and salaried officers as a means of recuperation after a long period of strenuous service. If that policy is not rigidly enforced the benefits that it is supposed to give are missed by both the officers and the Government, as those concerned do not obtain relaxation when it is due. It is a matter of regret that we have to maintain such a large body of temporary officers in the State Public Service.

Hon. A. Thomson: Some have for so long been temporary officers that they should long ago have been made permanent.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Although they are valuable officers in the service of the State, some of them could not pass the necessary examinations. The position is due largely to the necessity of putting on temporary officers during the war to replace others who had enlisted. It is a difficult problem which will give much concern to both the Government and the Public Service Commissioner. I am sorry to say that a large number of our officers are leaving the State service in order to join that of the Commonwealth, but I suppose the explanation is that the Commonwealth service is now better paid and more attractive. The remaining clauses of the Bill, as I have said, contain safeguards and aim at preventing as far as possible, officers—and particularly key officers—piling up long-service leave. I have no hesitation in supporting the second reading.

On motion by Hon. G. Fraser, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 14th October.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.42 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 7th October, 1947.

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

QUESTION.

WHEAT.

As to Continuance of Acquisition by Commonwealth.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (on notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has he communicated with the Commonwealth Government to ascertain—

(a) Whether it is the intention of the Commonwealth Government to extend for a further period that portion of the Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act, 1947, which applies to wheat?

(b) Whether the Commonwealth Government intends to acquire that portion of the 1947-48 crop which will in the ordinary course be delivered to country sidings prior to the terminating date of the Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act, i.e., 31/12/47?

(2) If he has communicated, what are the replies?

(3) If he has not communicated, will he communicate by telegram for an early reply?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Reply not yet received.

(3) Answered by (1).

I understand that at the Premiers' Conference it was agreed to extend the Commonwealth Act for another 12 months, but I have wired to have that confirmed.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Section "A" 1947.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of Section "A" of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1947. It will be laid on the Table of the House.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Constitution Acts Amendment (Re-election of Ministers) Bill.

BILL—MAIN ROADS ACT (FUNDS APPROPRIATION).

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. V. Doney—Williams-Narrogin) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: This relatively small Bill is being submitted to permit a division of water board areas into sub-areas and to enable a differentiation in rating to be effected. Under the existing statute there is no distinct provision for this purpose. Consequently, rates must in all cases be assessed on a uniform basis on all blocks within a water board area—that is all blocks to which reticulated water is available. Today, the rate can, with the consent of the Governor, be assessed up to 3s.; but whether it be 3s. or anything less than 3s., the rate must be the same in all parts of the area, irrespective of conditions where, in the interests of equity, a variation in the general rate is plainly called for.

In the Goldfields Water Supply Act, as I presume most members know, provision is made under Section 20 for the division of the water board area into districts and those districts are used as a basis for the differential rating to which I am referring. No such provision as that appears in the Water Boards Act. Why such a provision does not exist I do not know, but obviously it should have been made a long while ago. Be that so or not, it is desirable to have a similar arrangement under the Water Boards Act because it has been found that circumstances might readily arise whereby differential rating would be both expedient and necessary, not to say fair; and particularly would that be so in the case of dual towns or dual centres of smaller size than towns where both are served by the one board, and where the cost of supply in the case of one town or centre might be higher or lower than that of the other town or centre.

A case in point has arisen at Busselton where the local water board is quite willing to serve an area in the West Busselton district which is outside the existing water board area and where the water board—which in this case happens to be the Busselton Town Council—is quite willing to make that supply provided a differential rating can be assessed. It can easily be seen that the one alternative to such a differential rating would be the formation of another water board, quite independent in administration, although perhaps dependent in the matter of its water supply. It will be appreciated that there would be no sound reason in favour of that proposition, seeing that it would entail a duplication of overhead expense, as well as the general running costs and would therefore, without doubt, be entirely uneconomical.

It is thought most desirable—I know the House will appreciate this point—that where at all possible centralisation of control should exist, particularly when the source of supply of the water is one and the same in the two or more cases concerned. This, I might add, is the position at Busselton and the adjacent area of West Busselton. The case to which I am referring is well within the knowledge of the member for Sussex and he—if no one else

—is likely to appreciate the need that exists, or at all events to appreciate it later on if events take a certain turn. The Bill was not drawn specifically to meet the position at Busselton and West Busselton, but to serve the situation that might arise there under certain contingencies, and to provide for similar situations elsewhere, if and when they arise. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

BILL—TOWN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Hon. A. F. Watts—Katanning) [4.43] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is really the result of consultations which have taken place between the Minister for Local Government—that is myself—and the Perth City Council, and aslo, to a lesser degree, the result of representations which have been made by other local authorities concerning similar aspects of the Town Planning and Development Act. In order to arrive at a proper understanding of the position I think it may be necessary for me to traverse, to some extent, the history of the negotiations between the Perth City Council and the several Ministers for Works or other Ministers who have been in charge of the Town Planning and Development Act over a period of something like ten years, because the amendments that are proposed in this Bill, although not of an extensive character, are necessary, in my view, before real co-operation—which is most desirable—can be obtained from certain local authorities and the Perth City Council in particular, in the face of difficulties that arise in relation to town planning in the metropolitan area.

In June 1938, following protests by a number of industrial and business firms against the desire of the City Council to zone by bylaws under the Municipal Corporations Act, a conference was held between the Minister and his officers and representatives of the City Council. That was a little over nine years ago, and as the result of that conference the Minister remained of the opinion that the proposals of the council should be given effect to as a scheme under the Town Planning and Development Act, and was convinced t even if bylaws were approved Parliam would probably wish to know—when th bylaws were tabled—why in the circu stances the Town Planning and Devel ment Act had not been implemented. T Minister, who at that time was Hon. Millington, asked the council to inform h of the reasons which actuated it in decidi that to have a bylaw was preferable to t ing action under the Town Planning a Development Act.

After a further conference the Minis stated quite definitely that—based on t advice of the Solicitor General and t powers contained in the Town Planning a Development Act— it was essential that t council's proposal should be promulgated a scheme under the Act, which provi safeguards for ratepayers, gives pro prior notice of the intention of the coun to take action such as zoning, gives an i terested party who has rights opportun of having those rights and queries arisi under them examined before the scheme c become effective, and generally has att butes that bylaws do not possess, in th bylaws can be put into operation witho any prior notice and merely by gazettal, a are in operation until they come befo Parliament and are laid upon the Table the House, when they may go through t system of disallowance and re-gazettal amended form if any complaint or dispu arises. In any event, those complaints a disputes are not, in my opinion, proper investigated under that system, where under the Town Planning and Developme Act, with the statutory notice and oth requirements, ample opportunity is ava able for those who are concerned to ascerta their exact position under the scheme a to make provision or protest accordingly.

The Minister of the day expressed t wish that the council should seriously unde take the work of giving effect to what w undoubtedly the intent of Parliament wh the Town Planning and Development A was passed some 20 years ago. Nothi eventuated in that regard, and in 1942 further conference was held between t Town Planning authorities and the buildi committee of the municipal council of Pert and on the report of that conference t Minister noted that the possibilities of t scheme looked more hopeful, but in Februa

1943 the council expressed regret at the delays caused by the clarification of the legal aspects, which it felt were of considerable importance.

By that time, of course, the war position had become desperate and naturally no-one would then have expected results to be achieved until the conclusion of hostilities. So nothing further was heard from the council until October, 1946, when strong representations were received from the legal advisers of certain firms and institutes and the Chamber of Commerce, urging that a town planning scheme be prepared and finalised, and strongly opposing any activity or legislation by bylaw. The protest culminated in February, 1947, in a deputation to the then Minister for Works, the member for Northam, from the City of Perth Ratepayers' Association, the Real Estate Institute, the W.A. Chamber of Manufactures, and the Perth Chamber of Commerce, all of whom urged that any town planning control for the City of Perth should be established by a town planning scheme, and they opposed any control by bylaws.

At that date, the City of Fremantle had made arrangements to prepare a town planning scheme for its area and had not suggested a system of control by bylaws. No decision was reached with regard to the deputation, although, so far as I can ascertain, there was no indication of any change of attitude on the part of the then Minister as against the attitude adopted by his predecessor, Hon. H. Millington. The Government having changed, the problem was revived and was submitted by the present Minister to Cabinet, and it was decided that in view of all that had passed, in view of all the circumstances of the case and the provisions of the Town Planning Act, as opposed to bylaws, it was not desirable to have bylaws prepared and that a town planning scheme must be prepared.

Events then moved fairly quickly. The necessary order was prepared under the signature of the Minister, as provided by the Act, with the object of giving notice of that decision in the statutory way to the Perth City Council. On representations being made by the council, the actual presentation of the order was deferred—and still is deferred, because of the negotiations that have taken place since—pending a further and final conference, at which I took the chair, with the Town Planning Board, the Lord Mayor and, I think, seven councillors of the City of Perth forming two of that body's committees. At the conference, the council urged that amendments to the Act were deemed necessary to enable the town planning scheme, as requested, to be put into effect. The council then submitted a number of amendments, although these seemed to go beyond the matters that had been fully discussed at the conference.

An endeavour was made to impress upon the representatives present at that gathering the fact that town planning in such a city as Perth and in the circumstances existing in Perth was something that should be as far as possible a co-operative arrangement between the local authority, or local authorities concerned and the State Government. Time was when the interests of Governments in transport, water supplies, electric supplies and many other things, which are closely connected with and concerned in town planning, were not the province of State Governments or of any superior Government. They were either the province of private enterprise or, to some restricted degree, the province of local authorities. Nowadays, however, it is unquestionable that the problems associated with transport and the other matters I have mentioned are completely bound up with the administration of superior Governments, because many of the enterprises are under the control of Governments or of boards set up by statute and responsible to the Government. Therefore, no successful scheme could be operated which did not take into consideration the relative needs and difficulties, not only of the local authorities and their ratepayers, but also of the various instrumentalities for which the State Government was responsible.

Therefore, quite apart from the fact that, under the statute itself, the Minister as representing the people was entitled to express his opinion and take action within certain defined limits on any proposals that were made, the exigencies of the case demanded that there should be the closest cooperation in any activities that were indulged in. I stated that, if it were established that it was beyond the capacity of the Perth City Council, either from the point of view of physical resources, which are limited, or financial resources, which also present some

difficulties, to proceed forthwith to implement a town planning scheme in all its ramifications, we would be prepared to amend the law.

So the first amendment in the Bill is to ensure that a town planning scheme can include any purpose set out in the First Schedule to the Act, not, as has been contended, a scheme being required to include all the many and varied purposes set out in the Schedule. Although it has been contended by the Perth City Council's legal advisers that it is not possible now, it will be possible, if this Bill becomes law, to commence a zoning scheme as part of the town planning scheme without having to carry out or attempt to provide at the same time the financial resources that would be required for the remainder of the town planning items included in the Second Schedule. The Act at present provides that the Minister, upon any infraction of the town planning scheme taking place by a local authority, may issue a mandamus or order requiring that the scheme shall be carried out according to the instructions or order issued by the Minister. Apparently, no appeal to a judge of the Supreme Court or any other legal authority is permissible. The Perth City Council and one or two other local authorities have made representations that in such circumstances they should be permitted to submit a decision of that nature, which might be fraught not only with practical problems but also with legal ones, to a judge of the Supreme Court before the order of the Minister should become final and conclusive.

I feel that no Minister of the Crown would desire to be placed in the position of an autocrat in a matter of this sort. I imagine that any Minister, in the circumstances that might arise along the lines I have indicated, would be only too glad to have the matter reviewed by a judge of the Supreme Court before a final decision was arrived at. The City Council, if I remember rightly, suggested that such an application should be made to a judge in Chambers, which, of course, would be in the nature of a private hearing, but it seems to me that such a matter would affect a considerable section of the public, and possibly Government instrumentalities as well, and that therefore any hearing of that nature should take place in open court. Therefore the Bill does not provide for hearing in Chambers.

The third amendment to the Act is solel to rectify a typographical or draftin error in Section 30 (3) of the Act. Th Government, like its predecessors in offic regards the preparation and finalisation o a town planning scheme for the City o Perth as a most important work in whic there ought to be as little delay as pos sible. The starting of the scheme wil necessitate a civic survey. I understan most of the data is available at the offic of the Perth City Council, and I hav informed the council that the services o the Town Planning Commissioner and o the board, so far as is practicable, wil be placed at its disposal; because on th planning of the City of Perth I woul say there depends to a degree the planning of a great part of the metropolitan are and the future prevention of the City o Perth from falling into the state int which other and older cities in other part of the world have fallen. Here we hav an opportunity for the making of a beauti ful city, which is really moving along t that destiny.

There should be no hesitation on th part of any of us on the one hand i desiring that that work should be put i hand, and on the other of ensuring tha it is within the capacity of the local authori ties to undertake the work within a reas onable time. The interests of the loca authorities should be conserved; the in terests of the ratepayers undoubtedl should be conserved; and, as I have said the interests of Government instrumentali ties may require some conservation. I view of the strong protests which hav been made against bylaws and of the equally strong requests for a town plan ning scheme, the Government has agreed t introduce this measure. It contains three amendments, two of which have been asked for by the Perth City Council. Our advisers believe that all of the amendments are required to enable the Perth City Council to implement a town planning scheme in co-operation, as far as practicable, with the Government departments concerned. For those reasons, I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

BILL—LAW REFORM (COMMON EMPLOYMENT).

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth [5.3] in moving the second reading said: This is a further measure for the purpose of law reform in relation to the general law of the State, and it may be the last measure of the kind that I will bring forward this session. The Bill is a short one, but it deals with a principle of some importance, especially to employees. A general rule of the law is that an employer is liable to any person injured by the negligence of an employee when that negligence occurs in the course of the employee's employment. If, for example, an employee is driving a bus for a bus company and the bus is driven negligently and knocks down somebody in the street, killing or injuring him, then the bus company can be sued for the negligence of the driver. In other words, the employer can be made liable to the injured person for the negligence of his employee. But to this rule, which is the general rule, there grew up an exception, which was that an employee, who was injured by the negligence of another employee, could not sue the master or employer because the negligent employee and the injured employee were in what is called common employment.

The theory was that when an employee accepts employment in some establishment or undertaking where there is another employee or other employees, then he accepts the risk of that employment, and he accepts the risk that he might be injured by the negligence of a fellow employee. According to that exception to the general rule, if an employee is so injured by the negligence of a fellow employee then the injured employee has no right against the employer because, on the theory of the rule, by working in that employment he has accepted and agreed to take the risk that he might be injured by the want of care of one of his fellow workers.

