

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Damages are not to be greater if improper things are done than if proper things are done and injury results. If the board foolishly do something that results in loss, the loss is not to be paid for.

The Minister for Lands: What more should a person want than to be paid his actual damage?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But he is not to get that. The object of the clause is to protect weak administration. If a drain is not properly cut, and the water overflows and does damage, the owner would not get compensation under this clause. Throughout the Bill the doubt is always against the landholder.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A certain amount of drainage has been done at Busselton, and no provision has been made for outlet. The work was done some considerable time before the present Government took office, and claims have been made for alleged damage. This clause says that the person who suffers damage as the result of work done by the board, or the board's officers, reasonably and in the belief that there was power to do it, shall not claim greater compensation than if the work had been done under legal authority. I am confident that there is going to be difficulty with regard to this measure, that there is going to be strong opposition to its operation. There are in this country people who want the group settlers to bear the whole cost of drainage. Certain drainage should be charged as a national work, and certain drainage should be charged to the groups, and certain drainage should be charged to private owners. The group settlers have to pay for their particular drainage, but not for national drainage. The other landholders, who have benefited from the drainage equally with the group settlers, are apparently not to be charged at all. I want it to be thoroughly understood that the Royal Commission on Group Settlement pointed out that £175,000 is to be spent in the Busselton district, and that a proportion of the amount should be charged to private owners, and, further, that unless there is power to charge that proportion to those private owners the Government are not justified in undertaking that drainage scheme. Without this clause the private owners cannot be charged. The Bill should have been passed

years ago, before we started group settlement.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 165 to 177, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

*House adjourned at 10.26 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 20th October, 1925.*

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

### QUESTION—RAILWAY COMMUNICATION, WILUNA.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What investigations, if any, or flying survey have the Government caused to be made as to a proposed railway from Nannine to Meekatharra, or Sandstone to Wiluna? 2, Have any persons been recently employed to make investigations as to the route for a railway from any point of the existing railway system to Wiluna?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, The Railway Advisory Board in 1911 reported on routes from Sandstone and Leonora to Lawlers; beyond that, no investigations have been made. 2, No.

**ASSENT TO BILLS.**

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the undermentioned Bills:—

- 1, Entertainments Tax.
- 2, Entertainments Tax Assessment.
- 3, West Australian Trustee, Executor, and Agency Company, Limited, Act Amendment (Private).
- 4, City of Perth.
- 5, Western Australian Bank Act Amendment (Private).

**MOTION—ABATTOIRS ACT.**

*To disallow regulations.*

Debate resumed from 15th October on the following motion by Hon. J. Nicholson—

That the regulations promulgated under the Abattoirs Act, 1909, published in the "Government Gazette" on the 7th August, 1925, and now laid upon the Table, be and are hereby disallowed.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.37]: Mr. Nicholson opened his speech and concluded it with the statement that the Government have increased the charges on the abattoirs in the metropolitan area by £37,000 a year. He said it was an enormous sum, and few will disagree with him on that point. It would have been an enormous sum had it any existence in reality, but it is very wide of the mark. It is difficult to understand how the figures came to be used by the hon. member. It is admitted that there is a heavy increase in the charges, but we say it is justified by several factors: by interest, sinking fund and depreciation on the capital outlay of £42,000; by losses sustained under the old regulations, and which have been provided against under the new; and by additional rent which the Government have to pay for the meat works at Fremantle over and above that which they had to pay for the old abattoirs in the same town. Let me deal first with the financial position. It will be fair to base our calculations on the numbers of stock slaughtered at the Government Abattoirs for the year ended 30th June, 1925. These were as follows:—cattle 23,274, sheep and lambs 204,266, and pigs 9,221. On this basis the comparison in round figures would be—charges under the old regulations, cattle 23,274 at 3s. 6d., £4,073; sheep 204,266 at

6d., £5,106; pigs 9,221 at 1s., £461; or a total of £9,640—charges under new regulations, cattle 23,274 at 12s., £13,964; sheep 204,266 at 2s., £20,426; pigs, 9,221 at 3s., £1,383, or a total of £35,773. This shows an increase of £26,133 instead of £37,000 as stated by Mr. Nicholson. The Government cannot meet the demand and supply the convenience of butchers without getting an equitable return. There is a total increase of £26,133, but against this are the following items: interest and depreciation of cost of extensions and additions £5,040; extra wages in chilling rooms, slaughterhouse, etc., engine-drivers, cost of electricity for power, chemicals, insurance and maintenance, £5,000; amount necessary to avoid recurrence of loss incurred under the old system, £5,000; loss of revenue owing to not being able to collect new charges until after 7th September, whilst the works operated from the 17th August, and the bulk of our expenditure started on the 1st July, the beginning of the financial year, 10 weeks, or a fifth of the year, £6,000, total £26,524. Assuming that for the current year we slaughter the same number of stock as we slaughtered last year we should, for the reasons I have given, sustain a loss of £392. Are these charges an oppressive burden on the butchers? We have only to analyse the position in order to discover that this is not so. It must be remembered that the increase of £26,133 is spread over the whole year, that is over the whole of the stock slaughtered during the year. The magnitude of the number of animals that pass through the abattoirs in the course of 12 months makes the increased cost of treatment per pound weight microscopically small. Taking the dressed weight of carcasses as, cattle 600 lbs., sheep 36 lbs., pigs 60 lbs., this works out at only a fraction over  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per lb. We must not forget that this is not taken out of the pockets of the butchers without giving them a substantial return in the shape of special services that are rendered. Before the abattoirs were opened the wholesale butchers were obliged to rent the cooling rooms at the Government Refrigerating Works adjoining the city markets, and had also to lease a big stall in the markets. The majority are now using only the cool storage provided by the abattoirs at Midland Junction, and are using the abattoir premises as their places of business. They now transact the whole of their business, even the packing of country

