country, but let them fulfil the statutory period and become naturalised.

Mr. RODOREDA: The Minister should accept the amendment. It has nothing to do with preference to Servicemen except to those of allied nations. We already have preference for our own men. The amendment will be less open than the Minister's proposal and, if adopted, the only people who will be prevented from taking these positions will be members of enemy nations in the recent war, pending their remaining here long enough to become naturalised. The amendment would admit, in addition to British subjects, all men who served with the allied nations during the recent war.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Why let them in?

Mr. RODOREDA: Why shut out men who fought for us? Where shall we get if we adopt that attitude? That sort of talk is what causes wars. We need to be sensible. Enemy subjects should be shut out until they prove themselves capable of becoming good subjects and obtaining naturalisation. I am opposed to shutting everybody out, and I am opposed to leaving the provision wide open so that the board would have discretion to give such a position to a man who had fought against us two or three years ago. I hope the Minister will listen to reason and realise that there is no danger whatever in the amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think I have made it reasonably clear that I am not wedded to the Bill. The position is fully protected by the board. The matter is one for the Committee to decide; if the Committee feels that additional protection is required, I am quite willing to accept that view.

Mr. GRAHAM: I support the Bill as it stands. Clause 3 is, in fact, the Bill itself. It is possible to conjure up all kinds of dangers which any reasonable person on reflection would know are not likely to arise. The personnel of the board is in itself a guarantee of the safety of the workers. The chief objection to the Bill is that miners may feel inclined to revolt against the idea that other than a British subject should be responsible for lowering and raising them in a mine. But the board has to satisfy itself of the competency of these engine-drivers and may grant or refuse a certificate as it may think fit. A certificate of a medical officer must be obtained and the person applying must have sufficient knowledge of the English language to enable him properly to perform his duties.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The miners who go underground know all about that part of it.

Mr. GRAHAM: This board is peculiarly constituted, in that there is no representative of the employers on it. If the amendment be carried—I do not know whether members have overlooked this fact—it would be possible to grant certificates to Russians, Chinese, Indians, Greeks and others. That is the intention of the member for Kalgoorlie because all of those peoples were our allies in World War II. Apparently, some people would prefer a second-rate winding engine driver merely because he happened to be a British subject, or one of the people proposed in the amendment, to having a person who might be highly qualified, but who happened to come from a country which was at war with the allied nations during the recent struggle. Many of these people, as we al

know, were victims of circumstances; they had no direct say in whether their country should proceed to war, and the regime under which they lived was just as abhorrent to them as it is to us. I hear an undertone that this is a poor old argument.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I say in a loud tone that it is a poor argument. How will you judge whether such a person was a victim of circumstances or not? Give me the good old British subject.

Mr. GRAHAM: The fact that a person is a British subject is not necessarily a guarantee of his loyalty, nor is it any guarantee that he is more capable than a person whom today we regard as an alien. It is time that we broke down some of our prejudices against people who were born in lands other than our own. The amendment does not go nearly as far as I think some members imagine, because an American subject could not come here and be automatically admitted by the board, even if he had the necessary qualifications. He would have to be an ex-member of one of the Fighting Services or the merchant marine. The amendment is more restrictive than appears on the surface. We must have some regard to our immigration law, which is definitely a limiting factor.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is very doubtful just now.

Mr. GRAHAM: If the member for Leederville would take the trouble, he could ascertain what a small percentage of people, other than British, have been admitted to Australia since the conclusion of hostilities. In view of the fact that the board has overall powers and there are so many safeguards as to qualifications, there is no need for us to discuss these imaginary problems. We have every reasonable safeguard, particularly in view of the fact that there is a union representative on the board. I wholeheartedly support the Bill as it stands.

Mr. READ: I strongly support the amendment. I have spoken before in this Chamber concerning those members of the Allied Forces who are competent to do work in our midst but are unable, because of the set-up of our boards, to be admitted to undertake the work for which they are qualified. I believe we should retain the words "British subject" and add those suggested by the member for Kalgoorlie. If the amendment is not inserted, members of allied nations would not be qualified to appear before the board to apply for a certificate.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If there were a large number of occupations of this kind within the State, and especially if there were a shortage of suitable men offering for those occupations, the Committee would have some justification for amending the Act in the way the Bill provides. However, I am informed that the number of jobs of this kind is very small and the number of men offering for them is usually more than sufficient. It seems clear that there is no justification for tearing the Act wide open by deleting from it the words "British subject." The amendment appears to me to go quite far enough in the direction of widening the application of the Act, especially at this stage. If in the future the situation develops in the direction of many more of these jobs being created and thereby a shortage of suitable workers develops, that might be a suitable time for the proposal contained in the Bill to be brought before Parliament for consideration.