In the beginning of last century there was a very great growth of industrialisation in England. Factories sprang up everywhere and England laid the foundations of the enormous manufacturing undertakings which were a feature of the English economy at the end of the last century and the beginning of this one. But in those earlier days of the development of England's industrial strength, some alertness was shown to find means by which there should be an immunity from liability in cases where employees might be injured; and one of the exceptions made was the one I mentioned, namely, that when an employee accepts a position in an undertaking which has a number of other employees he impliedly accepts the risk that he might be injured by the want of care of a fellow employee. The exception means that, having accepted that risk, if he is so injured he has no remedy against the employer.

The anomaly about that rule is that an employee, who is negligent and whose negligence injures a third person, makes his employer liable to that third person to compensate him for the injury; but if the employee, being negligent, injures a fellow employee then, by reason of the exception to the general rule I have mentioned, the master—or the employer, as I prefer to say—is not liable to the injured employee because he is deemed to have accepted the risk that he might be injured by the carelessness of another employee of the same undertaking. If I might give an example: Suppose that A, who is the employee of B, negligently handles a pipe of compressed air, loosens the nozzle and allows the compressed air to play full on to C, a fellow-servant, causing injury to C, then C, the injured worker, in those circumstances has no claim for compensation or redress against the employer; and the reason for his inability to obtain compensation is the rule of common employment and the theory that the employee accepts the risk of negligence on the part of a fellow employee.

But if the person injured by the compressed air being negligently turned on him was not an employee, but simply somebody who might be there on business—some third person—then he, as the injured person, would be able to sue the employer and hold the employer liable for the negligence of the employer's servant who carelessly handled the compressed air apparatus. So we have the anomaly that the same act of negligence gives no right of compensation to a fellow employee of the negligent man, but would give a right of compensation to a third person, although the negligence in both cases would be of the same character. As time went on, that very unsatisfactory state of

affairs came to be remedied to some extent. The first remedy was made by the Act known as the Employers' Liability Act (No. 3 of 1894).

There a series of limitations was imposed on the common employment rule, these being mainly that the employee would be allowed to receive compensation from the employer for the negligence of a fellow workman if the negligent employee were in some position of authority, for instance, if he had been a superintendent of the works or if he had been authorised to give orders which the injured workman was bound to obey. The protection given by that Act was related mainly to that class of case where the negligent employee had some position of authority over the injured employee, or where the injury to the man who was hurt arose in consequence of faulty regulations or orders which had been issued by the employer himself.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How long is it since a case was brought under this law?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The member for Fremantle has put his finger right on the point. I have no recollection of ever having seen a case under the Employers' Liability Act; and for that reason I am going to suggest to the House that we might very well repeal it. The next step in the law was the Workers' Compensation Act. That Act gave a remedy against the employer irrespective of whether the injury which the workman sustained was caused by a fellow employee's negligence or not. So the Workers' Compensation Act to a large extent gave an injured employee the right to recover compensation from the employer and prevented the injured employee from being debarred by the exercise of the doctrine of common employment to which I have referred. But the Workers' Compensation Act affords only a limited redress; a man cannot recover more than £750.

Under the Workers' Compensation Act, of course, the injured workman does not have to prove negligence; he merely has to prove the accident and he can recover compensation under the Act even in the absence of any negligence at all. But suppose there is negligence on the part of a fellow employee, the injured worker, while he is protected to the extent of £750, by the Workers' Compensation Act, cannot get more, though his injury may have been worth much more than that to him. So the common employment rule may still prejudice or defeat the right of an injured worker to recover adequate compensation for an injury he has received.

The object of the Bill is finally to abolish this doctrine of common employment, and to allow an injured employee to have the same right to get compensation for an injury sustained through a fellow workman's negligence, as exists in any third person, or outside person, who may be injured by negligence in the same circumstances. It is to put an employee in the same position as anyone else, and to give him the same right to recover damages for injuries sustained through the negligence of anyone else, whomsoever. The doctrine of common employment was abolished a good while ago in New South Wales. That State, by its Workers' Compensation Act, took occasion to do away with that doctrine. I am not aware of the position in the other States, but it is considered to be an obsolete doctrine—an exception to the general rule—which can operate prejudicially to an employee in certain circumstances, and I think it should now finally be done away with, and this Bill is brought down for that purpose.

I might draw attention to a reference in the "Juridical Review," a Scottish publication. The extract I wish to read is contained in Volume 58, No. 2, published in August of last year, where a recent edition of a well known textbook, "Winfield on the Law of Tort," was being reviewed. It is as follows:—

> "The Law of Tort," as the learned author points out, "certainly exemplifies Disraeli's opinion: 'Change is inevitable. In a progressive country change is constant.'" This edition bears eloquent witness to that fact, for apart from development of the law by important judicial decisions, there has been, since the previous edition appeared, the considerable amendment in the law of negligence effected by the Law Reform (Contributory Negligence) Act, 1945. And in July of this year, subsequent, that is, to the publication of this book, another and long-delayed reform has at last been approved: a departmental committee, appointed under the chairmanship of Sir Walter Monckton, K.C., to consider alternative remedies where a person employed on a contract of service is injured in the course of his employment, has recommended the abolition of the doctrine of common employment.

When that journal spoke of the Law Reform Act of 1945 it was referring to the measure which was incorporated in a Bill considered and passed by this House during this session. But it also shows that an authoritative committee in England, under the chairmanship of Sir Walter Monckton, recommended that the doctrine of common employment should be abolished from English law. As I have said, that has already been done in New South Wales. I recommend to the House that this anomalous doctrine be abolished in this State. Further, the Bill proposes to abolish the Employers' Liability Act, 1894, because if the House approves of this measure there will be no need for that Act which was designed to mitigate the unfairness of the common employment doctrine. If this Chamber is prepared to abolish that doctrine, then the need for the Employers' Liability Act will disappear, and if it does disappear there will be no need for it to remain longer on the statute-book. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. B. Sleeman, debate adjourned.

BILL—PUBLIC TRUSTEE ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BUSH NURSING TRUST ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [5.23] in moving the second reading said: This Bill has a short history which I think I should convey to the House as a background to the reason for it. In 1920, the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John, in England, made available a considerable sum of money to be applied in Australia to such charitable purposes as the Governor General should approve. The reason for this munificent gift from these two organisations in England was expressed in the following terms:—

The British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England as a recognition and appreciation of the support given by His Majesty's Dominions overseas to their objects during the Great War and with a view of establishing or assisting public charitable funds and institutions in the Commonwealth and the curing and alleviating of ill health and human suffering primarily of members of His Majesty's forces and others resident or sojourning in the Commonwealth and lately engaged in War Service in the Great War and their respective dependants but also generally of the residents of the Commonwealth lately remitted large sums to the Governor General to be applied at his discretion in or towards public charitable purposes of which he approved.

Thereupon the then Governor General of Australia, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, made available the sum of £15,000 for this State, and he directed that it should be used—

In or towards establishing maintaining and extending from time to time a Bush Nursing Scheme in and throughout such districts and places in Western Australia as the Trustees may in their discretion from time to time think proper.

The foundation of the £15,000 fund for use in this State was a deed of trust dated the 5th October, 1920. The original trustees of the fund were Sir Walter Kingsmill, Mr. A. J. Monger, Mr. Alfred Carson, Sir Hal Colebatch, and Mr. Philip Collier. The deed of trust provided that there should be from time to time, as a trustee of the fund the Minister for Health of the State and the Leader of the Opposition of the State, and three other trustees. The trustees carried on their duties and applied the fund for the purpose of bush nursing in this State, and acquired and established some hostels in outlying districts. In 1936, in order to facilitate the work of the trust, an Act of Parliament, now known as the Western Australian Bush Nursing Trust Act, 1936 was asked for, and obtained from this Parliament. Members will find in the schedule to that statute the original deed of trust which constituted the fund in this State. In the Act, the trustees of the Bush Nursing Trust are made a body corporate and, also in it we find—

"Fund" means the assets and investments from time to time representing the trust moneys originally paid over to the trustees named in the deed of trust.

Up to 1944—a matter of 24 years—the trust was carried on in a helpful way, in our country districts, but with certain limitations which were inevitable and of a kind that I will mention later. For the purpose of carrying on the trust, the work of the

founding and conducting of hostels was deputed to a committee called the Bush Nursing Committee. That committee consisted of representatives of the Silver Chain District Nursing Association, the Western Australian Division of the Red Cross, and the State Commissioner of Public Health. That committee, in conjuction with Mr. Alfred Carson, did the operative work of the Bush Nursing Trust from 1920 to 1944. I desire to inform Parliament that the great credit for the work of the fund must be given to the late Mr. Alfred Carson.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Hear, hear!

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am sure the member for Leederville, who was for many years a trustee of the fund, will agree with me when I say that Mr. Carson rendered magnificent service to the cause of bush nursing in this State over many years. In 1944, Mr. Carson's health became affected to some extent owing to his age, and he recommended the trustees to delegate the operative work of the trust to the Silver Chain District and Nursing Association. That body thereupon amended its rules and the scope of its objects to include bush nursing schemes. Following upon Mr. Carson's recommendation, the Silver Chain District and Bush Nursing Association became the delegate of the trustees of the Bush Nursing Fund to carry out the work of the trustees.

Not long afterwards Mr. Carson died, and the Silver Chain association has continued to carry out the operative work of the trust. The trustees of the Bush Nursing Trust then met and came to the conclusion that it would further the interests of the fund and the trust, as well as carry out the intention of the original donors if the fund were transferred absolutely to the Silver Chain District and Bush Nursing Association. The reason was that, as the matter now stands, there are two bodies dealing with the fund—the trustees on the one hand, and the Silver Chain District and Bush Nursing Association on the other, the association doing the real work in the field for the trust, keeping accounts and so on. The trustees, of which the Leader of the Opposition is now one, felt that, as a body, they were under severe limitations because if the trust were to be thoroughly effective and its influence to extend, it was necessary to secure money both as capital and for running purposes.

The trustees being very busy men with official duties to perform, are not as able to go out and raise funds in the same way as are those associated with the Silver Chain District and Bush Nursing Association. It was felt by the trustees, and so decided by them, that it would help bush nursing in this State and be in the interests of the fund, which has now grown to £23,000, if the fund itself were transferred to the Silver Chain District and Bush Nursing Association, which would then not only do the field work but would be the actual trustees of the original fund, the present trustees no longer having any responsibilities or duties in connection with it. The Silver Chain association has been operating in Western Australia for 38 years. It has a very fine record of service in the metropolitan area and of late years has established many facilities and provided much assistance for people in the more outlying districts. It is controlled by representative citizens in whom the fullest confidence can be placed. The Silver Chain organisation itself is an association in which the late Mr. Alfred Carson was deeply interested for many decades.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Are the officers of the Silver Chain association elected each year at the annual meeting?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is the only danger I see in it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not know what danger there would be.

Hon. A. H. Panton: There is always a tendency for a few people to get together to have certain persons elected.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: At any rate, they know good workers and have elected the same people year after year.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I do not object to that by any means, but I have had one or two experiences in similar matters.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The original trust of 1920 was signed by Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, the then Governor-General of the Commonwealth, and he decided the basis upon which the fund should be established in this State. It was considered by the trustees of the Bush Nursing Association that no change should be made in that respect without consulta

tion with the present Governor-General. The matter was therefore referred to him and the various reasons for the sugested change placed before him. The result was that His Excellency the Governor-General, Mr. McKell, on the 9th August of this year, wrote to His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor of Western Australia in these terms—

I have the honour to again refer to Your Excellency's despatch dated the 30th May regarding the appointment of the Silver Chain District and Bush Nursing Association Incorporated as sole trustee to hold the assets and administer the trusts of the Western Australian Bush Nursing Trust. I acquiesce in this proposal and my constitutional advisers suggest that such appointment and the transfer of assets and discharge of present trustees be effected by an amendment of the Western Australian Bush Nursing Act, 1936, or by such other legal method as the trustees shall be advised is proper.

It is thought that the proper course is to proceed by way of an amendment of the original Western Australian Bush Nursing Trust Act of 1936. The Bill therefore is for the purpose of transferring the assets of the trust to the Silver Chain Association which will then accept the liabilities and be able to exercise the powers that at the present time are undertaken by, and are vested in, the trustees appointed under the original trust. The present trustees, as I mentioned previously, feel that as they are a body of men with official positions and other active duties in various directions, they could not facilitate the work of the trust in the same way as an organisation of tried experience and undoubted standing such as the Silver Chain District and Bush Nursing Association. In these matters I have had the advantage of the views of the Minister for Lands, who is also a trustee of the Bush Nursing Trust. I have explained the position at some length so that members may know the background of this proposal, which I feel will be in the interests of the fund and its objects. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

BILL—COMMONWEALTH POWERS ACT, 1943, AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 2nd October.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [5.40]: The Bill is designed to delete from the Commonwealth Powers Act the word "wheat" where it appears in paragraph (c) of Section 2. The Commonwealth Powers Act of 1943 was debated in this Chamber at considerable length; in fact, I feel sure I can say it was debated at very considerable length. Upon whatever powers were referred by this Parliament to the Commonwealth, there were imposed important and very definite limitations in respect of their reference. Those powers were not in any way to be regarded as permanently referred, and provision was made in the Bill, which became the parent Act, to the effect that any amendment necessary for the repeal of the Act or any portion of it, required a constitutional majority of both Houses to allow of any alteration contemplated. There is a further provision with regard to paragraph (c) of Section 2, to the effect that any power added to those referred can be so added only after being passed by motions of both Houses of Parliament. With respect to any amendment which amounts to the deletion of any authority now vested in the Commonwealth Government, a simple Bill only is required such as that introduced by the Minister.

The purpose of the amendment in this instance is to make provision in anticipation of the passing by the State Parliament of a Bill which would become an Act to authorise State control of a compulsory wheat pool. It is important to realise that there are very earnest and decided opinions upon the wisdom of any attempt on the part of the State to deal with matters covered by the Bill and relating to transactions in wheat. It is in the anticipation of the passing of such a Bill and of the Commonwealth not continuing in control of wheat under the Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act that the proposal is advanced to delete the word "wheat" from the Commonwealth powers authority. The important part is set out in the preamble of the Bill which states clearly that the measure shall come into force on a date to be fixed by proclamation. It may never come into force.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is so.