orders, at the abattoirs. They pay no direct rent for these facilities, and in fact pay no rent whatever for them, the cost being included in the general charges. Owing to the provision of these conveniences there would be considerable congestion at the abattoirs were it not that the Government employ more labour than would be necessary if the meat were removed to a distributing depot. Besides that, the Government have lying idle a considerable area of cool storage space at the Government refrigerating works and at the city markets. That space would not be lying idle, but would bring in revenue if corresponding facilities were not provided at the Government abattoirs at Midland Junction, and which were provided, we must remember, without any cost to the wholesale butchers additional to the fees of which Mr. Nicholson complains. We have proof in the department that some of the butchers have effected savings under the new system by availing themselves of these facilities and have saved considerably more than the extra amount they have to pay under the present abattoir charges. A great deal of noise has been made regarding the increased fees, but the butchers have religiously avoided informing the public as to the benefits and privileges they enjoy, which I have already indicated, and also by reason of the existence of an up-to-date system. In the new regulations now under discussion there are two scales of charges under which the butchers can do their slaughtering. The charges under scale "A" are: cattle, 7s.; sheep and lambs, 1s.; pigs, from 2s. upwards. Under those charges the whole of the viscera or inedible offal is retained as the property of the abattoirs. Under scale "B" the charges are: cattle, 12s.; sheep and lambs, 2s.; pigs, from 3s. upwards. Under this scale the butchers retain the whole of the viscera or inedible offal. As to whether it pays better to slaughter under scale "A" or scale "B," it depends wholly upon the quality of the stock slaughtered. If the condition of the stock is prime, it may be better to slaughter under scale "B" and retain the offal. On the other hand, if the stock is mixed or of plain condition, scale "A," under which the rates are lower, represents the more profitable one to the butchers, the abattoirs being allowed to retain the offal. The whole of the butchers slaughtering at the Government abattoirs since the regulations came into force have been slaughtering under scale "B," under

which the charges are higher. They have done so by a mutual understanding. Two or three of them have got together and the others have been influenced by their decision. It is very apparent that they must have some particular ends to serve for their extraordinary course of action. If my argument and my authorities are sound, there is not the slightest doubt that it will pay the majority of the metropolitan butchers to do the whole of their slaughtering under scale "A." Take the kill at the Midland Junction abattoirs for the week ended 10th October last. The stock slaughtered numbered—cattle, 194; sheep and lambs, 3,422; pigs, 69. The cost of killing under scale "B" was £463 19s., whereas under scale "A," which is the lower, the cost would be £245 18s., plus the value of the offal retained by the abattoirs, weighed and priced at the ruling rates, representing another £156 8s. 10d., making a total in all of £402 6s. 10d. Thus, the procedure which the butchers have decided to follow involves them in a weekly loss of about £60. Hon. members must remember that this is the flush period of the year when nearly all the stock are fattened. The butchers are deliberately incurring that weekly loss in connection with their slaughtering. I say deliberately, for they know they could slaughter under the lower scale "A." What their object is in thus incurring a loss, is best known to themselves. Later on, I am informed, 50 per cent. of the stock will be in plain condition and that frequently occurs during six months of the year. In that case, it will be more profitable for the butchers to do what they are doing now, and yet under existing conditions they are by premeditation sacrificing £60 a week! But that amount is not all. That simply represents the loss at the Midland abattoirs, but 50 per cent. of the killing is done at Fremantle. Thus, on the figures I have mentioned, the butchers are incurring a weekly loss of £120 a week, and doing that deliberately for some reason that has not yet been explained. Let me show what the result would be under the new charges as compared with the old charges for a year. Taking cattle on last year's basis—for 23,274 at 7s., we get a total of £8,145; sheep and lambs, 204,266 at 1s., £10,213; pigs, 9,221 at 2s., £922, giving a total of £19,282. This shows an increase on the old scale of £9,640. To this must be added the value of the offal that is retained by the abattoirs under that particular scale. It