Mr. TRIAT: I support the amendment, though I am not enamoured of the idea of members of all the allied nations being permitted to enter the mining industry as winding engine-drivers. When it is suggested that Servicemen of allied nations can be admitted, it is not claimed that only Dutchmen or Americans are to be so admitted. It would be open to all nations. There are Greeks, Chinese, Javanese, Indians and people of other nationalities who could claim the privilege.

The Minister for Education: Asiatics are controlled by other means.

Mr. TRIAT: Indians are being allowed to come here. I have no objection to that, but I would have an objection to their driving winding-engines. I would prefer to see Italians already employed on the job doing that work. But the Act gives the board power to refuse a certificate if it deems that advisable, and I feel sure that the members of the board will see that the people to whom certificates are issued are suitable for the work.

Mr. STYANTS: I am not wedded to the wording of the amendment. But I listened with amazement to the specious reasoning of the member for East Perth who said he was going to oppose the amendment because it would admit Russians and Chinese. He said

he would support the Bill. The Bill not only admits Russians and Chinese but admits every nationality under the sun. That shows the hon. member's consistency.

Mr. Graham: You are incapable of listening straight.

Mr. STYANTS: It may be that I have not been gifted with hearing that would enable me to hear straight, but I can understand most members in this Chamber. Perhaps the member for East Perth is a little too verbose and gets his sentences mixed to such an extent that he is difficult to understand. He referred to the fact that the union was represented on the board. Evidently he has not made any inquiries as to the union's views on this matter. The branch secretary, Mr. Bradshaw, who is secretary of the Metropolitan Enginedrivers' Union, is the representative of the union on the board and this is a letter I have received from him—

Further to our recent telephonic conversation re proposed amendment to the Inspection of Machinery Act, I have communicated with Mr. Daly, our general secretary, and he has instructed me to say that he is opposed to the removal of the words "shall be a British subject" from the Act as he considers the proposed alteration would be detrimental to the workers.

Mr. Daly did not suggest a suitable amendment but admits there are a few cases of hardship which should be dealt with. When I spoke to you there was only one case which I could think of but since then several cases have been brought under my notice, particularly the case of a Dutch engineer who is now employed at Norseman and who passed the examination for an enginedriver's certificate but who cannot get his certificate till he is naturalised.

I am told that you have submitted an amendment the effect of which would be to retain the words "shall be a British subject" but which would permit the issue of certificates to ex-Servicemen who have served in the Allied Forces in World War II.

This is much more acceptable to my union than the proposal contained in the Government Bill. There are, however, a few cases which would not be covered, and, if your amendment could be adjusted to also cover workers who served in the merchant marine of the allied nations I think that would be satisfactory to all concerned.

That is the opinion of the union representative on the board. To say that he or the union is satisfied that sufficient protection is given by the board would not be in accordance with fact. It would not be any great hardship for the few genuine cases to reside in this country for five years and then take out naturalisation papers. The amendment is a sufficient liberalisation of the existing conditions. The enginedrivers' union has been very reasonable. It has opened its ranks to the nationals of countries other than those which were our enemies during the recent war. Those who have lived on the Goldfields, and even those who have not, must realise because there have been racial riots, that a good deal of racial animosity exists there. Many Southern Europeans have lived on the Goldfields for 25 or 30 years and have not thought it worth while to bring their wives and children here to become good Australians. They have not even become naturalised.

If we agree to the proposal in the Bill these people will be able to qualify as winch drivers or enginedrivers and so use machinery that is raising and lowering Australian miners to and from the bowels of the earth. Enginedriving is very responsible work. Not only the limbs, but the lives of the workmen are in the custody of the driver. We should be particular as to whom we will allow to qualify as an enginedriver. I have no keen views on the matter. I put my amendment on the notice paper because the union was prepared to go more than halfway towards meeting the wishes of the Minister. We should not go further. The amendment will admit many people that I would not like to see in charge of an engine, and as the union is prepared to agree to that I think the Committee could do so.