Hon. F J. S. WISE: The Wheat Marketing Bill, to which the measure under discussion is complementary, is also to become law on a date to be fixed by proclamation.

Otherwise the two Bills introduced to amend the Commonwealth Powers Act will be of no effect nor yet will be the Bill to amend the Wheat Marketing Act. I cannot anticipate the debate on the Wheat Marketing Bill but I presume there will emerge in the course of the discussion arguments both in support of the measure and in opposition to its proposals. The reasons for that are obvious and many. It is not my desire to anticipate what they may be. It has been considered very necessary that the Commonwealth Government should control wheat both under the National Security Regulations promulgated under the Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act and under the Commonwealth Powers Act. It is obvious that the combined organisations of all the States in regard to wheat surpluses had a very important angle from the Commonwealth-wide point of view.

It is necessary that this Bill and the one complementary to it be passed in the event of the Wheat Bill becoming law and being proclaimed, rather than have a collapse because of Commonwealth authority lapsing. It is within the province of this Parliament to withdraw from Commonwealth authority anything that was referred in the Commonwealth Powers Act of 1943. The list in the Commonwealth Powers Act of 1943 is a considerable one, including such matters as profiteering, rationing, family allowances and other matters that received great attention from the Commonwealth during the latter years of the war. It is quite within the province of Parliament this session, or at any stage, to take from the Commonwealth powers and authorities vested in it by the legislation of 1943. This is the first move on the part of this Parliament for the purpose of arranging that the Commonwealth shall have no authority over wheat, should the Bill now before the House be passed in the near future.

The Minister for Agriculture: And be proclaimed.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Of course, though under the wording of the Bill, it may never be proclaimed.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is so.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Once the Wheat Bill passes both Houses, Parliament will have no say in regard to the proclamation of the Act. It will then be a question for the Government in anticipation of establishing a compulsory pool for the merchandisi of wheat. I have no objection to the Bi but I think it unavoidable that all aspec of wheat marketing and its Australia-wi implications will be discussed under t Wheat Bill itself.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: To pass this Bill, an a solute majority is required. I have count the House and there is an absolute majori present. There being no dissentient voi the question passes in the affirmative.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—COMMONWEALTH POWERS ACT, 1945, AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 2nd October.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [5.50] In 1945, Parliament amended the 1943 Ac which, as I mentioned a few moments ag referred certain authorities to the Commo wealth Government, and such matters the came within its express jurisdiction. Th 1945 amendment restricted the reference c prices to the Commonwealth and made definite that, in the reference of prices t Commonwealth control, such matters a State instrumentalities or semi-governmenta authorities, including the Transport Boar were not affected by the authority give under the legislation of 1943. Unlike th previous measure dealing with an amend ment to the Act of 1943, this Bill seeks t add to the authority taken from the Com monwealth under the 1945 legislation an authority constituted to deal in wheat.

This anticipates, I presume—althoug the Minister did not tell us much about i when moving the second reading—that i the wheat legislation there will be given t governmental authority certain powers t control transactions in wheat, whether suc transactions are performed by an agent o the Government or by the board itself. presume that is really the object of th amendment. Then, if an authority is set u

in this State compulsorily to acquire wheat and to deal in wheat in all the necessary ways, that authority also will have reserved to it the right to fix charges and make payments to agents acting for it, and such charges shall not be subject to the authority of the Commonwealth on prices.

This again is a measure in anticipation of our passing the Wheat Bill and it also may or may not come into force. Should the Wheat Bill be proclaimed, however, it is necessary that this authority should be reserved to the State Government to have its instrumentalities exempted from the Commonwealth Powers Act of 1943 as were the Transport Board and other semi-Governmental authorities under the 1945 legislation. I appreciate that if there is to be a State authority dealing in a commodity like wheat, it is essential that it be exempted from Commonwealth control as it was necessary to exempt the Transport Board or any activities licensed under that board. This being so, I support the second reading.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: To pass this Bill, an absolute majority is required. I have counted the House and there is an absolute majority present. There being no dissentient voice, the question passes in the affirmative.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—CHILD WELFARE.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 30th September. Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after Clause 37 had been agreed to.

Clause 38—Child released on probation may be arrested without warrant in certain cases:

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 after the word "may" the words "with the written consent of the Minister" be inserted.

The clause gives too much power to the secretary of the department. The power to order the arrest of a child without warrant should not be vested in an officer of any department. I am not in the least reflecting upon the present occupant of the position; but I contend that such a power should be vested in a person directly responsible to Parliament. We are extremely careful in other statutes dealing with warrants to provide that the bench shall issue a warrant for the apprehension of a person. If we give this power to the secretary of the department, no matter who he might be, he might at some time exercise it without using discretion. If a child is not conducting himself as he ought whilst on probation, it would not cause much inconvenience or delay for the secretary of the department to inform the Minister, who could order the arrest of the child. The liberty of the child is at stake and the liberty of a child is at least equal to that of an adult. I quite agree that a child not complying with the terms of his probation should be brought back into custody.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I accept the amendment, not altogether because I consider there is anything in the past history of the department which warrants it, but because in my opinion it is probably justified on general principles. It would have done no harm had it been included in the act from the commencement. I point out to the member for Perth that for approximately 26 years, since the passing of the 1921 Act, the secretary of the department has had authority to take such action, and that since 1935, I think, this provision has been almost the same, and in effect exactly the same, as the one now appearing in the Bill. I ask the Committee to accept the amendment.

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

Clauses 39 to 46—agreed to.

Clause 47—Governor may release ward:

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 of the proviso after the word "inquiry" the words "and the matron or manager of the institution" be inserted.

I have letters dealing with this matter which show the importance of the clause and the necessity for this amendment. The first is from Mr. Roy Peterkin, manager of the

Anglican Homes for Children. He writes as follows:—

At the recent deputation to Mrs. Cardell-Oliver from the combined orphanages one of the requests made was that in the event of a manager of an institution disagreeing with the department on the question of the release of any particular ward the matter should be referred to a magistrate before whom the institution should be heard. It is unlikely that the institution would be prepared to take the case as far as that if they did not feel that there were very good grounds for opposing the release of the ward. I think you may safely assume that the manager of every institution believes that the right place for a child is in its own home, always provided that the home conditions are satisfactory. The combined institutions, however, do feel that there have been instances where we have been instructed to release a child when we felt that such discharge was not in the child's interests. It is in cases such as this that we feel that having failed to convince the department that the proposed discharge is detrimental to the child's welfare that the matter should be discussed before a magistrate.

I recall a case, for instance, where we had two children committed to our care on the grounds that the home conditions under which they were living were very unsatisfactory. The boys were living with us for some months during which time the parents got a new house built and immediately applied for the lads. Under normal circumstances the discharge would not have been opposed but would have been supported. We however, knew that the children were badly neglected and the parents very unsuitable people for the control of children. When we protested to the department we were told that the home conditions were now satisfactory and the children must be released. We saw the children later and it was obvious that they were in a much worse state than they had been when they were first admitted to the home. I recall another instance of a boy being discharged on a few hours' notice on the instructions of the then Minister for Child Welfare. When I protested that I did not consider the lad's conduct warranted discharge (he having been committed for disciplinary reasons) I was curtly informed that it was a personal instruction from the Minister.

The manager or the matron of an institution keeps in touch with the homes of these children and has as much information about conditions therein as the department has. For the time being a matron and a manager are responsible for the welfare of the children under their care and I consider they should be consulted before a release becomes final. If they have information that the conditions in the homes of the children are not such as to provide for the proper rearing of those children, they should be heard. Another letter I have is from St. Joseph's Orphanage. I will not mention the name of the child to whom reference is made. The letter states:—

The girl was admitted to the orphanage for protection on 17/2/44 at 15½ years of age. Upon admission she was found to be pregnant and transferred to the pre-maternity section of the Foundling Home. After the birth of the babe the foster mother made repeated applications for the release of the ward to her home. The girl was released to the foster parent in September, 1945, in the face of strong objection by the Institutional Superior. Re-admission was sought by the Probation Officer of the Child Welfare Department on 26th August, 1946, for the birth of the second infant, which was born on 21/10/1946.

Neither of the infants was up to average either mentally or physically.

The girl herself was observed to be of such disposition as to need institutional protection and training beyond the usual eighteenth year, and it was hoped that this could be effected. However, after these two experiences and the need for extra protection, the girl was finally released from wardship on her 18th birthday. As far as can be gathered, there is little reason to suppose that this was a wise procedure.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. NEEDHAM: This letter mentions another case involving two sisters. The elder was considered to be suitable for extra schooling, and application was made to extend the usual school-leaving age in her case. The child was doing well. Application was made for the release of the sisters to the non-catholic home of their aunt, and this was opposed by the institution. I have quoted from these two letters, from two of the largest institutions in the State, to show that there is a danger of a child's being released without the manager or the matron of the institution being notified. I think the manager or matron should have the same right of notification as a parent. I hope the Minister will agree to the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I have no objection to the amendment in this part of the clause. Other considerations, however, apply to the other amendment of this clause, of which the hon. member has given notice.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of the second proviso after the word "parent" the words "a matron or manager of an institution" be inserted.

There is very little difference between this amendment and the one just agreed to. It will not be very much good to the future of the ward if we stop at my amendment to the first proviso in respect of notifying the matron or manager about the release of the ward. It will be noticed, in the correspondence I have read, that despite the objections lodged by the manager of the Anglican home, in one instance, and the Sister in charge of St. Joseph's Orphanage, in the other, the releases took place. My amendment is to give the manager or the matron of an institution the right to appeal to a magistrate, the same as a parent has. The manager or matron of an institution is, for the time being, the custodian of the child and is, in effect, in loco parentis.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not propose to agree to this amendment. Different considerations apply here from the previous one, as I have already said. The member for Perth loses sight of the fact that the children with whom we are dealing are wards of the State. The State is, therefore, in loco parentis, and to bring a magistrate into the settlement of the matter would, in my opinion, be most unwise. The history of the children is well known to the department, but the magistrate would know nothing of it at all. I was quite prepared to agree that the manager or matron of an institution should have the right to discuss the matter with the Minister, because the Minister is really the superior authority with which the institution has to deal. The child, of which the State is for the time being the parent, is a State ward, and is allowed to remain in or be placed in an institution because the State, acting in loco parentis, considers that that institution is a fit and proper one for the child to be placed in. While I think it is quite right that the Minister, in addition to the officers of the Child Welfare Department, should be prepared to hear any opposition from the matron or manager to a child's being released or removed from the institution, I do not think we should go any further.

The only other authority, if I may use the term authority, which would have rights in the matter, is a parent of the child. A parent may be assumed, in a great many cases at any rate, to have had as much to do with the child as the department, or at least to be as much entitled to a hearing in regard to the disposition of the child, as the department. Therefore, it has been the law—which it is not my intention to try to change—that the parent, feeling aggrieved by the order of the Minister to hand the ward over to the custody of anybody, may apply to a magistrate to deal with the matter. I am not, in that case, satisfied that the magistrate is well qualified to deal with such a question on the evidence adduced at the time of the hearing, but I do not propose to raise that point because, as I have said, this provision has existed for many years and I do not propose to alter it. There is undoubtedly some justification for the parent having the right of approach to the court, but to superimpose on that the right for the matron or manager of any institution, if dissatisfied, after the fullest inquiry has been made by the Minister, to go to the court and commence what would amount to litigation in respect of the child seems to me, on that and the other counts I have mentioned, to be undesirable. The position is well met by the previous amendment of the member for Perth and by the practice and the law as to the balance that has prevailed for many years. I therefore ask the Committee not to agree to the amendment.

Mr. NEEDHAM: Parents may sometimes be actuated by motives not altogether in the best interests of the child, perhaps with a view to getting a few shillings from the earnings of the child. In that regard, an institution would be disinterested to a far greater extent than would a parent or guardian. My experience of such institutions in this State is that they are not actuated by any motive of gain, but by a desire to turn out the children committed to their care as good citizens of the State. I regret that the Minister cannot see his way clear to accept the amendment.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I must agree with the Minister in his opposition to this amendment. The member for Perth is unaware of the way in which this part of the Act is administered. There exists a committee upon which there is a representative of each home where wards of the State are confined. Before any release is approved by the Min-

ister, he obtains a recommendation, through the Child Welfare Department, as the result of consideration of the merits of individual cases following on a regular meeting of a committee for each home, and so if the matron in charge of a home has any objection to a proposed release from that institution she has ample opportunity of stating the objection at a committee meeting, and of advancing all the arguments in support of her objection to the release. If, having heard those arguments, the committee believes it is in the best interests of the child that it be released, a recommendation is made to the Minister, who then gives consideration to the statements placed before him. He uses his own discretion to approve of the recommendation or not. Actually, few institutions recommend to the department that children should be released. If it were left to the institutions to decide, in many cases wards would remain in such places for longer than is necessary.

It is because the initiative is taken by the department that the Minister from time to time agrees to releases. Neither the wards nor the institutions have anything to fear, as ample opportunity is given matrons or superintendents of such homes to put forward reasons why, in their opinion it would not be in the interests of the ward that he be released. Some matrons and superintendents develop a complex on the subject and adopt a wrong attitude in considering what is in the best interests of the ward. They sometimes believe it is in his best interests to continue rendering service to the institution so that he may to some extent repay what it has done for him. While I was Minister controlling the department, that argument was advanced in all seriousness as a reason why wards should not be released. I believe a ward should be released when it is in his best interests that that course be followed. The interests of the institution must be subordinated in every case to the interests of the ward.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Clauses 48 and 49—agreed to.

Clause 50—The department or governing authority may apprentice children:

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That after the word "may" in line 1 the words "with the written consent of the Minister" be inserted.

This would be an important stage in a boy's life and the clause proposes to give the secretary the wide power of deciding to whom a boy shall be apprenticed. The Minister should have the say rather than that the secretary of the department should be the final authority.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I cannot accept the amendment. The Minister, in the ultimate, is obliged to act on the advice of the department headed by the secretary. If a Minister had to investigate all these matters personally, his activities would be rather too great for an average individual to handle. I am satisfied that the officers exercise due caution, that their investigations are complete and that their aim is nothing more or less than the betterment of the child. The only contribution the Minister could make in virtually every case would be the expenditure of time, which might be better devoted to other aspects of child welfare, after which he would aprove of the secretary's recommendation in the absence of evidence to the contrary. This procedure has been operative for many years and I have never heard one complaint of the ill-placing of a ward of the State for the purpose of learning a trade or calling. No benefit would accrue from the amendment; in fact, the contrary might be the position.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 51 to 66—agreed to.