is rather difficult to calculate over a year's operations, but the amount may be arrived at by a simple sum in arithmetic. If the butchers by slaughtering under scale "B," experience a loss of £60 weekly out of a total of £463, or over 12 per cent., while stock at this time of the year are at their best, the butchers will certainly lose considerably more by taking the average over the year. If we calculate the loss at 12 per cent. over the year if slaughtered under scale "B," we are quite safe in saying that the butchers will save about £4,290 per annum by slaughtering under the lower scale of charges at the Midland Junction abattoirs alone. As I have indicated, 50 per cent. of the slaughtering is done at Fremantle. Hence, under the lower scale, were those charges adopted, the butchers would save certainly not less than £10,000 a year. Thus, instead of the new charges amounting to an increase of £37,000, as erroneously stated by Mr. Nicholson, they would really amount to about £19,000, a little over half the sum quoted by that hon. member. This, spread over the year's slaughtering, represents about one-eighth of a penny per lb. Undoubtedly, £19,000 is a large sum, but as our extra cost of operating is to be £15,524, we will not have much margin left. It may be urged that we should reduce the charges under the higher scale "B," under which the butchers have decided to operate. But in making the scale "A" rates low, we retain the viscera and inedible offal which we can treat more economically in the bulk than would be possible for individual butchers to do in small parcels. The development of this branch of the work can enable the Government ultimately to make a reduction in the charges. Not only that, it will be possible to observe the health regulations. Under scale "A," the offal can be dealt with as it should be, immediately after the animal is slaughtered. There has been a suggestion that the Government should treat the offal at the abattoirs on butchers' account. That would be impracticable. No abattoirs in the world have, so far, entertained such a proposition. Separate plant would be necessary for each individual butcher in order that he might get back his own product. It would involve a big increase in staff as well as of plant necessary in order to avoid inevitable confusion. In addition to that, there is no other public abattoir in Australia—the matter can be investigated in order to see if what I say is

correct, or if I have been informed truthfully, as I think I have been—where the viscera is allowed to be removed from the abattoirs. One of the reasons that actuated the Government in constructing the abattoirs on modern lines, was to ensure that the health regulations would be observed and, in the interests of the consumer, to see that the meat was prepared for home consumption under the most up-to-date system instead of under the old slipshod and filthy style that has obtained during recent years. Nor could there be any justification for the increased price of meat if that were done. I have already shown that under the higher scale, the cost to the butcher is only a fraction over a farthing a pound, but under the lower scale it would be less than a farthing a pound—about an eighth of a penny per lb. In return for that, the butchers have cool storage free, which they did not have before, and the use of business premises at the abattoirs free, which, also, they did not have free before. There is also the possibility of eliminating the loss which the butchers admit was sustained through lack of cool storage facilities, owing to meat going bad during the summer months. Mr. Nicholson quoted the charges imposed by the Government in 1916 when the Government did all the slaughtering and said that the butchers handed over their stock to the department and received back the carcasses with all the by-products, the charge for which was then 8s. per bullock. Surely it is not fair to make a comparison between 1916 and 1925! The cost of operating ten years ago and now, owing to the advances in wages, coal, and all classes of material, is so wide that it is ridiculous to use one argument against the other. Mr. Nicholson said that in 1916, after the lapse of some months the department changed its policy and ceased doing the work. The explanation is very simple indeed. The department changed its policy because there was a change in Government. Immediately the Scaddan Government went out of power the old order of things was reverted to. Mr. Nicholson implied that the Government that succeeded the Labour administration victimised the Anchorage Meat Company. They rented space to the company at £6 per week, allowed the company to kill at their own works, and then forced them to pay the same fees as others, fees that amounted to £50 a week, although they received only £6 a week rent. That was what

the hon member asserted. I am obliged to take up the cudgels on behalf of a previous Administration. It is clear that the whole position has been misrepresented to Mr. Nicholson. In the first place, the amount paid by the Government was £6 a week, only for a period. It was £8 a week for a greater part of the time. In the second place, this arrangement was made with the object of serving the convenience of the Anchorage Company. Stock had to be killed at Government abattoirs; it was stipulated that it must be killed at Government abattoirs at that time, and the Anchorage Company's premises were made a Government abattoirs purely for the convenience of Mr. Copley, one of the principal shareholders in the company. By spending £2,000 at the Union Abattoirs, sufficient space would have been provided for the Anchorage butchers, but Mr. Copley wished to do the killing at his own works, and the Government generously acceded to his wishes. It is true that the company paid 6d. per head more for cattle than anyone else, but there was a reason for it. They were allowed to keep all the blood and manure, but they paid nothing per head for sheep and pigs. On top of that they had the benefit of the whole of their by-products and also the utilisation of the plant. My inquiries go to prove that during the last ten years Mr. Copley has had nothing to complain of, but much indeed to be grateful for, to successive Governments. The charges may, or may not, be excessive; that question will be determined at an early date. The Minister for Agriculture has given the master butchers a definite pledge that he will review the charges. Two deputations waited on him on the subject. In reply to the first, on the 17th August the Minister said that the charges would be reviewed six months from that date. After giving the matter a lot of consideration, the members of the deputation were dissatisfied with Mr. Troy's reply, and they again waited upon the Minister on the 7th September and the whole question was again fully discussed. A report of the deputation appeared in the "West Australian" of the 8th September, and on perusing it members will find that Mr. Troy concluded his remarks with these words, "I will discuss the question of offal with Mr. Johnson and I will review the charges in one month's time. You will kill under regulation (b) and leave the matter of by-products over for a week." The delegates replied,