Mr. FOX: I do not support the Bill, or the amendment. The Act should not be opened wide for the sake of one or two people. I do not think there has ever been a dearth of enginedrivers on the Goldfields.

Mr. Styants: There are numbers of them now.

Mr. FOX: I was surprised at the union allowing this clause to go into the Bill. Mine managers in the past have brought out thousands of Southern Europeans to work in the mines, to the detriment of Australians who were seeking jobs there at the time. Of course, they might have done the Australians a good turn unknowingly. It might be possible for the

Americans who have taken control of some of our mines to bring drivers from America, and so displace numbers of our enginedrivers.

Mr. Graham: They might even displace members of Parliament.

Mr. FOX: Yes. I do not care where people come from so long as they are decent citizens and are prepared to live like Australians. The two or three envisaged here can, by living for five years in Australia, take out naturalisation papers, and they should do that. This is a very special job. We should not be in a hurry to alter the Act. Would the pharmacists or the members of the legal profession be prepared to bring down a Bill to admit all and sundry, without any examination, into their ranks?

Mr. Read: I will be working for Mr. Chifley presently.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. FOX: I oppose the amendment.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am not going to deal with the legal profession. We all agree that this Bill requires liberalising, and the amendment goes quite a distance in that respect. I appreciate the arguments put up tonight and on prior occasions, that the liberalisation should go no further. This is the most restrictive Bill I know of. It cannot burst wide open, because Section 58 still remains, and under it there is provision for the Chief Inspector of Machinery and representatives, one of whom is a union representative, to have the last word. Being Britishers they would naturally incline towards their own nationality. I know of no Bill quite as restrictive as is this one. There is no danger of unqualified people getting in, as all must show their qualifications by examination. I was not very concerned about how many men desired to be admitted under the Bill, but I read in the Press that Mr. Calwell, Commonwealth Minister for Immigration, had been going round Europe and America attempting to attract migrants to this country, not in hundreds, but in thousands. If such a migrant comes here nothing will be more infuriating than to find that, though he is skilled in some occupation, he cannot exercise his skill.

Hon. A. H. Panton: To the detriment of those already here.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: But we are asking migrants to come here. I can imagine their feelings when, on arrival, they find they must wait five years before they can become naturalised, in order to engage in the occupation for which they are qualified.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You must also imagine the feelings of the Australians whom they displace.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That raises the question of whether we should have any migrants in at all, or any of a category that might displace Australians.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Would you let an American or Dutch lawyer practise if he came here?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Mine is the only profession, members of which contribute £5 per year to give education to young people in order that they may compete with us.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is no answer to the question. Would you admit an American lawyer to practise here?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If he showed qualifications and knowledge of our law. An engine is an engine, whether in America, Sweden or Australia, but the law of Iceland differs from that of Western Australia.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It is colder there.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: An expert in Eskimo law might be singularly unfitted to advise the hon. member on workers' compensation. With those limitations, if through our Federal Minister we invite migrants to come here, they should not be placed in an under-privileged class, but should be allowed a fair chance of taking part in the normal economic and industrial life of our country. The Bill appeared to me to be complementary to the Commonwealth policy at present being actively pursued. On the other hand, it might be said that we can do what is necessary later, as need arises, and that in the meantime we have made some progress, in going as far as the amendment moved by the member for Kalgoorlie.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and passed.

Mr. STYANTS: Is it permissible under the Standing Orders, Mr. Chairman, and with the consent of the Committee, for me

to alter the words "World War II" to read "World War 1939-1945."?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Now that the words "British subject" have been left in, I think the Committee could well afford to leave the clause as it is.

The Chief Secretary: I wish to move an amendment on the amendment.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: The member for Kalgoorlie does not seem to be enamoured of the amendment. Had there been a shortage of engine drivers throughout the State there might have been a need for it.

Mr. STYANTS: I move—

That the words proposed to be inserted be inserted.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out all words after the word "or" first occurring, and inserting the words "a national of any country other than an enemy country during the period 1939-1945 inclusive" in lieu.