Clause 67—Order of liability for maintenance of any child:

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I cannot approve of this clause: it is too much of a dragnet. Governments are usually out to get their pound of flesh somewhere, no matter who provides it. To require near relatives such as brothers, sisters and grandparents to contribute towards the maintenance of a child is ridiculous. I believe that a similar provision appears in the Lunacy Act and it should be removed from that statute. In the case of an illegitimate child, the mother's husband should not be held

liable. I do not think that is right and I hope the Minister will agree with what I propose. I move an amendment—

That in lines 2 and 3 of paragraph (a) the words "brothers and sisters, grandparents" be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I am not altogether opposed to the views of the member for Fremantle on this subject now that he has moved his amendment in its present form and not as he first indicated that he would move it. Here we have a sort of borderline case, and I feel disposed to leave the matter to the discretion of the Committee after pointing out such things as I consider it desirable to point out. The first is that this provision was not taken from the Lunacy Act, as the member for Fremantle suggested; it has been in the Child Welfare Act for a great number of years, although that does not mean that it should be sacrosanct. However, I thought I would correct the hon. member on that point.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The provisions are almost identical.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Perhaps so. I have not perused the Lunacy Act of recent years, but I can say where this phraseology actually came from. There are two occasions when it would be legitimate and reasonable to ask brothers and sisters to make some contribution towards maintenance of a legitimate child. After all, family responsibility should not necessarily cease with the family, especially when one bears in mind that the clause provides that these members of the family shall contribute towards the maintenance of such child according to their several abilities and that if they have nothing they are not to be made to contribute at all. But if they have a great deal, then it is questionable to my mind whether the obligation for maintenance should fall upon the general taxpayer. It is merely a question of determining whether it is wise or not to relieve the brother and sister of responsibility. I could go further and say that if the question is determined by the ability of the parties to pay—and that is quite clear from the clause itself—is it reasonable to suggest that a grandparent ought to make some contribution rather than that the burden of the maintenance of the child, for whom the State has no responsibility other than under this measure, should fall upon the State?

Hon. A. H. Panton: As a grandparent, I object.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: As one gets further from the commencement of the clause, one gets a stronger argument, admittedly. That is why I am not altogether opposed to the amendment. If the hon. member will be satisfied with the deletion of the word "grandparents" I say quite frankly I will not oppose the amendment at all; but if he goes the whole distance with his amendment I cannot bring myself to support it.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Members know from experience that all Governments, including the Commonwealth Government, pursue a person to the bitter end. Perhaps I may make this comparison: when old-age pensions were first granted, the Government inquired whether a person, say Smith, with a wife and two children, could afford to pay something for the maintenance of his old mother with a view to reducing the amount of the pension to be paid by the Government. As a matter of fact, notwithstanding that Smith could not afford to contribute to the upkeep of his mother, the Government would pursue him to the bitter end. We cannot legislate for extraordinary cases, such as for a few wealthy people. We have to consider the matter as a whole. In the vast majority of cases, neither the brother nor the sister nor the grandparents can be asked to pay for the maintenance of a delinquent child. I hope the Committee will agree to the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Notwithstanding the fierceness with which the member for Fremantle followed up his amendment I am convinced he has not made sufficient inquiry into the matter. In the short time that I have been in office, I have approved the writing-off of hundreds of pounds that might have been claimed from people for the maintenance of these children. I know that my predecessor, from the files I have perused, also wrote off a huge sum of money during his term of office and for no other reason than that the persons concerned could not pay. I do not want to paint the lily, but I think it fair and reasonable that the Committee and the public should know that

the method which the member for Fremantle suggested was commonly in practice—the taking of the last ounce, not the last pound, of flesh—has not been practised by the department in a great number of cases either during the present regime or that which preceded it.

Mr. GRAHAM: This is not a question of how many persons might be affected or in how many cases the provision might be enforced. Neither is it a question of whether or not the brothers and sisters can afford to pay. It is a straight-out principle as to whether brothers and sisters have any legal or financial responsibility. I do not consider they have. It is generally accepted that parents and step-parents are responsible as guardians and custodians of their children in many different ways. But there is no general imposition placed on other members of families such as brothers and sisters. Notwithstanding that it has been in the Act for a number of years, I think it would be wrong to perpetuate such a set of circumstances. In equity and justice the Minister could allow the deletion of the brothers and sisters and grandparents and I hope the Committee will agree to the amendment.

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

Ayes	.. .. ..	24
Noes	.. .. ..	17
Majority for	..	7

AYES.

Mr. Cornell	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Panton
Mr. Fox	Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Graham	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Smith
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Styants
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Triat
Mr. Mann	Mr. Wild
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wise
Mr. May	Mr. Yates
Mr. Needham	Mr. Rodoreda (*Teller.*)

NOES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Murray
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Nimmo
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Seward
Mr. Doney	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Watts
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Brand
Mr. McLarty	(*Teller.*)

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I would like a clarification of the next part of this clause. I admit that in certain cases it would be quite all right but in other cases it would be quite all wrong. When a woman has an illegitimate child and subsequently marries a man, the man accepts responsibility for the child. But let us take the case of a married woman who has an illegitimate child by someone else and the home is broken up and the husband goes away. Are we going to allow the department to sue him and say, "You are the woman's husband and are responsible for the illegitimate child?" I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of paragraph (b) the words "mother's husband" be struck out.

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

Clauses 68 to 71—agreed to.

Clause 72—Allegations in complaint prima facie evidence:

Mr. MARSHALL: I would like an explanation of this clause. We have had many discussions on the principle involved. This practice of introducing into our legislation provisions in which the onus of proof is placed on the defendant is becoming more popular. The idea is, "I say you are guilty. You prove you are innocent." It is creeping into every piece of legislation, though in years gone by we were particularly careful about this sort of thing. Here are a multiplicity of statements an officer of the department may make concerning an individual whom he suspects. He can say, "This is the amount expended. You prove it is not the correct amount." Then there is an onus of proof on the person to prove that he is not a near relative, or that he has not sufficient means to maintain a child. He has to parade his poverty. The clause goes on to say, "or that some other person is prior in order of liability." If I were accused, I might say it was the member for Leederville, and he would have to defend himself. The onus of proof would be on him.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Not at my age!

Mr. MARSHALL: The clause goes on "or that the sum stated in the complaint to be expended, or due, or owing is not due, or owing, or was not expended." How can I prove that the department did not expend a certain sum of money on a particular child? But, apart from the fact that some unfortunate wretch might have

to prove he is not guilty of a number of matters, it is the principle involved to which I take strong exception. I remember on one occasion when introducing a Bill that was not quite—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, I confess I should. In the Bill I introduced, it was somewhat doubtful whether the onus of proof did lie on the defendant, but there is no doubt here. There can be no misconception of what this means because it says "shall lie upon the defendant." Such clauses should be treated with a great deal of contempt. We have dealt with them on several occasions over a period of years. Unless the Minister can redraft this clause, I will ask the Committee to vote against it.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: If I thought the Minister would agree to the hon. member's suggestion, I would sit down and let the clause go through.

Mr. Marshall: Let it go out.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Yes. I am pleased to be able to support the member for Murchison. We have been fighting for this for a long time. The question is not a Party one. Some years ago, a member on the other side promised that if we came back after the elections we would go through each Act with a view to striking out any provisions containing this particular burden of proof. Unfortunately, he died.

The Minister for Works: Did not the opportunity arise at any time in the past?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: This has been fought out many times, but unfortunately we have not been very successful.

The Minister for Works: When did you last try?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: As the Minister knows, it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. By the same token, it is better to have tried and lost than never to have tried at all. I will keep on trying to prevent this sort of thing going through, for as long as my electors keep me here.

Clause put and a division called for.

Mr. Marshall: This is unfair.

The Minister for Education: No, it is not.

Mr. Marshall: You might have indicated your attitude.

The Minister for Works: What harm has it done to anyone?

Mr. Marshall: Thanks for the information.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	22
Noes	20
Majority for	2

AYES.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Murray
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Nalder
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Cornell	Mr. North
Mr. Doney	Mr. Seward
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Watts
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Wild
Mr. Mann	Mr. Yates
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Brand
	(*Teller.*)

NOES.

Mr. Coverley	Mr. Panton
Mr. Fox	Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Graham	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Smith
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Styants
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. May	Mr. Triat
Mr. Needham	Mr. Wise
Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Rodoreda
	(*Teller.*)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Collier
Mr. Hall	Mr. Johnson

Clause thus passed.

Clause 73—Court may adjudge person to be father of illegitimate child:

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I wish to move an amendment consequential on one made to Clause 20. I move an amendment—

> That in lines 1 and 2 the words "Subject to section 20, subsection (2) of this Act" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. MARSHALL: We have the same principle in the proviso to this clause as we had in the previous clause. I am going to move to delete the words "upon the defendant" in the last line with a view to inserting the words "shall lie with the complainant." The complainant should prove his case without forcing the defendant into the invidious position of proving his innocence.

The Minister for Education: You have already passed my amendment. This amendment is on the motion that the clause stand as amended.

Mr. MARSHALL: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of the Proviso, the word "defendant" be struck out with a view to inserting the word "complainant."

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: It is only British justice that a man is believed innocent until he is proved guilty. It is time we took a stand to see that British justice is observed in this respect. I appeal to the Minister to agree to the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: What the amendment asks one to do—as did that defeated by the Committee a few moments ago—is to assume that all the people who come before the court in such matters are persons who are prepared to explain to the court what their true position is, but, as is well known, in fact they come to the court with the intention of preventing the recovery of just dues from them. It is therefore a common precaution in such matters to make the defendant prove that he cannot pay. The assumption is that the parent of any child is able to pay for the maintenance of that child. If he cannot do so it is up to him to give proof of that fact. It is an obligation on men in every civilised community to look after their children. If a man can prove to the court that he is unable to maintain his child the court will no doubt treat him accordingly. This is all the clause asks.

Mr. MARSHALL: It is a principle of British justice that no accused party has to prove his innocence or inability to pay.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: This man is not an accused person.

Mr. MARSHALL: In British courts the party making the accusation must prove his case to the satisfaction of the court, but under this proviso, as in the previous clause, that is not the case. I remind the Committee that there is a misapprehension regarding this legislation. We refer constantly to "a child" but the measure deals with a neglected child, a destitute child or an uncontrollable child. In the third case it is a child who has committed a misdemeanour or who has offended against the law. Such children may be of anything up to 18 years of age. They are not necessarily innocent little children. They may be lads who are within a month of being old enough to fight in the defence of the country. Under the clause we are asked to make the parent contribute to the maintenance of such a lad. If the boy was aged 18 years and one month when he committed the misdemeanour he might go to the Fremantle gaol, and we would not then ask the parent to maintain him while he was in gaol. That is the difference between the two positions. Were we dealing only with children up to perhaps 12 years of age there might be some substance in the contention of the Minister.

Mr. GRAHAM: The Minister has satisfied me with regard to this clause. It is not a question of a person being charged with an offence. In this case the parentage has been established and it is then only a matter of determining to what extent, if any, the parent shall be financially liable. Generally speaking a man is responsible for the financial maintenance of his wife and his children, and before he can escape that responsibility he must establish the fact that he is unable to maintain them.

The Minister for Education: That is the point.

Mr. GRAHAM: The principle mentioned by the member for Murchison does not come into the matter.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not see this in the same way as does the member for East Perth.

Mr. Marshall: I cannot follow his reasoning at all.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Under the clause the person making the complaint will invariably state that the party responsible is able to maintain the child. That may be taken for granted. The complaint will set out that the father of the illegitimate child is able to maintain it—otherwise the case would not be before the court. The burden of proof is then on the defendant to show that he cannot maintain the child. The person making the complaint will no doubt exaggerate to the fullest extent possible in an endeavour to say there is a substantial bank balance—

The Minister for Railways: How can he do that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He will state it in the complaint. What is said in the complaint is prima facie evidence of the fact, until the defendant proves otherwise. To make statements is much easier than to prove them.

The Minister for Railways: He could not prove them.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He would not be asked to prove them.

The Minister for Railways: If the clause were amended as the member for Murchison suggests, the officer could not prove the statements.

The Minister for Works: Do not forget that the defendant would already have been adjudged to be the father of the child.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The test is, whose job is it to prove the truth of the statement, the person making it or the person against whom it is made? Under the clause the complainant could say anything and, having done so, there would be no further responsibility upon him to prove it. The defendant would have to prove that what had been alleged was not correct, and that might not be easy. Suppose the defendant was alleged to have several hundred pounds in the bank and he produced his bank book to show that he had nothing of the sort, it might then be urged that he did have the money, but had withdrawn it some time previously. The onus of proof should be on the person making the statement. An officer alleging that a defendant was able to maintain a child should have some grounds for his allegation and should be obliged to state the grounds. While a defendant should be compelled to meet his just obligations, we should not place him in an unfair position by allowing the complainant to say anything and putting the onus of proving the contrary on the defendant.

Mr. LESLIE: If we accept the amendment, the position will be rendered impossible. The clause stipulates that the onus of proving that the defendant is not of sufficient means to maintain the child shall lie upon the defendant. The member for Murchison should have moved to strike out the word "not" and substitute "complainant" for "defendant" and then the clause would have provided that the complainant was required to prove that the defendant was of sufficient means to maintain the child. I oppose the clause on the grounds stated by the member for East Perth. This is not a matter of proving the guilt of the defendant. To obtain confidential information about the financial circumstances of an individual is not easy and it would not be possible to prove that the defendant was possessed of sufficient means to maintain the child. It would be assumed that the defendant was in a position to meet his normal obligations.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I agree with the member for Mt. Marshall that the amendment will not achieve the objective, even if that objective were desirable, because it would merely confuse the position. The amendment would make the clause provide that the complainant had to prove that the defendant could not pay, which is not what is required. I reiterate the argument so well advanced by the member for East Perth and the member for Mt. Marshall. The case presented by the member for North-East Fremantle was based on a false foundation, which was that the complainant would refer to the defendant's having so much money in the bank or a house, say, at Nedlands. All that would be said—and nothing further is ever said—is that the defendant has the means to maintain the child. That is a reasonable assumption, particularly in these cases. It is done not to place the defendant in an invidious position nor to make the court's position easier, but in order that the defendant may have a case to answer. The proviso is founded on the well-established rule that a parental relationship exists and that there is an obligation to pay.