"Yes, we agree to that." Mr. Troy asked the deputation to be patient for another month, so that he might have a basis on which to rearrange the charges, and the delegates un-animously agreed. There was not one protest raised, and yet before the month had elapsed, and of course before Mr. Troy could even make a start, an attack was launched in another place against the regulations, palpably through the influence of these butchers, or a section of them. The accountant in the Department of Agriculture is now engaged in preparing figures to enable the exact cost of operating to be ascertained. When this work has been completed, Mr. Troy will revise the charges in accordance with his pledge. If they are found to be higher than necessary for administering the abattoirs, they will undoubtedly be reduced. That has been the understanding all along. Mr. Nicholson has not proved his case. The information he has given to the House does not warrant the regulations being disallowed. His was erroneous and misleading information, due to no fault of his own, but to the fact that both sides of the case were not placed before him. Evidently he was not aware of the definite commitments of the Government in connection with the abattoirs, or the greatly added facilities the butchers now enjoy under the new order of things. I am sure he would be the last to urge that any burden imposed by the facilities that are being offered should be passed on to the shoulders of the taxpayers. All will agree with him if he contends that the Government should not make undue profit out of these works. The Government would be making undue profit if his figures were correct, but they in no sense represent the true position. I trust the House will refrain from hindering the operation of these regulations, and that it will rely on the sense of justice of the Minister to review the regulations with no unnecessary delay and with a proper regard for the rights of the butchers and the interests of the State.

On motion by Hon. J. Duffell, debate adjourned.

#### BILL—DIVORCE AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly, and on motion of Hon. A. Lovekin, read a first time.

## BILL—RACING RESTRICTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and on motion by Hon. W. H. Kitson, read a first time.

### BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Water Boards Act Amendment.
  - 2, Permanent Reserve A4566.
- Passed.

### BILL—JURY ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

### BILL—LABOUR EXCHANGES.

#### *Second Reading.*

**THE HONORARY MINISTER** (Hon. J. W. Hickey—Central) [5.12] in moving the second reading said: In submitting this Bill the Government are actuated by a keen desire to secure legislation with regard to labour exchanges that is in force in advanced parts of the world. As long as I can remember, the question of registry offices has been an aggravating one, particularly, if my memory serves me correctly, in Victoria, where investigation resulted in various Governments bringing down legislation to minimise the influence of these institutions. Whatever arguments may be advanced for the retention of private labour bureaus, I think it is generally recognised that they thrive on the necessities of the individual. At least that is my experience, and it must be the experience of those who have given any thought to the operations of these particular exchanges. I have no growl against the institutions that exist in Western Australia. I do not know the individuals who control them. So far as I can gather, those people, outside the conduct of the bureaus, are estimable, but at the same time they are entirely outside the pale so far as their operations are concerned. There are altogether 11 of these bureaus in Perth, one at Fremantle, one at Kalgoorlie, and one at Geraldton. As I have said, I have no complaint against the individuals, but I am entirely up against the system of privately-run labour exchanges. My opinion, based on experience, is that it would be for the mutual benefit of all sections of the community, and employer and employee, if these institutions were abolished and their place

taken by a State labour exchange, having for its object the bringing together of employer and employee in the same way as these people endeavour to do now.

**Hon. E. H. Harris:** To bring them together in the same way as private exchanges do now?

**The HONORARY MINISTER:** Perhaps so. The Bill should have an effect in promoting the peace of the world. I do not adopt sentiment to the detriment of something of a practical nature; but while the question of labour exchanges is agitating the minds of many people here, it is not merely a Western Australian domestic question, but one of world-wide importance. Nothing could be more conclusive of that than the evidence we have from the Geneva Conference. Though I am not one of those who are always prepared to quote all round the world in support of an argument, yet I consider that that conference was composed of some of the brightest intellects in the world, who arrived at certain conclusions. We are justified, to my mind, in giving weight to those conclusions, though it is a long cry from Geneva to Perth. I may quote article No. 2 of the draft convention on this subject—

Each member who ratifies this convention shall establish a system of free public employment agencies under the control of a central authority. Committees, which shall include representatives of employers and of workers, shall be appointed to advise on matters concerning the carrying on of these agencies. Where both public and private free employment agencies exist, steps shall be taken to co-ordinate the operations of such agencies on a national scale. The operations of the various national systems shall be co-ordinated by the International Labour Office in agreement with the countries concerned.