I think we should make the measure sufficiently wide to include those who worked in the workshops of America and other Allied countries during the war.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Are you striking out anything of the amendment of the member for Kalgoorlie?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, all the words in the amendment after the word "or" first occurring.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I hope we never hear any more from this Government about preference to ex-Servicemen.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member's policy is protection for unionists.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I did not skite about it like your mob did.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Our policy is preference to ex-Servicemen.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Yes, it sounds like it!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Apparently the member for Kalgoorlie does not altogether approve of his own amendment. I suggest that mine is more suitable as it would include men who laboured in the workshops of the nations that were not at war with us.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Seemingly the Minister is out to smash the Act in some way or other. First he tries to strike out the qualification that an applicant shall be a British subject and leave the provision open to all and sundry. We were successful in getting those words retained, and now he wants to admit any national of a country that was not at war with us. There is a nigger in the woodpile somewhere, though I have not yet been able to locate him. I hope the amendment on the amendment will be rejected.

Mr. STYANTS: I framed my amendment in those terms for good reasons. I had in mind that the only men likely to come from America to live here would be those who had been members of one of the Services, had been in Australia and had probably married or still intended to marry Australian women. In gratitude to the men who assisted to prevent Australia from falling into the hands of the enemy, we should give this consideration. I was also influenced by the opinion of the union, which admits that there are certain cases of hardship that ought to receive consideration, and the union would be satisfied with my amendment since the words "a British subject" have been retained.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The member for Mt. Marshall, as the representative for the R.S.L. in this Chamber, should approve of the amendment of the member for Kalgoorlie. I am sure he would not agree to the exclusion of Allied ex-Servicemen. It is not long since the Attorney General and the Minister for Lands stated emphatically that the Government stood for preference to returned soldiers.

Mr. Grayden: And what did you say?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: What I said was said before the hon. member was born.

Mr. Grayden: What did you do?

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Oh, nothing.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! This interjecting must cease.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Then keep the hon member quiet; I ask your protection. The member for Middle Swan need not ask what I stand for. I said I stood for preference to unionists. I shall not allow little boys in the street to bully-rag me.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I am sure the member for Mt. Marshall stands for preference to ex-Servicemen.

Mr. Leslie: Yes, 100 per cent.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The hon. member is at least consistent. He would not have the audacity to criticise a member of the Opposition who never stood for that, and then, at the first opportunity, deliberately vote against preference. When I was so rudely interrupted by the member for Middle Swan, I was about to say that the Attorney General and the Minister for Lands emphatically stated that they stood for preference to returned soldiers. Yet we find a colleague of theirs, the Chief Secretary, deliberately moving to delete preference.

The Chief Secretary: Not to delete preference.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: We are asked to delete the whole of the provision proposed for the protection of ex-Servicemen and throw the Act wide open to everyone. I challenge the Chief Secretary to insert some provision for preference in the Bill.

The Chief Secretary: With pleasure.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: At the moment, the Chief Secretary is doing his best to cut it out. If the words are to be struck out of the amendment, I hope the Committee will delete the lot and leave the Act in its present form.

Mr. GRAHAM: Members have been indulging in the old sport of tilting at windmills. The purport of the amendment is to give certain persons the right to make application for certificates.

Mr. Fox: And if they have the qualifications, they will receive certificates.

Mr. GRAHAM: The board may grant or refuse a certificate on any ground it deems desirable. There are other safeguards relating to health and a knowledge of the language. I emphasise that the amendment will merely make it possible for those additional persons to apply, not necessarily to receive certificates. The question of preference to ex-Servicemen does not enter into the argument. Preference could be exercised by the board or by the employers if they so desired, subject to the provisions of the Act, but the amendment will merely widen the scope for those who may make application for certificates.

Mr. LESLIE: I do not like the Minister's amendment, nor do I like the amendment of the member for Kalgoorlie. In fact, I do not like the Bill.

Mr. Marshall: That is better. Now we are getting somewhere.

Mr. LESLIE: The alteration proposed by the Minister will not meet the position. The lesser of two evils is the amendment of the member for Kalgoorlie.

Mr. Styants: You work out something better and I will agree to it.

Mr. LESLIE: That will be a big job.