Mr. NEEDHAM: Mr. Chairman, would you accept an amendment by me to strike out a word in a line preceding the the portion of the proviso which the member for Murchison has moved to amend?

The CHAIRMAN: I am afraid I cannot. The amendment is before the Chair and must be dealt with.

Mr. MARSHALL: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

> That in line 4 of the proviso the word "not" be struck out.

The member for Murchison forestalled me. The amendment which he moved would not have the effect he desires.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: This amendment seems to me to be equally difficult. Now we will have it that the onus

of proving the defendant is of sufficient means to maintain the child shall lie upon the defendant! The complainant has to prove it prima facie and then the defendant has to prove that he has the means. That is more objectionable than to require him to prove that he has not the means.

Mr. NEEDHAM: My object in moving the amendment was, if it were carried, to strike out the word "defendant" in the last line and insert the word "complainant" in lieu.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. FOX: The clause, as printed, should stand. The first thing that the complainant, the mother of the child, would do would be to show that the defendant had sufficient means. It would then rest on the defendant to prove that he had not. We should not have so much sympathy for a person who is responsible for a child being brought into the world and then is not prepared to maintain it if he has sufficient means.

The Minister for Works: That is the right way to look at it.

Mr. FOX: The only case I can visualise where it might be difficult to secure an order against a person is when he has sold his business and is not working. He may have money stowed away somewhere and not be prepared to disclose it. Such cases would, however, be few.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Why pick a businessman, anyhow?

Mr. FOX: We have both good and bad businessmen. The complainant would be given an opportunity to prove that the defendant was capable of paying something. After all, the amount involved would not be large; it probably would not amount to £1 a week. If the defendant were working for wages, his employer could be subpoenaed to prove what the defendant's income was, and if he were in a position to pay, the court could make an order. If not, no order would be made against him.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The member for South Fremantle has given an unusual twist to this matter and possibly it might put some members in a wrong position. The Committee will recall that this argument developed on a question of principle. Very few members would have any sympathy for a defendant in a case like this. I have no sympathy for a man who is responsible for an illegitimate child. He should be made to stand up to his responsibility. He certainly has an obligation to the unfortunate girl and nobody would want to assist him to evade it. As the clause is framed, the complaint will invariably set out that the putative father is able to maintain the child. Then the responsibility of proving that he cannot do so is on the defendant.

The Minister for Works: On whom would you put it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think the person who makes a statement about somebody else should prove it.

The Minister for Works: The unfortunate mother, for instance?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. If she makes the statement that she knows the father is in a position to maintain the child, she should give some reasons to prove how she knows.

The Minister for Works: Let him sit back and say nothing?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Oh, no! He would have to say something. But the position the Minister wants to place the defendant in is to allow the complainant to say anything and tell the defendant, "Get out of that if you can." And it is not always easy. Although it would not be stated in the complaint that a person has some money buried in the backyard, or did have money and has given it away to his friends, that might be in the mind of the person who alleges in the complaint that the defendant is able to pay. How could a man prove he had not money buried in the backyard?

The Minister for Education: He would swear it on oath. That is accepted as proof.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: By whom?

The Minister for Education: By the court.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is news to me, that the uncorroborated statement of a defendant in a case like this would be accepted as proof.

The Minister for Education: In regard to money in a backyard it would be, if the other man could not prove it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Suppose it is believed that he had money but gave it to somebody else, as I understand is done on occasion, when people want to dodge in-

come tax, for instance. How could it be proved that he had not given money to someone else?

The Minister for Railways: You could prove it by his way of living.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Quite the wrong idea might be gained by looking at a man's way of living, especially his mode of dress. Some people dress as if they had not two bob, and others dress as if they had two million.

Mr. Marshall: Look at me, for instance!

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I do not think you should refer to the member for Murchison like that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not think much reliance can be placed on that.

The Minister for Education: You can place reliance on the discretion of the court as a general rule.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I have no sympathy for a defendant in a case of this kind and believe he should be made to stand up to his obligations. But I think that the principle of putting the onus of proof on the defendant is contrary to what has come to be accepted as British justice.

The Minister for Works: How would you amend the clause?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I could tell the Minister how it could be done, but we cannot do it because Standing Orders will not permit. It would be simple to amend the wording so that that could be accomplished, but we cannot go back.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I agree with the member for North-East Fremantle. I do not believe one member on either side of the Chamber wants to let a man evade his responsibilities. I have said a hundred times I am against this principle and will fight it wherever I see it. But when the Minister for Works tries to charge the member for North-East Fremantle with being against the poor mother, it is plain he has not read the clause or he would have been on his feet long ago, because the mother, to establish paternity, has to prove her case. But when it comes to the defendant, he has to prove his innocence. Has the Minister read the clause?

The Minister for Works: Yes, I have read it.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Has the Honorary Minister taken any interest in it? It seems to me —

The Honorary Minister: You wait till you are implicated and I will give it to you.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Mr. Chairman, I object! The Honorary Minister must either speak up or shift her seat. We cannot hear her.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member should disregard interjections.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I cannot, when I see them next day in "Hansard." Then I have to say, "Is that what the Honorary Minister said?" I think the Chairman should tell the Honorary Minister she should either be in the House or outside it. We cannot hear anything she says where she is. If she is not going to let us hear what she says, I am going to object to her having a seat right back there.

The Honorary Minister: I said that when you are implicated I will give it to you.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member can make his complaint on some other occasion.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I will probably do it when the Speaker returns. It seems to me that the poor mother the Minister for Works talks about has to have a chap's fingerprints before she can tell who is the father of her child!

Mr. TRIAT: If a man is proved to be the father of an illegitimate child, I do not think it is very difficult to prove whether he has means or not. If a man is single and earning good wages, he can afford to pay maintenance for an illegitimate child. If he is a married man with a legitimate family and there are a number of members in that family, it is possible for him to prove he has not the means to meet his other obligations. We are given to understand that in many cases men, in making overtures, mislead girls into thinking they have ample means, with the consequence that a girl will go to the court under the impression that the father of her child has substance whereas probably that is not the case. I intend to support the clause.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I believe the clause should remain as it is. Some members opposite have placed great stress on this business and said that a principle of British justice is involved—a principle that a man

is believed to be innocent until he is proved guilty. We all share their sentiments. But it is also a principle in British countries and elsewhere that a man is responsible for supporting his own family. It is not a principle of British justice that the court has to prove that a man should support his family, but that is what some members opposite are attempting to say.

Clause put and passed.

Progress reported.

BILL—DENTISTS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 25th September. Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 44 (partly considered):

Hon. F. J. S WISE: When the Bill was last being considered in this Chamber I raised the question as to the necessity for this clause, or for the Bill itself, and asked for justification of this amendment. I based my criticism on the contents of the parent Act, which includes all the Universities of Australia. Since that time I have consulted legal opinion to find whether, when the Solicitor General said that this amendment was desirable, it was meant that the amendment was necessary. All of us recall the information drawn out during the discussion on the second reading—information that was not given to us when the Bill was introduced.

It appears from the discussion that, legally, there is a possibility of doubt as to whether the section of the parent Act does explicitly express that Western Australian graduates shall be included. I have strong objections to that possibility of doubt remaining. The graduates who receive diplomas from the Chair of Dentistry of our University should have the same rights as the parent Act appears to give to graduates of other Universities in and out of Australia. Having had the opportunity of discussing the matter from that legal angle, and believing that there is a possibility of doubt I support the clause.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 30th September.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.15]: The previous Government appointed a Royal Commission to give consideration to the welfare of the wheat industry in Western Australia, and to make recommendations as to what would be in the best interests of the industry in this State. The commission sat with the object of ascertaining whether it would be in the best interests of the State, and its wheatgrowers, to adopt any, and if so what scheme for the stabilisation and marketing of wheat. We have a Bill before us for the marketing of wheat only, and not for the stabilisation of wheat. In discussing the merits of the measure, it is necessary to give consideration to the findings of the Royal Commission, and the reasons advanced by the commissioners for making a recommendation that a Bill be introduced.

It seems to me that the conditions which formed the assumption on which the recommendations were made have so changed as to make the introduction of the Bill no longer necessary. There are certain statements in the report with which I strongly disagree, as I disagree with that of the Minister in his second reading speech, when he gave reasons for the introduction of the measure. He used words which were used by the Royal Commissioners when he said that a state of absolute chaos would result if we did not have a Bill of this kind to make certain provisions for the setting up of an organisation which could be used if occasion arose. I would like to know the argument upon which he bases his conclusion that a state of absolute chaos would result in wheat marketing in Western Australia. I take it, if that is a true statement, that if other States do not do as we are proposing to do and pass such a Bill as this, there will be a state of absolute chaos in those States if the Commonwealth powers cease to exist. Well, I do not think that is so.

The commissioners clearly state in their report that the conditions necessary for a return to free marketing by merchants do not exist—and we know that they do not exist. The merchants could not raise the

finance or arrange the chartering of ships to handle the wheat harvest, or any portion of it. They could not take the risk of committing themselves with regard to it. So we know the merchants could not operate if the Commonwealth powers ceased tomorrow.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What we do know is that all the necessary paraphernalia for the proper functioning of a voluntary pool exists today, just as it did in this State when such a pool worked satisfactorily. Not only have we all the necessary arrangements and personnel here but, according to the Royal Commissioners, the requisite arrangements exist at the selling end, in London. There is nothing to prevent the successful operation of a voluntary pool. Wherein does the state of chaos referred to by the Minister and by the commissioners arise? I fail to see it.

The Minister for Agriculture: I base it on the point of finance.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The arrangements previously made for financing a voluntary pool could be made again. I think the Minister knows that a voluntary pool would work, without this Bill, which is based on a number of assumptions that are not likely to be borne out. There is no necessity for the measure in the transitional stage and it is unlikely that the conditions visualised in these assumptions will come to pass. I doubt the wisdom of passing the Bill. There are also other reasons why I object to it. Authorities writing on the problems associated with wheat, almost without exception refer to the fact that it is unwise at this stage to have unilateral action on wheat marketing. They point out that inter-governmental action within a multilateral framework is not only preferable, but essential if the real problems of wheat marketing are to have any possibility of solution.

The commissioners say that if prices remain somewhere near the present level or do not fall below 10s. per bushel, Western Australia stands to gain considerably from the operation of a State pool. I do not doubt that that is correct, but it contains a big "if." What happens if prices do not remain up but fall, as they have done before, with the result that world parity is considerably below the home consumption price? Then, instead of showing a substantial profit, Western Australian growers will incur a substantial loss. It is to deal with times of depressed prices that a solid organisation is required for the marketing of wheat.

Mr. Perkins: That is the problem of the stabilisation proposals.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is no stabilisation proposed in this Bill.

The Minister for Agriculture: Stabilisation would follow.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We are dealing with the Bill before the House, which makes no provision at all for the stabilisation of wheat marketing, a stabilisation plan or a fixed or guaranteed price.

Mr. Perkins: The Commonwealth Government has collected millions of pounds from the growers to put such a scheme into being.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is it thought that we would be permitted to set up a separate organisation in order to benefit to the maximum extent from oversea prices and then come in, when the price fell, and get the benefit of a stabilisation plan to which other States—but not our own State—were parties? It would not work out that way.

Mr. Ackland: You could not do it under the Constitution.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That shows how hopeless it is to get a stabilisation plan if individual States are to commence setting up their own arrangements for the marketing of wheat. I understand that the chairman of this Royal Commission—Mr. Teasdale—addressed meetings in both South Australia and Victoria—largely attended meetings of wheatgrowers—in an endeavour to get them to support, in their own States, a proposal for the establishment of State pools. My information is that he met with little success. I am informed that at a meeting held at Kadina, where there is a small group of wheatgrowers who appear to have thought differently from the general body of wheatgrowers in South Australia, he was successful in getting a body of men to approach the South Australian Government with a request for a State pool, but the farmers' organisation in South Australia is dead against it and, instead of supporting

a move for the establishment of a State pool, has endorsed the 15-point plan of the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: All the States have done that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: All the States have done it, including Western Australia.

Mr. Perkins: That is not incompatible with the State pool.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is an altogether different proposition, as it envisages a Commonwealth pool.

Mr. Perkins: There are certain minimum demands, and if they are not met a State pool is asked for.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The 15-point plan is based on the principle of the establishment of a Commonwealth pool and marketing authority, with a stabilisation plan and a guaranteed price for wheat embodied in the scheme. That is very different from what we have here. The statement of the American, Patrick Henry, applies with as much truth to the problem of marketing as to any other problem to which we can apply it. He said—

> I have but one light by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging the future but by the past.

If we are to endeavour to develop a scheme for the marketing of wheat we must have regard to what has happened before, under similar circumstances, and endeavour to arrange a plan to meet such conditions as we believe will occur again. In many respects the condition existing today is comparable with that which existed after the 1914-1918 war. During the first world war period there was a big fall in the productive capacity of continental Europe. That also occurred during the recent war. It took a considerable time after the first world war for European countries to get back to anything like pre-war production standards, and to do so they required the assistance of foreign credits and the policy in their own countries of granting substantial bounties and re-establishing currencies in order to encourage producers to expand their production. By dint of using all those methods European countries found it possible gradually to get back to their pre-war production standard, but the very factors that are responsible for accelerating production continue after production is capable of meeting existing demands.

Production goes on, and it is remarkable with regard to wheat that even a fall in price does not operate in the same way as a fall in the price of other commodities operates to restrict production. With wheat, production seems to continue at its previous level despite even a steep declination in price. Various reasons are given in explanation of that phenomenon, the main one being that it is extremely difficult to get men who are accustomed to producing wheat to turn their attention to other avenues of production. They know the business of growing wheat and desire to continue doing it. They will not stop unless compulsion is imposed upon them by way of restricted acreages. Many producers do not like a stabilisation plan and advance many arguments against it. But any such plan, having in view a guaranteed price, must have as a concomitant some limiting of the amount of goods or products to be raised or produced under the scheme. Producers could not be given the right to go ahead to turn out as much as they liked and at the same time be guaranteed a certain price for their production. No country would be sufficiently strong financially to support such a scheme, and it is therefore necessary to impose limitations.