There is also the following recommendation—

The general conference recommends that each member of the International Labour Organisation take measures to prohibit the establishment of employment agencies which charge fees, or which carry on their business for profit.

That is practically the essence of the Bill now before the Chamber.

Where such agencies already exist, it is further recommended that they be permitted to operate only under Government license, and that all practicable measures be taken to abolish such agencies as soon as possible. The general conference recommends that each member of the International Labour Organisation co-ordinate the execution of all work undertaken under public authority, with a view to

reserving such work as far as practicable for periods of unemployment and for districts most affected by it.

Action has been taken by many countries in the direction indicated, and others are moving. The picked minds of the world having made those recommendations, surely the introduction of the Bill is justified.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: What other countries have done this up to the present?

The HONORARY MINISTER: England, Roumania, Germany, Japan, Denmark, Canada, Belgium, Greece, and some Australian States.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Have they abolished all private employment agencies?

The HONORARY MINISTER: To come a little nearer home, many of us will agree that the conduct of private employment agencies has at times been far from satisfactory. I have many experiences in support of that view, and not only experiences gained since I took charge of the State Labour Bureau. Though I do not administer the Employment Brokers Act, complaints float along to me occasionally, and I have made certain investigations. Indeed, long before I had any official connection with the State Labour Bureau, I made various investigations. It may be asked why some action has not been taken by the authorities in regard to offences committed by those conducting private employment agencies. The answer is that the law does not provide for action being taken. I have here a long list of offences committed by various private employment agencies in the city, and I know the statements made to be perfectly correct. On more than one occasion I have proved them correct to my own satisfaction. Unfortunately, however, when an inspector endeavours to get a case, the matter falls to the ground. One or two instances will not be amiss, and then it cannot be said that no case has been made for the Bill. A waitress was engaged at 25s. per week, and the employment broker charged her a fee of 12s. 6d.—pretty stiff for a position worth only 25s. per week.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is that the regulation charge?

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is a charge made by a private registry office.

Hon. J. Nicholson: But is it the regulation charge fixed by the Employment Brokers Act?

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is the charge fixed by the registry office.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is not the regulation charge half a week's wage paid by the employer and half a week's wage paid by the employee?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Fees are not fixed by any Act or regulation. The private employment broker has merely to submit to the Government a scale of the fees he charges. The Government have no power in the matter.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Cannot the Government amend the Employment Brokers Act?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Ministry after Ministry has found itself up against the same problem. Had an amending Bill been introduced, the Ministry would have been up against it just to the same extent.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Such a Bill might meet with greater support than this measure.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member interjecting has, I think, had as much experience of these matters as I have had. Here is another case: A private employment broker engaged two lads, each of whom paid him a fee of £2, to do clearing at £2 10s. per acre. The employment broker informed the lads that a good man could earn from £4 to £6 per week at that price. No fee was in that case paid by the employer. The boys only lasted two days, and were then discharged, being paid at the rate of 15s. per day, less 5s. deducted by the employer for stores supplied. These are some of many cases which come under the notice of the Government. With the law as it stands, one cannot prosecute and get a conviction. Such cases happen every day in the week. These are not isolated cases.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Why do you not regulate the private employment agencies?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No matter what one does, one is asked, "Why don't you do something else?" Ministry after Ministry has been up against the problem. Somebody has to tackle it, and the present Government have decided to take it on. Probably other methods could be adopted. The regulations could be amended, or existing legislation could be amended. However, we know how hard it is to amend an Act of Parliament; and it is just as well to deal with the problem as we now propose. No matter how we may feel with regard to registry offices, we must all acknowledge that we know of certain things with regard to their transactions. There are the cases

of waitresses, teamsters, and shearers, all of whom have been exploited.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The shearers are not exploited much.

The HONORARY MINISTER: A position as teamster was advertised at £4 a week. The case can be proved, because an attendant was present and heard the conversation. The employment broker said to the applicant, "I'll give you a job at four quid, and after you have settled up you can send me a present of a few pounds for getting it for you." Complaints were sent by the R.S.L. to the Commissioner of Police and to the Inspector of Factories; but it was impossible to trace the man, although he was written to in the country; and consequently no action could be taken in respect of the offence. Just one other case: a broker charged a kitchenmaid 8s. for a position worth 17s. 6d. a week. The girl retained the job for only a day and a half before being discharged as unsatisfactory. She was paid 7s. for the time she was there, and so the net result was that the privilege of working at that place for a day and a half cost her a shilling. Again, a broker engaged two girls as housemaids for a position at Green-bushes, wages 25s. weekly. Each paid 12s. 6d. to the broker but, on finding that they had not sufficient money for their fares, they requested a return of the fees. The broker offered them other unsuitable jobs, but he refused to return the fees they had paid. I could retail dozens of similar cases, cases of exploitation by the brokers. Those agencies are a positive menace to the welfare of the community.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Is more than one firm concerned in these examples?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, it is not confined to one firm.