Mr. Styants: That is what I found out.

Mr. LESLIE: The amendment would admit certain nationals, ex-Servicemen, whom I would prefer not to be admitted. How to overcome the difficulty I candidly confess I do not know.

The Minister for Education: Leave it to a sensible board instead of worrying.

Mr. LESLIE: I quite agree. The member for East Perth put the position in a nutshell when he said that the amendment only gives these people the right to apply. For the information of the member for Leederville, I definitely am not supporting the Minister's amendment.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I did not think you would.

Mr. LESLIE: By the time the Bill is returned from another place, we might be able to draft an amendment to meet the wishes of everyone.

Amendment on amendment put and negatived.

Mr. MARSHALL: This clause is the Bill and, as I said on the second reading, I object to any interference with the law as it now stands. I have not altered my view. The amendment is acceptable only insofar as it restricts the position. Incidentally, the clause is much wider than some members appear to realise. It was agreed to by the union, no doubt, because the union felt that if the Government pressed for the Bill, this was the only chance of restricting its operation. That course no doubt was inspired by the fact that the measure would cover two known cases on the Goldfields. My opinion is that if the matter were left to the union, it would decide in favour of the law as it stands. We Australians are too prone to extend consideration to people from other countries with whom there has never been a semblance of reciprocity.

Mr. Leslie: Hear, hear!

Mr. MARSHALL: I cannot imagine an American State introducing a Bill such as this to give equality to two West Australians.

Mr. Bovell: We want good immigrants.

Mr. MARSHALL: Let them come, but let us take time to ascertain what kind of citizens they will be. The Board of Trade of the United Kingdom and Ireland grants certificates to marine engineers. It also delegates to authorities of a like character in other parts of the Empire power to grant such certificates. We cannot say what nationals may be in possession of those certificates. There are engineers of all colours on some of the boats in parts of the world where I have lived. They hold certificates. All they would have to do would be to gain admission to Western Australia, produce their certificates and obtain an equivalent certificate under the Act. They could obtain a first-class engine driver's certificate, which would give them the right to drive every machine on a mine, except a winding-engine used only for raising and lowering men in a mine. They could drive a winding-engine hauling material.

I remind the Minister that he mentioned a boiler attendant and the driver of small engines, but that he omitted to say that those men were in a probationary period. We cannot debar them from subsequently sitting for an examination to obtain a first-class engine driver's certificate, unless the Minister makes some such provision in the Bill. Those men are passing through an apprenticeship. That is where they graduate from. If they are let in there under the Bill, they will go on gradually qualifying for their third and second and first class certificates, and then for their winding engine driver's certificate.

The Chief Secretary: They have to pass an examination on each occasion.

Mr. MARSHALL: I want the Committee to realise that the position today is satisfactory. Although there are only two, as far as I know, that might have to wait five years to qualify, it is better things should remain as they are, and that they should qualify in the ordinary way by getting naturalisation papers rather than that the whole scope of this law should be extended. These words are put in the Act for some reason or other, and I think they should remain.

Amendment (to insert words) put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—THE FREMANTLE GAS AND COKE COMPANY'S ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. V. Doney—Williams-Narrogin) [10.22] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is one likely to be of very considerable interest, not to say importance, to the people of Fremantle, to say nothing of the centres adjacent to Fremantle—that is, Cottesloe, parts of Claremont, I believe, Mosman Park and, I think, Applecross and Melville. The Bill covers a case where the company and the consumers are anxious to see an improvement in the gas supply and where the Government is anxious to assist to that end. The Government's purpose in introducing the Bill is that the capital of the company, which now stands at £120,000, may be increased to the not inconsiderable figure of £250,000; and also to have the borrowing powers of the company extended from the £60,000 at which it now stands to £125,000. At present, the company's works are in Cantonment-street, Fremantle, on six acres of land. The company has in mind extension and improvements in many directions, and the six acres of land is not nearly sufficient for the purpose. So it has secured some 46 acres of land in the Spearwood district and it will gradually take the works from Cantonment-street to the new site.