In all schemes for stabilisation, there is some provision for the limitation of the quantity of goods to be produced. The Royal Commissioners plumped for a compulsory State pool, and one of their arguments in favour of it was the necessity to compel all the farmers to participate in the pool. When it comes to the question of dealing with a stabilisation plan, they want to make it possible for some farmers to remain out of it. They were cute enough not to commit themselves to a definite statement along those lines, but they made it clear to me how they were thinking about it, because they went so far as to say that the decision in that respect ought to be made by the Government, and if the Government did make such a decision, it would be necessary for those who did not want to participate to be able to contract themselves out of it. The relevant reference in the Royal Commission's report appears in paragraph 29 as follows:—

> If the Government when setting up an equalisation plan desires to recognise the rights of self-determination of these farmers,—

That has reference to farmers who may wish to make their own arrangements to tide themselves over any period of lean prices—

—then obviously provision should be made in the equalisation plan to allow them to contract out. Declaration of desire to contract out would of necessity have to be made at the very outset of the plan and be irrevocable.

The next paragraph reads—

Decision on this fundamental principle rests with the Governments of the people, not with a Commission of four men. Our task is merely to note the fact.

I would like to know what position we arrive at. The decision as to whether the stabilisation plan should be all-embracing and compulsory is one that the Government alone should make and not this commission! Yet with regard to the marketing side and the setting up of the pool, that, it would seem, is not for the Government to decide but for the commissioners themselves to say that it ought to be. If the commissioners believe in one instance that we should compel all farmers to be in the pool and not leave to them the right of free selling—the commissioners believe all should be in the pool, and even go so far as to say that they will make a decision on that point—why will they not make the decision on the stabilisation plan, which to my mind is far more important? The big weakness in wheatgrowing has always been the wide fluctuation in prices. Wheatgrowers do not want much assistance when prices are high and crops are good. Only when prices fall do they find themselves in serious difficulties in large numbers, and it is then that some governmental action becomes necessary not only in the interests of the producers but of the country's economy.

The commissioners were not prepared to make a pronouncement on that phase as they considered it was for the Government to decide; but they were prepared to state their views regarding the marketing side and claim that it should be compulsory. The farmers generally are looking for some scheme that will provide them with a guarantee against serious losses in a time of falling prices. We know from past experience that we must expect prices to come down from their present figure and, if history repeats itself, they will fall to a very low amount unless some action is taken to put a floor under them so as to prevent them declining beyond a certain figure. That is not always possible of accomplishment. Although a Government may by legislation fix a price and endeavour to maintain it at a certain level, if the prices of other commodities fall steeply, it can easily become impossible for any Government to maintain the floor price it set out to maintain in the first instance.

Thus it becomes necessary to seek not only nation-wide action, but action between nations in order to prevent, if possible, a repetition of the catastrophic fall in prices that occurs each time there is a depression; and at such periods many wheatgrowers are threatened with bankruptcy. In fact, many of them did go bankrupt and Governments were called upon to find tremendous sums of money to keep the industry anything like solvent. We may take a purely selfish view and say, "Prices are high at present. Let us hop in and get the full advantage of the existing high prices and then, when they fall, abandon our State scheme and go under the Commonwealth scheme and thereby gain from it." If we think we can do that and are selfish enough to adopt that point of view, I have no doubt the State pool would be attractive at the present time, but it would not be attractive because we would have such a large exportable surplus, if world parity fell below the home consumption price. We would then be in the position of being heavy losers unless subsidised from outside. There is a proposition in the report that a substantial increase should be made in the home consumption price. It is recommended that the price of wheat consumed locally for purposes other than flour should be raised to 8s. a bushel.

Mr. Reynolds: What is it now?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: At present, it is 5s. 2d. And, in addition, a subsidy should be paid to the producers to make up the difference between that price and world parity. That subsidy would have to come out of the pockets of the taxpayers. So, in effect, the commissioners are asking that, for the whole of the Western Australian crop with the exception of the wheat consumed as flour, growers should be paid world parity and get the full advantage of the existing high price. People

who put forward a recommendation like that lose sight of the fact that there are times when farmers have to look to the Government to tide them over situations too difficult for them to cope with.

I remind members that, owing largely to the efforts of my predecessor in office this State received 12s. per acre for land that was not cropped, and this at a time when it would have been impossible for farmers to grow wheat on that land because of the lack of fertiliser. Because acreage was limited, there was a restriction in this State, and producers received 12s. per acre for land that went out of production. Where did that money come from? Obviously, from the taxpayers of the Commonwealth. There have been many subsidies of a like character. Speaking from memory, I think a sum of about £1,900,000 was made available to Western Australia under the restriction-of-acreage plan. In addition, we have had the benefit of a cheaper rate on superphosphate. The State has given concessions by its reduced freights on the carriage of wheat and superphosphate, and these are all benefits that the growers received at the cost of the taxpayers. Is it fair that the growers should expect to get the advantage both ways?

Under existing legislation, if the price of wheat falls below the home consumption price, the flour tax operates to provide money to enable the farmers to get the home consumption price. It was proposed at the same time that a tax should be imposed upon wheat when the price rose above the home consumption price, but that tax was never imposed, and so the wheatgrowers were never called upon to make good their side of the bargain. I mention these matters to show that this is not one-way traffic as some wheatgrowers would have us believe. It is a question of the general taxpayers assisting the industry when the industry requires assistance and expecting to receive in return from the industry a product at a price somewhat below world parity. If the proposal of the Royal Commission is put into effect, to start with there will be a substantial increase in the price of bread.

Mr. Perkins: Why?

The Minister for Railways: You ought to prove that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: To prove it is easy.

The Minister for Railways: Go ahead.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I shall prove it by quoting from the report of the Royal Commission. On page 13 will be found the recommendations, and amongst them is set out what I have just stated and what the Minister has asked me to prove.

The Minister for Agriculture: I did not say anything.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am referring to the Minister for Railways. The recommendations read—

1. That the State Government draw the attention of the Federal Government to the fact that the aggregate income of Western Australia is being seriously diminished by the continuance of the policy of selling wheat for flour, stockfeed and other purposes within Australia at a heavy discount below overseas values, and request the Federal Government to recoup such amounts as may be shown to be the net loss to the State which has arisen out of such concessional sales as have been negotiated since the termination of the war period covered by the original National Security Act ending December, 1946.

2. That in the event of the Federal Government continuing to control wheat sales by means of an extension of the period of Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act, request be made to the effect that the accounts for each State be kept separate and proceeds credited to the realisations from the producing State.

3. That the State Government represent to the Federal Minister for Commerce that current selling prices of wheat for milling into flour for home consumption, for stockfeed and all other purposes within Australia be raised to 8s. per bushel, f.o.r. bulk basis, and further, that upon all sales for purposes other than flour production, a subsidy be granted to lift the return to the pool to export parity as determined from week to week. Also, that prices of mill offals be raised 50 per cent., and by so doing align them with comparable stockfeeds which at the present moment stand as follows:—

Bran, at £5 18s. 10d. truck lots, 2,000 lbs.=£6 13s. 1d. per ton of 2,240 lbs.

Pollard, at £5 18s. 10d. truck lots 2,000 lbs.=£6 13s. 1d. per ton of 2,240 lbs.

Chaff, at £9 truck lots 2,240 lbs.=£9 per ton of 2,240 lbs.

The recommendations deal also with barley, oats and wheat and continue—

For the purposes of comparison—

Wheat, at 8s. per bushel of 60 lbs.=£14 18s. 8d. per ton of 2,240 lbs.

Wheat, at 16s. per bushel of 60 lbs.=£29 17s. 4d. ton of 2,240 lbs.

This alteration of flour prices after allowing for proper offal returns, should not raise the price of the 2-lb. loaf more than one penny.

I repeat that that would be a substantial increase in the price of the loaf.

Mr. Perkins: That is a matter for the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is it? Then we are to take those parts of the Royal Commission's report that suit us for the time being and jettison the rest and not regard the report as a general finding on the wheat situation. Clearly, that is part of the whole plan. It is a plan under which an attempt is to be made to give the wheatgrowers of Western Australia world parity for all wheat produced in the State except the wheat used for consumption as flour.

Mr. Perkins: That is so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In order to achieve that, it is proposed, first, to increase the price of wheat for flour from 5s. 2d. to 8s. That is an impost upon the persons who consume flour.

Mr. Perkins: But that has nothing to do with the Bill.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It has something to do with the scheme. This Bill is introduced as the result of recommendations of the Royal Commission. A further recommendation was that after the price of wheat for flour has been increased to 8s., the wheat for stock feed should be increased to 8s. also; but in addition, so that the farmers can get full world parity for that wheat, a subsidy of the difference between that 8s. and world parity shall be paid by the Government.

Mr. Perkins: Do you disagree with that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is asking too much to expect the taxpayers of the Commonwealth to come to the aid of the industry when prices are low and yet to give the industry the right to exact the maximum amount when prices are high.

Mr. Perkins: Do you think the wheat farmers should suffer?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not think the farmers are entitled to get it both ways. If they are entitled to get world parity for their wheat now, then they must expect world parity when the price is below the home consumption price.

Mr. Perkins: The Australian consumers were called upon to pay 1s. 8d. when world prices were down to 1s. 8d., you must remember.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I take it the member for York is advocating that stock feeders ought to be charged world parity.

Mr. Perkins: We say the taxpayers ought to bear the cost of the difference.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The taxpayers then are to foot the bill to enable the farmer to get world parity on wheat, except wheat for flour.

Mr. Perkins: There is nothing in the Bill about that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is a flour tax which operates if the price falls below the home consumption price. The member for York would say to the general taxpayer, "We expect you to pay more for your flour than you are paying now because world prices are up, but if we are unfortunate and world prices should fall below the home consumption price, then we want you to come in again and make a further contribution to our industry." The hon. member cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Perkins: There is a lot of difference between 8s. and 17s. a bushel, which is export parity.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I think the Chairman of Committees ought to set a good example.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We have to keep in mind that it is one thing to have an ideal, namely, that the farmer should be allowed to get the full benefit of the high market, but another thing to achieve it in practice. If we follow the recommendations of this Royal Commission and increase the price of wheat for stock feed to the extent that it recommends, that will result in an increase in the price of butter, the price of eggs, the price of bacon and the price of milk, all items which form an important part of the regimen of the basic wage earner. The inevitable result will be a substantial rise in the basic wage, with increased costs all round, and consequently the farmer in the long run might find himself worse off than he is without this increased price.

The whole thing is bound up in the deliberate policy of the Commonwealth Government, eminently successful so far I say without hesitation, of keeping prices in the Commonwealth within bounds. Once this proposition is agreed to, however, it would

be impossible to stop prices from getting out of bounds and then we would have repercussions in all directions. The Minister, when moving the second reading, said that it was desirable to have a State plan on the statute-book ready for proclamation, and he went on to use the words to which I have already referred, "in order to avoid the inevitable chaos which would result upon the Commonwealth relinquishing control." The Commonwealth does not seem to be worried about this inevitable chaos at all.

The Minister for Agriculture: There would be a disorganisation of marketing, I said.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is a big difference between a disorganisation of marketing, as the Minister now says, and inevitable chaos.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is chaos in a mild sense.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: A big difference! Of course, there would be some disorganisation owing to a change of plan, but I am informed it would be very slight indeed because all the machinery exists already to deal with such a situation. I venture to say that if the Commonwealth powers ceased tomorrow we would not notice any disorganisation in this State, so efficiently did the voluntary pool work. I am of opinion that the sensible approach to this question is to have some regard to what the Commonwealth's intentions are. The Minister for Agriculture, in answer to some questions this afternoon, stated that the Commonwealth Government had been requested to say what arrangements it proposed to make. What the Minister did not tell us was when the Commonwealth Government was asked. It seems to me that is must have been within the last day or two.

The Minister for Agriculture: My statement proved that the Commonwealth had been asked only in the last few days.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The Minister said at the Premiers' Conference that the Commonwealth had intimated it was continuing the Defence (Transitional Provisions) Act.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That removes the necessity for the Bill, as we have the assurance that there is no possibility of those powers ceasing to exist. The commissioners themselves say that it would be futile to try to establish a State pool while the Commonwealth powers continued to be exercised. It is almost as certain as that night follow day there will be evolved in the Commor wealth a general plan of wheat marketin and stabilisation.'

The Minister for Agriculture: I hope yo are right.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Too much atter tion has been given to the matter alread for it to be jettisoned now without furthe consideration. We know, too, that arrange ments have already been made for an earl consideration of the 15-point plan of th Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation. W also know that at present an inquiry is be ing made to endeavour to ascertain the cos of producing wheat in the Commonwealtl That cost is to be used as a basis for an plan established upon the 15-point plan o the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federatio Why should we tinker here with a Bill whic we know will never be put into force an which would be disastrous for us, as a Stat if we were left with it and had a period o falling prices such as occurred in 1930 an 1931? It is well for members to refres their memories as to what took place i certain countries of the world at a tim when prices were low, so that we may kno what to expect if that happens again an we have a State pool here.

The Minister for Agriculture: I feel tha no Commonwealth Government could tak the responsibility of allowing prices to fa to that extent again. With our presen economy it would be disastrous.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Are you not prov ing my argument?

The Minister for Agriculture: No. I ar only trying to talk commonsense.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is proving m argument, which I hope is commonsense.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is al right, but we want to be prepared.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Of course, we kno that the Commonwealth, having given s much thought and consideration to a plan will not abandon it now—

The Minister for Agriculture: Do w know that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —because it ha been proved to be necessary. There was a international agreement between 22 coun tries before. True, it lasted only 12 months but it was a start. It was an indication tha

international action was regarded as necessary in order to cope with a situation that is well beyond the capacity of a State like Western Australia.

The Minister for Agriculture: But if we knew that, we would not waste our time on this.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We know that.

The Minister for Agriculture: We do not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We are a mere drop in the ocean.

Hon. N. Keenan: So is Australia as a whole.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, we are not.

Hon. N. Keenan: It is a big drop.

Mr. Reynolds: Not in connection with wool.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Australia was regarded as a wheat producing country sufficiently important to be in the discussions when the proposal for an international arrangement was being considered.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is one of the Big Four.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, it is one of the big four producing countries. But Western Australia is only a very small part of that total. It is true that because we only want to retain about 4,500,000 bushels for consumption within the State and we can export the balance, the present time is a particularly favourable one for us to endeavour to get 17s. a bushel for all over and above 4,500,000 bushels which we do export. But is that a fair proposition—to expect to come in now and grab that and then throw ourselves on the mercy of the rest of the Commonwealth if prices happen to fall below the existing home consumption price?

The Minister for Agriculture: I think you are arguing on wrong premises.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister is saying we can be assured the price will not again fall below 5s.