Hon. A. Lovekin: There is some expense, is there not, attached to the carrying on of these little businesses?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, the cost of a table and an occasional telegram, together with the expense of keeping a record. That is about all.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: What about the horrible landlord?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: And advertising?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The majority of these places are run merely as a sideline. The whole stock-in-trade would not amount to much. Those unfortunate enough

to fall into their hands are treated as sidelines also.

Hon. A. Lovekin: And you propose to put the expense on the taxpayer?

The HONORARY MINISTER: One of the main objections to the Bill seems to be the establishment of a State monopoly. I have heard it said that this is to be another State enterprise. That is not so. I have never gone mad over State enterprises where it was possible for private enterprise to function in the interests of all concerned.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Look at Clause 9.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That deals with the whole position. I would be the last to interfere with these private exchanges if I thought they were functioning in the interests not only of employers but of employees also. Clause 9 prohibits the carrying on of the business of an employment broker with a view to reward. Clause 3 defines an employment broker as a person who for reward or gain conducts this business.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Under Clause 5 you are going to do it for nothing.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I suppose you will say next that we are scabbing.

Hon. A. Burvill: Could you not start a State labour exchange and leave the others alone?

The HONORARY MINISTER: We already have a State labour exchange. Apparently the hon. member is prepared to tolerate these private agencies. I am not. They are a menace to the community.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: They would be all right if they insisted upon preference to unionists, would they not?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member is merely drawing a red herring across the trail.

Hon. E. H. Harris: How does the State Labour Bureau compare with the private agencies in respect of number of employees engaged?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Lovekin is afraid that Clause 9 will eliminate the pastoral employment agency and the R.S.L. agency. That is not the object of the Government. I know the pastoral agency well, and although I disagree with some of the arrangements made by it I am glad to say it will not come within the scope of the Bill. That agency will continue to be run as at present.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Under the Interpretation Act that agency is a person.



The HONORARY MINISTER: Not so. We do not want the pastoral agency to come within the scope of the Bill.

Hon. J. Nicholson: But under Clause 9 that agency will be carrying on business as a private broker.

The HONORARY MINISTER: But not for profit or gain.

Hon. J. Nicholson: But it is prescribed that no person shall carry on business as a private broker.

The HONORARY MINISTER: As president for some years of the A.W.U., which is largely made up of pastoral workers, I have had a great deal to do with that agency. Since its advent it has been my business to keep in touch with it. I do not want to abolish that institution.

Hon. J. Nicholson: But the Bill will do so.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No. If the hon. member can show that an injury will be done to that institution by the Bill, we shall have to consider the position. I am advised that the Bill will not touch that institution, nor the R.S.L. agency. I am only too willing to see that justice is done to all concerned and that no injury shall be done to anybody. Another objection has been raised that the Bill is designed to compel all workers to be members of a labour organisation. That is entirely wrong.

Hon. A. Lovekin: What about the case from the Midland Junction workshops?

The HONORARY MINISTER: What was that?

Hon. A. Lovekin: A man who had been there for 20 odd years was dismissed because he was not a unionist; and he cannot join a union, because nobody will either propose or second his nomination.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think the Minister had better be allowed to explain the Bill in his own way.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I see no connection whatever between the interjection and the Bill. The man referred to will never come within the jurisdiction of the Bill. This question has been frequently raised. It has been stated that the Bill will mean compulsory unionism. I have combated that statement on numerous occasions. I think members agree that preference to unionists is a sound policy. That being so, it has been put into operation at the Labour Bureau, but not to the detriment of any individual or combination of individuals.

Unemployment occurs during the winter months, irrespective of the party that may be in power, and it is necessary for the Government to meet the abnormal conditions that then arise in such a way as to secure the best results. Men in search of work come to the city from various portions of the State and often they are connected with various organisations. Other men not connected with any organisation also come to the bureau seeking work. When men are selected for employment, preference is given on all occasions to members of an organisation regardless of what that organisation may be. Men may belong to the butchers, clerks, bakers, blacksmiths or seamen's union; it makes no difference to the bureau. It has been stated in another place and also in the Press that this is not correct. I repeat that regardless of what organisation a man may belong to, he is given preference of employment at the bureau over a man who is not a member. There may be some men who present themselves for work and are not members of an organisation. We are not going to set aside members of an organisation for those men.

Hon. A. Burvill: Therefore you are going to force every man into a union.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No; the hon. member knows that every man that works in the country is not engaged through the Labour Bureau.