I understand the works have been in Cantonment-street since the inception of the company in 1886, and since then there have been considerable improvements and structural alterations. There is to be new plant and further substantial extensions are to be made. There is no room for these on the present site. I might add that the gas supplied at Fremantle today, both as to calorific value and as to pressure, is by no means good. It may be taken for granted, therefore, that the decision of the Government and the company to have more up-to-date plant and more modern buildings has the enthusiastic con-

currence of gas-users in the Fremantle area. It apparently has also, from my reading of the passage of the Bill through another place, the enthusiastic support of those members in another place who represent Fremantle. I notice that the three members speaking in turn on the Bill each, in very cordial fashion, gave it his blessing, finding meanwhile no fault whatever with it. The transfer to the new site will take place as soon as building circumstances permit. The company's intention, I believe, is progressively to transfer all activities from the present site to the new one and ultimately to close down entirely on the old site. The company's choice of the Spearwood land has, I am told, the blessing of the Town Planning Commissioner.

The Minister for Education: That is a blessing!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is a blessing indeed, apparently. The Minister in charge of town planning holds that opinion, and I dare say he knows. It should count for something; let us agree on that.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We did not hear what the Minister said. What are you going to agree on?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have intimated that what he agrees is that the new site is in every way a good one. The company claims that the new works will be among the most modern in Australia. If that claim is made good, and there is no reason why it should not be—not immediately, but progressively—then the company should be in a position to produce what is generally known as calorific value gas. Today throughout the world and as affecting all but outmoded works, the practice is that a gas authority must declare the calorific value of its gas, and must maintain that value, within certain limits. Additionally, there are further limits as to the amount of sulphur and other impurities that gas may contain. The Government will shortly ask the House to agree to a Bill which will have for its aim the imposition of those requirements upon the larger gas suppliers in this State. There are but two gas suppliers of any substance, namely, the Fremantle company to which I have referred, and the concern run by the Perth City Council. I believe there are two other companies, one of which is at Kalgoorlie and the other at Albany.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Is there any difference between the calorific value of the Perth gas and that of Fremantle?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. Were there no difference, the Bill I am foreshadowing would not be considered worthwhile. It is to bring the standard of the Fremantle gas up to that obtaining in Perth which means up to the general world standard—that these changes are being sought.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Fremantle gas is not too good.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have already admitted that the quality of the gas at Fremantle could hardly be other than of a poor quality when we remember the outdated plant there and the number of years it has been operating. The well known British firm of Woodall, Duffen has been selected to construct the new works. Construction may commence within six months, but like all construction jobs the starting date is conditioned by the degree of availability of plant, materials and, of course, suitable men.

Hon. E. Nulsen: How much will the new plant cost?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I made mention of that. I am afraid the hon. member has not been too attentive. In the unsettled economic conditions of today, the work may be commenced within six months; or it is quite possible that some three years will elapse before the new structure is completed. This is a simple Bill, drawn in simple terms. I like it myself, and I think members will too. I have pleasure in commending it to the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. T. Tonkin, debate adjourned.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Amendment.

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Local Government in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The Council's amendment is as follows:—

Clause 6: Insert after the word "of" in line 9, the words "Subsection (1) of."

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A very short explanation will suffice to satisfy members that the amendment should be agreed to.

Mr. Marshall: I do not know why the Minister did not notice this error when the Bill was in Committee.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: This amendment is brought in consequence of a point raised by the member for Roebourne, which I undertook to have looked into, as to whether if this clause were not limited to Subsection (1) of the Act, it would be possible for the driver of a tram to be asked to produce his license. I expressed the opinion that as under the Traffic Act no license was required by a tram-driver he could not be asked to produce it. On submitting the point to the Crown Law Department I was advised that that was the proper legal rendering of the matter, but in order to place the point beyond all possible doubt, it was desirable to insert the words included in this amendment. For that reason they were inserted by another place. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

House adjourned at 10.37 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 22nd October, 1947.

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

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Western Australian Trotting Association Act Amendment Bill.

QUESTION.

FREMANTLE DOCK.

As to Recommendation by Mr. Tydeman.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Has Mr. Tydeman yet made any recommendation regarding the establishment of a dock at Fremantle?

(2) If not, will the Minister arrange for him to do so?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Yes.

BILLS (6)—THIRD READING.

1, Municipal Corporations Act Amendment (No. 1).

Returned to the Assembly with amendments.

2, Milk Act Amendment.