The Minister for Agriculture: No; I say you can be assured this legislation will not be proclaimed if the Commonwealth carries on.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister may as well tell me he knows it will not be proclaimed.

The Minister for Agriculture: I hope you are right.

Mr. Leslie: We are out to help ourselves.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not think we will help ourselves if we establish a State pool. The wheatgrowers do not think so either.

Mr. Leslie: They say it is a good alternative.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Australian wheatgrowers are supporting a Commonwealth marketing organisation and a Commonwealth stabilisation plan. Any action on the part of individual States must delay rather than assist the establishment of a full Commonwealth scheme.

Mr. Leslie: This is not being put up in conflict with that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But it is.

Mr. Leslie: It is not put up as such; it is an alternative.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is all it is.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is definitely in conflict.

Mr. Leslie: We are not going to be left helpless. That is all.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is in conflict with the Commonwealth idea. To ask me to believe that the proposal to increase the home consumption price for wheat consumed as flour from 5s. 2d. to 8s. is not in conflict with general Commonwealth policy is to ask me to believe something I am not prepared to believe.

Mr. Ackland: That is why we know we will not get a fair Commonwealth scheme.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The inference I draw from the interjection is that a fair Commonwealth scheme is one that is going to give farmers world parity for all wheat they produce.

Mr. Ackland: Cost of production plus a reasonable profit. You know that.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If it comes to that, that is the basis of the 15-point plan.

Mr. Leslie: Which the Commonwealth Government will not give us.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The hon. member is not entitled to say that. The Commonwealth has intimated its intention to give the matter the fullest consideration.

Mr. Leslie: We have heard that for a long time.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Well, who has set up an inquiry into the cost of production?

Mr. Leslie: That holds no promise of anything.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, but I cannot imagine that any self-respecting Government would do it as a gesture and call upon the taxpayers to foot the expense.

Mr. Leslie: It has been done. Similar actions have been taken as gestures.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Not by Labour Governments.

Mr. Leslie: By all Governments.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is too much interjecting.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In the period between the 1924-25 to 1928-29 seasons and the 1934-35 to 1938-39 seasons the world wheat trade shrank by about one-third, proving that it is inevitable that we reach a stage when there is an inelastic demand for wheat.

Mr. Leslie: Demand or need?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Demand! Try as we do, we cannot appreciably increase demand over and above the figure at which it appears to stabilise. If we agree that is so, we have to admit the possibility of a stage of over-production again such as we had before; and when we reach a stage of over-production, prices fall overnight.

Mr. Leslie: If you talk of needs, it is a different thing.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Needs do not supply the money to purchase goods.

Mr. Leslie: They may on a stabilisation scheme.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Effective demand fixes the price and we know at present that though the increase is tremendously high, a number of countries, because of lack of foreign exchange, are finding it difficult to purchase their needs, and they require a lot more corn than they are getting. I have read that even though the 1946-47 harvest is not nearly sufficient to meet the demand, there is the possibility that some of it will not be sold at existing prices because of sheer inability of the purchasing countries to find the necessary exchange to get it.

Mr. Leslie: That happens in our own State.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is a factor we have to take into consideration when we are trying to form an opinion about the possibility of the price level. We have to face up to the certainty of a recession of prices and a stage when production will overtake consumption. Following the last war, because of the very strong demand—the strong and continued demand—the production of wheat was pushed out into the semi-arid regions of the United States and Canada. The price was such as to give a good return to growers even though the return per acre was not high. High prices will always stimulate production; and it is an acknowledged fact that when wheat production is stimulated in that way, it takes some time before the farmers will voluntarily reduce their acreages. What sends them out of business is that if there is a continued fall in prices and they get no financial assistance from Governments, they are obliged to leave their blocks and go bankrupt. But Governments usually endeavour to find finance to stave off bankruptcy under such circumstances and so production is maintained at the same level and we have the building up of a very big surplus.

As early as May, 1929—and members will see some relationship between the period which elapsed following 1918 up to 1929 and the period with which we are dealing now, the post-war period—the United States Government was very concerned with the fall in price. So it set up a farm board which granted loans to farmers so that they could get their wheat off the market in an attempt to keep up the price. By 1931, the board had accumulated 330,000,000 bushels of wheat at prices substantially above world prices. That is a colossal amount. It so happened that a series of droughts subsequently enabled it to clear that surplus, but what would be the position of Western Australia, with a State pool, if we struck a period of prices like that? I suppose we would then go back to the suggestion of the Minister, that the Commonwealth Government could not allow the farmers to be in a difficult situation if prices fell. If we accept that as being sound, we have to say then, in acknowledgment of the fact that the Gov-

ernment will be called upon to find finance for farmers if prices fall, that the farmer should not expect to get all the high price when world parity stands as it does at present.

Mr. Leslie: He is not asking for it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is next door to it.

Mr. Leslie: No fear.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He is asking for almost all of it.

Mr. Leslie: You are beginning to qualify your statement a little. If you go a bit further you will be right.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Assuming the Western Australian crop will be 26,000,000 bushels, the farmer is asking that for 22,000,000 bushels he shall get world parity. That is nearly all of it, surely. It is unfair to adopt that attitude if, at the same time, we expect the Commonwealth, when prices fall, to go to his assistance by giving him substantial grants in various directions. I refer again to the 1929-30 period. After the Farm Board had accumulated a surplus of 330,000,000 bushels, the position was somewhat eased because of the occurrence of droughts. The various pools in operation tried to tackle the problem, but the practice, which is almost universal with pools, of making advance payments, put them all into serious difficulty.

We had the situation of prices falling to 56 cents a bushel in 1930. Despite all their efforts to keep wheat off the market, and buying it up at prices above world parity, it fell to 56 cents a bushel. What is to stop it from doing something similar again? What, other than some international action? If international action is envisaged, we cannot afford to have separate State pools functioning in the various States of the Commonwealth. We should be in the position of having proper agreements, by being in a Commonwealth pool. The whole history of wheat production is one of fluctuation. The farmers at one period enjoy good prices, and appear to be on the highway to prosperity, and shortly afterwards they are down in the trough of despair because of the quick and tremendous fall which occurs in the price level. So far no satisfactory method of easing that fall has been found. We are at the stage of having to look for one, but the establishing of State pools will not assist.

Mr. Leslie: It is better than nothing.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is not always better than nothing, because steps might be taken that would delay remedial action, whereas if they had not been taken at all the remedial action could have been considerably expedited

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It might conceivably worry the State Treasurer, and cause him to go grey.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Not our Treasurer.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: By reading a publication of considerable standing, on this subject, I found these recommendations, with which I entirely agree, because I think they set out the position as it can best be set out in the light of current knowledge: Firstly, there is need to reach collective agreement on a range of prices fair to exporters and to importers. If there is to be any agreement at all to get stability, it is obvious it cannot be one-way traffic. Whilst it might suit exporters at present, there will come a time when it will suit importers.

We have to acknowledge the possibility of a change and so come together and agree upon a fair price. So, there is need to reach collective agreement on a range of prices fair to the exporters and the importers. Secondly, there is necessity for co-operation in a stock-building programme. That means, of course, that in order to guard against the occurrence of droughts, which cannot be foreseen, it is necessary that there should be in existence some stock of wheat to meet an extraordinary demand following upon a period of scarcity. Obviously there has to be some collective agreement for the financing of such stocks and the growing of the necessary quantity to make possible the setting up of the stocks. Thirdly, there is the need for co-operation in the management of export supplies or export quotas, particularly when world supplies threaten to become excessive. How can a State, with a State pool, satisfactorily meet that requirement? We know very well that if we were functioning in competition with a wheat organisation of the Commonwealth, and we wanted to charter ships to get our crop away we would frequently be in ex-

treme difficulty. It appears to me to be absolutely unworkable for us to establish a pool, compulsory or voluntary, in Western Australia, and expect it to function satisfactorily unless there is a similar pool in each of the other States, with agreements between all the pools; or, failing that, a Commonwealth pool bringing in all the States on the one basis. To expect us to function satisfactorily here, in the face of different policies elsewhere, is to expect something which, I say, is not possible.

Then there is the big financial risk involved. I take it that the State of Western Australia would have to back any advance. If advances were made and we suffered a fall in price, then the State would have to carry a tremendous burden. That, I suppose, brings us back again to the statement of the Minister for Agriculture, that we would, if prices fell so low as to cause a loss, have to look to the Commonwealth. If we are going to start off in anticipation of looking to the Commonwealth when we are up against trouble, we had better look to the Commonwealth in the first instance and be in a Commonwealth scheme altogether. It seems to me that this State has nothing whatever to gain in the long run from the establishment of a State pool, and I do not think we should do anything to assist towards its establishment. The only time when we should consider it at all is when all else has failed and we are left to our own resources and have to do something to effect an improvement.

But all else has not failed, and I challenge the Minister, or anyone else, to bring forward evidence to prove that the state of chaos with which we are threatened would indeed occur if the Commonwealth powers ceased to exist. We know there would be no such state of chaos and that the voluntary pool could function. We would be foolish to do anything to suggest to other people that we are thinking along the lines of a State pool. We should only do that when everything else has failed, when we have been abandoned and told by the Commonwealth that it has no intention of setting up a Commonwealth scheme.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is all the Bill is for.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But the Commonwealth has not told us that, and all the evidence points the opposite way. Members will have an opportunity to bring forward arguments to prove that a state of chaos will result. The commissioners say that there are constitutional difficulties in the way of both a State and a Commonwealth pool—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Sections 92 and 51.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —but that in their opinion the difficulties confronting the Commonwealth pool are greater than those confronting the State pool. I do not agree. I know there are difficulties confronting both, but I say that the Commonwealth, with its far greater powers and financial resources, is in a much better position to evolve a plan to which all will subscribe than are individual States, going their several ways.

The Minister for Education: We did not have much luck last year.

Mr. Leslie: You are only arguing with yourself.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If I have convinced the member for Mt. Marshall, I have done something, as it is the first time he has been convinced of anything. If he will read the report, he will find that the two arguments advanced for the introduction of the Bill no longer exist. If the assumptions upon which the Bill was recommended are no longer there, the only inference is that under existing circumstances the commissioners would not have recommended the Bill, and the Government should therefore realise that there is no need for it.

Mr. Leslie: The reasons still exist.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would like proof of that. The first point is the assumption on the part of the commission that the Commonwealth powers would cease to exist in December of this year.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The Minister thought that, when the Bill was drafted.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is in the report.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Now we know that those powers will not cease on that date.

The Minister for Agriculture: We do not know it yet.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Is it not definite?

The Minister for Agriculture: Not yet. We will confirm it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The statement coming from the other side astonishes me. Here is a report which sets out in black and white

that, acting upon a certain assumption, the commission recommends a Bill. The assumption is that these Commonwealth powers will cease in December, 1947. Then the Minister has information which tells him beyond doubt that the Commonwealth powers will not cease in December, 1947.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am waiting for that confirmation now.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister tells me that the assumption still exists.

Mr. Leslie: We have no information to the contrary.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is a peculiar method of arithmetic.

The Minister for Agriculture: We are all different from one another.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: As the reasons given by the commission for the introduction of the Bill no longer exist, there is no need for the Bill. Apart from that, if one analyses—as I have endeavoured to do—the possible advantages and disadvantages accruing from the establishment of a State pool, one must come to the conclusion that it would be unwise to pass the Bill. In the interests of the wheatgrowers of Western Australia, and in the interests of the Commonwealth of Australia, I hope this State will not take the step of setting up machinery for a State pool now, but rather that we will do everything possible to get the Commonwealth Government to introduce a complete scheme—not a half-baked scheme such as this, for marketing only—but a scheme which will attend to the marketing of the product and at the same time give the producer what is so necessary to him, a guaranteed minimum price, so that he will know that if he goes into wheat production, does his job and delivers his wheat, he will get a price that will ensure him a fair livelihood. Surely that is more important to him than that he should have an opportunity, for a fleeting period, of making hay while the sun shines.

The Minister for Agriculture: You have the wrong outlook.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is all the Bill does, if put into operation, and if the Commonwealth can be cajoled or dragooned—I understood the Government was to try some of those methods—into putting up the home consumption price, the farmer can make hay while the sun shines, and have a short life and a merry one, but that is not much good to the industry as a whole.

The Attorney General: Your view will let the farmers down with a terrible thud.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The farmers themselves do not think that. At a meeting at Warracknabeal—

The Minister for Agriculture: Why not keep to Western Australia?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —where Mr. Teasdale went—

The Minister for Agriculture: This Bill is not for Warracknabeal.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —he addressed 2,000 wheatgrowers—

Mr. Ackland: By invitation, not necessity.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: —and spoke to them for 1½ hours on the advantages of a State pool, but I am told that they voted against him, with but two dissentient voices. Out of 2,000 who were present he could find only two supporters for a State pool. I can understand that and I believe there would be a similar result here if it became a question of a State pool in preference to a Commonwealth pool. I am endeavouring to show the wheatgrowers that it is a foolish policy to wish to hop in now and get all they can from the high market price, leaving the future to look after itself. In the long run they will be far worse off than if they went in for a proper stabilisation plan that would give them a guaranteed minimum price. The Minister has an impression that the Bill means a stabilisation plan, because he said so.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: He thought he was dealing with the Dried Fruits Bill.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This is what the Minister said—

> We have, undoubtedly, made inquiries through our department as to whether the Commonwealth Government intends to continue the scheme. The point I want to make is that it is essential, on the recommendations of this Royal Commission—

The basis of the assumption on which the recommendations were made is no longer there, but the Minister did not say that—

> that we should in the interests of the wheatgrowers of Western Australia be prepared to carry on wheat marketing in a stabilised form.

This does not mean carrying on wheat marketing in a stabilised form.

The Minister for Agriculture: You will agree that compulsory wheat marketing will go a long way towards the stabilisation of the industry and that it must have that effect.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I will not agree to that at all. I claim that what is necessary for a stabilised industry is a guaranteed minimum price, and there is no other way of attaining that objective. We could have all the marketing schemes in the world and they would function satisfactorily when prices were high, but when prices fall an efficient marketing scheme will not keep farmers on the land if the price they get for their commodities is less than the cost of production. In those circumstances we must have some plan that will provide for the almost certain period when there will be a serious recession of prices. The Bill does not deal with that aspect at all. The Royal Commissioners' recommendation is that there should be a State marketing scheme and that we should look to the Commonwealth for a stabilisation scheme. We may do so, but we will look in vain for it if we wish to proceed in that way.