Hon. A. Burvill: That will be the effect if this Bill be passed.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is quite wrong. It is only during abnormal seasons that we insist upon all employees on Government jobs being engaged through the Labour Bureau. That is done in order to relieve the glut and get a better grip of the situation than would be possible in ordinary circumstances. After that, men are probably engaged on the job. We should not have a central organisation to employ labour for the whole of the State. We should encourage men to go out into the country and apply on the jobs for work. When unemployment occurs, however, and we engage men through the bureau, we say that preference must be granted to unionists. A large percentage of the men are not members of unions. They are sent out to various jobs, but the other men go first. A few weeks ago we cleaned up the last of the Labour Bureau men, about 110, in one lot, and I do not think that 25 of them were unionists. It is said that any stick is

good enough to flog a dog with; apparently any argument is good enough to condemn the Government. It has been said that this Bill is designed to make unionists of all men. Men, however, go out to a job and are dealt with on the job.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You mean they are dealt with if they are not unionists?

The HONORARY MINISTER: That, of course, is their concern. I have been associated with jobs of this kind all my life and have not witnessed much trouble, though I did get into court once or twice over trouble of this kind. If a man is asked to join a union, generally speaking he has no qualms about doing so. If he has not the money to pay his dues, he will have it at the next pay or the pay after, and so he joins. Everyone must agree with that principle. It is erroneous to state that this Bill is designed to compel men to join unions. Anyone who has watched closely the work of the Labour Bureau during the last twelve months cannot contend that it has operated harshly. The most prejudiced individual must admit that all possible consideration has been given to every man and, as I have pointed out, every man out of work has been absorbed. A few weeks ago there was not a man, unionist or non-unionist, available to take a job in the country. That is a full and sufficient answer to the accusations made.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: On your own showing the non-unionists did not get a job until all the unionists had been provided with work.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I stand to that, too.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What about the case Mr. Lovekin cited?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Lovekin can deal with that in his own way; it has nothing to do with the Bill. I do not know that the man referred to ever presented himself at the bureau for a job; neither do I know that he was denied a union ticket. My experience has been that it is the job of the union steward to see that a man joins the union; it is not for the man to chase the union officials with his pound or twenty-five shillings.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I understand that man has got his job back.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That will not spare us from hearing more of him. It is objected, too, that this measure will deprive a number of citizens, some of them women,

of their means of livelihood and will abolish established businesses without compensation. It is true that the Bill, if passed, will have the effect of closing a number of employment agencies which have been carrying on business for varying periods and some of which are conducted by women. There are 14 licensed employment brokers in the State, but not all of them are entirely dependent on this class of business. Further, the Conference adopted a recommendation that each member of the International Labour Organisation should take measures to prohibit the establishment of employment agencies which charge fees or which carry on their business for profit, and that all practical measures be taken to abolish such agencies as soon as possible. There is ample evidence in the department to prove that these agencies, about whom some members appear rather concerned, derive almost if not the whole of their incomes, from persons seeking employment. Although entries are made in the books charging fees to employers, those fees are rarely collected, while the person seeking employment never secures an engagement until he or she has paid the broker's fee.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You might tell us the number of employees who get their railway fares paid, sell their tickets and never appear on the job.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Only three men have done that.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I know from personal experience that it has been done.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Amongst a large number of men, we are bound to find a few who are not straightforward. In my unsophisticated days I backed some of these men for railway tickets and I had to pay. Since I have been a member of Parliament I have paid on several occasions. I consider that the guarantee of a member of Parliament should not be taken by the bureau. While it is inadmissible to take a member's guarantee, he does not like to refuse an applicant.

Hon. J. Cornell: I have always been able to say no.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: But by this Bill you will increase the evil.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, I am trying to obviate this backing by individuals, and to place the responsibility upon the employee to refund the money through the employer. The percentage of fares collected has been very good. The business of employment brokers, as carried on under existing

legislation, is based on unjust and immoral premises. More than one employment broker has conveyed to me that he could not carry on his business successfully, compete with his opponents and at the same time comply with the letter and spirit of the Act. It has frequently been stated that employers have resented being charged fees for services rendered and have threatened to withdraw their patronage from brokers who have charged fees. Consequently, the broker, in order to retain his business connection, makes a charge but refrains from taking steps to collect it from the employer. I have a letter illustrating the position. I am not prepared to mention the name of the writer, but I am willing to allow members to see the correspondence privately. The following letter was written to the Chief Inspector of Factories:—

I write to ask your advice upon a point that is affecting my business as an employment broker. The hotels and restaurants, who apply to me for servants, say they do not pay fees for supplying them. I cannot understand this, as it is distinctly laid down in the Act that fees are payable on the part of employer and employee equally. Mr. Newton, of the Globe Hotel, to whom I supplied a house-keeper, informs me that he has never been asked for a fee from any office but mine, and resented my attitude when I insisted on payment. I do not in any way wish to create trouble among my competitors, but I feel I am not working on an equal footing with them if I maintain this point, which I fully intend doing. If you will advise me on this matter, I shall be most grateful.

I have several letters of a similar nature. They are more or less confidential, and one is not in a position to make use of them because they will perhaps re-act upon the individuals who wrote them. Knowing these things as I do, and as the department knows them, I hold the opinion that these institutions are a menace to the community. I am sure the ramifications of the State Labour Bureau could readily be extended, irrespective of whether these businesses are in existence or not. As things are, these private employment agencies are acting detrimentally to the people, alike to the employers as to the employees. One of them will induce a man to go to a farm or some other job, and the man may fall out with his boss, or the boss with him, and he comes back to Perth in a couple of weeks. The employment agency has collected the fee from the man. Another agency may supply someone else to that particular boss, and again collect £1. The employer does not pay his £1 but the employee does, and

so it goes on. There are only 11 of these employment agencies and they all share in this kind of thing. It is unsatisfactory to all sections of the community. If the work were carried out entirely by the State Labour Bureau, a better feeling would be brought about between employer and employee. The boss would be satisfied as well as the individual employed by him. They would not be called upon to pay any extortionate fees, such as are now being extracted from them.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Bring in a Bill to regulate the fees.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is the same old cry. There would be just as much objection to that. If the Act were to remain as it is, many amendments would be essential. Mr. Harris has several times interjected, "Why not do this or that?" The same thing may be said of every Government. It is the old argument over and over again. Out of all this hurly burly the present Government have decided to introduce this legislation, believing it to be in the best interests of all parties concerned. It will also conform to the decisions of the conference of the League of Nations and will be more in keeping with the advanced legislation of the world.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And also in conformity with the policy of one big union.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Holmes is ever prone to see the nigger in the wood pile, and voices an objection to something. There is one big union represented by those conducting these private employment agencies, and they are operating successfully, and are being aided and abetted by many people who are still anxious that they should be retained.

The PRESIDENT: One big union has nothing to do with this Bill.

Hon. A. Lovekin: It is one big bureau.

The HONORARY MINISTER: At the Labour Bureau every section of the community will be protected, every unionist, and every non-unionist, who will be given an opportunity of joining a union. I know what is in Mr. Holmes's mind. If, however, he would obtain the views of some of the people who have waited in deputation upon me, and have subsequently gone to the "Daily News" and the "West Australian," and hear from them the assistance they have had from the bureau as well as from me as representative of the Government, I feel sure he would learn that they have been well satisfied that they have had

the best of treatment, that there is no intimidation meted out towards them, and that they received every help. Only from Mr. Lee, the king of the Communists, whom I kicked out of my office, might Mr. Holmes be able to obtain a different opinion.

Hon. J. Cornell: I thought the Communists were against it.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member is not obliged to answer interjections.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Bill is an honest attempt to bring about the better organisation of our industries, and to co-ordinate or consolidate the industrial ramifications of the State. If the Labour Bureau is given a little more power, its operations can be most effectively extended. Reverting to one of Mr. Holmes's interjections, I would point out that from the 1st July of this year to the 19th October, there were 2,361 engagements out of 4,004 registrations at the Labour Bureau, 1,012 of these being Government engagements and 1,349 being private engagements. From the 1st July, 1924, to the 19th October, 1924, there were 3,334 registrations, 1,770 engagements, 343 being Government and 1,427 private. For the 12 months ended the 30th September last there were 6,374 engagements, 1,554 being Government and 4,820 private, while for the same period in the previous year the number of engagements was 5,303, the Government engagements being 1,369 and private 3,934.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You told us that all Government men had to be engaged there.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. All Government employees were engaged at the bureau for two or three months, but they represent only about a fifth of the total number of engagements. It is in respect of the private engagements that the Labour Bureau will fill such an important position, if this Bill passes. When all the work is done at the State centre, it will obviate the continual agitations that arise from time to time on the part of people who have asked for the elimination of the private employment agencies. No great hardship will be done to these private people if the Bill passes. They have been placed under no great expense, and in many instances the business is treated as a sideline.

Hon. A. Lovekin: What does the State Bureau now cost?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I cannot say offhand. It is the most economically run institution in the Government service. I am sometimes ashamed to find the officers there working so hard and at such high pressure, but it must be remembered that at other times of the year they do have a little relaxation. I have given careful consideration to the Bill from all angles. I am sure that if it is passed and the existing Government institution is enlarged in scope, though not necessarily at much greater expense, we shall have a bureau to be proud of, one that will give satisfaction to all concerned, and be of immense benefit to the State. I commend the Bill to the House and move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. Lovekin, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 20th October, 1925.*

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

### ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read, notifying assent to the undermentioned Bills:—

1. City of Perth.
2. Entertainments Tax.