The only hope of obtaining a proper stabilisation scheme is to have a marketing scheme in conjunction with it, so that when prices are high sufficient can be put into the pool to enable the funds to be drawn upon as requisite to make up low prices to what they should be. I suggest we shall do nothing to assist in the realisation of that ideal by proceeding in this fashion and establishing State pools. I do not believe there are many members on the Government side of the House who believe otherwise. The Royal Commissioners recommended that there should be a State pool and, because members opposite are friends of theirs, they feel in duty bound to introduce such legislation whether it is needed or not. As the assumptions upon which the recommendations were made no longer persist there is no need for the Bill, and I hope it will not be agreed to.

MR. ACKLAND (Irwin-Moore) [10.35]: I rise to support the Bill. I listened with considerable interest to the member for North-East Fremantle, and he is one of three things. He may be horribly misinformed—and it is very hard to think that a man who has been Minister for Agriculture could be misinformed—he may be eaten up with sectional interests, or, thirdly, he may have been indulging in cunning misrepresentation.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is very generous!

Mr. ACKLAND: I cannot help it. I believe that is so, and while I am a member of this Chamber I shall on all occasions state what I believe.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Very generous indeed!

Mr. ACKLAND: It is certain that the maintenance of a Commonwealth pool would be in the interests of the people of Australia and there is not one wheatgrower that I know of who does not believe in that completely. We believe in the interests not only of the wheatgrowers but of the people generally that that is the ideal set-up. The member for North-East Fremantle knows as well as I do that with the present socialistic Government in power, it is absolutely impossible to have effect given to anything of the sort.

Mr. Reynolds: What socialistic Government are you speaking about?

Mr. ACKLAND: The Commonwealth Government, and we are talking about a Commonwealth pool.

Mr. Reynolds: I thought you were talking about the State Government.

Mr. ACKLAND: A Federal pool is necessary in the interests of all sections of the community. We do not desire one that would favour wheatgrowers more than it would those who consume the farmers' products. We have been told what the oversea price is, but we have never asked the people of Australia to pay that much for the wheat they use in the form of flour. In the Federal sphere much legislation has been enacted that has been sectional, and I shall refer to only one instance, that of payment of attendance money to wharf labourers. Those payments are made to men who report for work but are not able to get any employment. We are informed that for seven or nine months of this year the wharf labourers have received nearly £250,000. They are paid 12s. daily when they report for work and do not get it. I understand they will receive approximately £330,000 before the end of the year.

That payment is, as I say, at the rate of 12s. a day.

Mr. May: It is not enough to live on!

Mr. ACKLAND: In Australia some 32,000,000 bushels of wheat are required annually for its population of, roughly, 8,000,000 people. That means to say they use four bushels a year. In Western Australia 500,000 people consume about 1,900,000 bushels at a similar rate of about four bushels a year. We are asking for the payment of 16s. 4d. per head of the population per year for the purchase of wheat from the farmers and that rate per bushel should be increased to a little over 6s., which represents the cost of production plus a reasonable profit.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You are asking for an increase to 8s. per bushel.

Mr. ACKLAND: There is nothing in the Bill about that.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: But there is in the Royal Commissioners' report.

Mr. ACKLAND: I am discussing the Bill, not the report.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: But the Bill is based on the report.

Mr. ACKLAND: I will accept the figure of 8s. referred to by the member for North-East Fremantle and that will give an increase from 5s. 2d. ports, equal to 4s. 1d. siding, and instead of paying a little over £1, port basis, per head of population, the payment would be somewhere about 35s. per head spread over 52 weeks of the year. We know how costs have gone up, and the man who is producing wheat has had increases in his costs just as everyone else has had. One would think that any Government that would be willing to spend over £300,000 in attendance payments to wharf labourers in the circumstances I have indicated, would be prepared to agree to the farmers receiving 35s. spread over the full year. It has been said that there are 15 points that have been placed before the Commonwealth Government by the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation. The member for North-East Fremantle must know as well as I do that several deputations from that body have approached the Prime Minister asking him to give effect to those points. It is not necessary to read the whole of the 15 points but I shall quote some of them as follows:—

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.

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.

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

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 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 reimbursed to export parity by the Government.

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

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

It is well known to anybody who has been following the fight that has been going on for some years that there is not the slightest possibility and not the slightest intention of the Commonwealth doing that. The wheatgrowers in Western Australia, in common with those in other parts of the Commonwealth, would be perfectly satisfied with such a scheme as that. I am not going to repeat all the figures with reference to what they have received from the Commonwealth. The amounts have been considerable and we are at all times ready to remember this. But our costs are constantly rising. When I spoke in this House six weeks ago, I mentioned that the present Commonwealth scheme was costing the people of Australia 32½ millions a year. At present it is costing at the rate of 36 millions a year, and our costs are going up as well. Still, we are receiving very much below the cost of producing the wheat.

In 1934, when the Gepp Commission sat, it ascertained that the wheatgrowers of Australia owed creditors £153,000,000. During the next nine years up to 1943, there was only one year in which they received a price equal to the cost of production. I believe that was in 1935-36. In 1935-36 they received more than the cost of production, namely, 5s. 0⅛d. In every other year the price was down to 2s. or 3s., with costs about 4s. 4d. It stands to reason, then, that the industry owed considerably in excess of £153,000,000 by the year 1943. We know that the farmers have been growing wheat at a considerable loss since that time also. In 1938 it was ascertained that the cost of growing wheat was 4s. 4d. a bushel. In 1943 the value had gone down to 4s. 1d. and costs had increased during the whole of the intervening period.

The only thing the Commonwealth Government promised to do with regard to the 15 points was to set up a committee to inquire into costs. One member of the committee came from Western Australia. I have previously stated that a committee of the Primary Producers' Association ascertained that the minimum cost was 5s. 5½d., but I have here a report of the cost of production in this State by E. Walker, who stated it to be 5s. 8d. a bushel.

Mr. Reynolds: When was that?

Mr. ACKLAND: In 1945.

Mr. Reynolds: What about the price of wool since then?

Mr. ACKLAND: I am referring to wheat and to the committee set up by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. Reynolds: And the price of fruit, too.

Mr. ACKLAND: Within a week of this gentleman having been appointed as Western Australian representative on that committee, he stated at a conference of the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation held in April, 1946, that the farmers of Western Australia could not justify a cost exceeding 4s. at sidings in this country. Yet, less than 12 months before that, according to a report I have before me, he stated that the cost was 5s. 8d. a bushel.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Then is either of his statements reliable?

Mr. ACKLAND: I am certain that the figure of 5s. 8d. was reliable; at any rate, more so than the other. This is the only thing that has been done by the Commonwealth regarding the 15 points. I do not see how we can expect that committee to do its job if one of its members can adopt such an attitude after having been appointed. It has been stated that chaos will occur at the end of this year. We know that recently the Commonwealth Government extended its wartime regulations for another 12 months. The member for North-East Fremantle knows quite well that when that legislation comes to an end, there must be chaos if we have nothing to take its place.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Do not talk nonsense!

Mr. ACKLAND: The hon. member paid a wonderful tribute to the voluntary wheat pool if Western Australia, a tribute which was justly merited. If there is not some definite organisation set up, with Government assistance, there must be chaos when the Commonwealth legislation ceases. We sincerely hope that the necessity will never arise to make use of the measure now before the House, but we must have it ready in case the necessity does arise.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is the point.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Why?

Mr. ACKLAND: Because of the chaos which might result.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Was there chaos before?

Mr. ACKLAND: No, because the world was then in a different position. Everything was ready and waiting; shipping, finance, and so on.

The Attorney General: There has been a war since.

Mr. ACKLAND: The wheat pool in Western Australia was built up from a very small beginning. We hope and believe that there will be not only one State pool when the Commonwealth Government gets out of the wheat business. We believe that all the other States of Australia will have a pool and that one central organisation will deal with all oversea sales of Australian wheat. Western Australia is the right place for us to start. Geographically, we are situated advantageously and in wheat marketing and handling we are easily the foremost State of Australia. As the member for North-East Fremantle will agree, we have men here who have been trained in the wheat trade and have successfully managed and

operated our wheat business. Under this Bill, the chairman of that body will be a member of the directorate of the proposed pool.

We also have Co-operative Bulk-handling, Ltd., which will, under this Bill, handle the wheat. Its capabilities are already recognised not only in Australia, but oversea as well. The services of the officers of that company have been made use of by New South Wales Grain Elevators, the bulk-handling facilities in Victoria, and even by the people in New Zealand who bought our wheat cheap under the present scheme. They asked for our men to be sent to New Zealand to instruct them how to handle the wheat. Quite recently, we had in this State a South Australian Parliamentary body which inquired into our bulk-handling facilities. When that body returned to South Australia it recommended that similar facilities should be provided there, because, they said, our method was elastic, economical and effective. Only yesterday, we had in Perth an agricultural adviser to the United States Government. He has toured our State and says that Co-operative Bulk-handling, Ltd., was, in his opinion, the most perfect example of co-operation in the world today.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Yet with all that, we are going to have chaos!

Mr. ACKLAND: It will prevent chaos.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Those facilities are ready now.

Mr. ACKLAND: It will need more than a voluntary scheme to deal with this matter. The hon. member knows that quite well, too.

Hon. J: T. Tonkin: No, I do not.

Mr. ACKLAND: The Commonwealth crop average is 150,000,000 bushels. Home consumption accounts for 60,000,000 bushels, which represents 40 per cent. of the whole of our production. In Western Australia the average crop is 30,000,000 bushels. We use 1,900,000 bushels to feed our people and we need 1,400,000 bushels to feed our stock, a very poor percentage of what is used in Australia, but it means that instead of our having only 60 per cent. of our crop to export we have nearly 90 per cent. If we cannot have a Commonwealth pool, by all means let us have a State pool so that the producers can recoup the losses they have suffered in past years. There is no suggestion of asking the people of Western Australia to pay 17s. 4d. per bushel for wheat, which is the oversea price today.

Mr. Reynolds: What do you reckon they should pay?

Mr. ACKLAND: I think the flour millers should pay a little over 6s., which is the cost of production, plus a reasonable profit. The people of the State should be prepared to help the stock feeders to pay something towards the oversea cost of the balance of that wheat.

Mr. Needham: What would you consider to be a reasonable profit?

Mr. ACKLAND: The same as any other firm would expect—gross, 10 per cent., net, 5 per cent.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Not many firms are working on a profit as low as that. The banks do better than that.

Mr. ACKLAND: There is another aspect. We are very favourably situated as to freights, which gives this State a preference of about 4½d. per bushel over the other States. I obtained some illuminating figures today dealing with freight rates. It may interest members to know that not one bushel of wheat has been exported from Western Australia to Great Britain since 1942. Since then all our wheat has been sold to Mediterranean countries, the Middle East and the Eastern States. The freight for bulk wheat from the Eastern States to the Middle East is 96s. per ton and from Western Australia, 82s. 6d. per ton; to Malaya, the respective rates are 65s. 6d. and 52s.; to India, 76s. and 63s. respectively. That means an average of 4½d. per bushel in favour of Western Australia. If we are not to have a Commonwealth pool—which I, for one, know we cannot get on just terms and which every grower belonging to the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation is not prepared to accept, unless it is on just terms—it stands to reason that the Commonwealth Government will have to get out of the wheat marketing business as soon as its present powers cease. The Commonwealth cannot take the wheat of the producers of this State except on just terms. This State, South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales have not shown any desire to pass enabling legislation to allow the Commonwealth Government to take their wheat. On the wall of this Chamber are some interesting graphs which I think teach us a lesson.

It has been mentioned that there are four main wheatgrowing countries and they are all represented on the graph on the wall. I intend to deal with only three, leaving out Argentina. The figures are divided into four periods—the pre-war period, 1909-1914; the World War I period, 1914-18; the intervening peace period; and the period from 1939 to 1946, the period of World War II. If anyone studies those periods closely, he will find that all the countries, with the exception of Australia, increased their wheat production. In Australia, we have made a very definite backward step; and that is because other wheatgrowing countries—and particularly the United States of America, which has made the biggest advance—have seen that the growers have received a marketable price for their wheat. But the most distressing feature of the graph is the fact that the average per acre in this country has decreased, while in other countries it has increased. That is not because producers here are not just as good farmers but because they have not had the finance to work their properties as they should have been worked. I am willing to admit that the lack of fertiliser, the lack of adequate dressings, has played a part, but there is a far greater story to be told than that. The people in this country have not been able to do the job as it should be done, and the averages have gradually been decreasing over the last periods. In common with all the members of the Farmers' Union of Western Australia, I sincerely desire to have a Commonwealth scheme. If there were any possibility of having one, we would not be asking for this State scheme.

Mr. Needham: On your own terms.

Mr. ACKLAND: On just terms—terms which are just to all the people, the producers just as much as the consumers. But the way in which things have been working, particularly since 1943, has meant that we have been going back further each day. We are getting a lesser return for our labour and we are not prepared to agree to any scheme along the lines proposed by the Commonwealth Government, which is out to socialise wheatgrowing as it desires to socialise other things. We are not prepared to be a party to that. We believe it would be in the interests of the people of this country to have a State scheme to deal with our own crop. We believe it is not too much to ask the people of this country to pay a matter of 35s. at the port price of wheat when it is considered how much costs have increased in other directions. I would like to read something that appeared on the notice paper of Co-operative Bulk-handling yesterday. This is it—

(a) We used to pay 17s. 6d. for a set of liners. The price rose steadily, and from March to June this year we paid 42s. 4d. In May we ordered a further thousand sets and these have just been delivered to us at 61s. 1d. per set. This means that it will cost over £3 to replace any set now in use.

(b) We paid £28 5s. per ton for cane before 1941. In that year we paid £52 17s. 6d., and in July this year we received a parcel, of 2½ cwts., which cost £202 per ton. This represents 7s. for a single cane.

(c) A 45-ft. length of 2½-in. rope for Clarke shovels cost us 5s. some years ago. The price is now exactly double that figure.

That is the way many costs with which the wheatgrower is faced today are increasing. I believe there is every justification in asking the House to pass this legislation, particularly when it is not going to bear very heavily on the rest of the community; and to enable us to take advantage of the oversea value of wheat at present. There is no intention on the part of farmers to ask for all that money to be paid to them from this Western Australian wheat pool. They are perfectly willing for a considerable amount of it to be put into an equalisation scheme from which they would be able to draw when wheat is reduced in value.

On motion by Hon. A. H. Panton, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Thursday, the 9th October.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 11.7 p.m.