

they should be. It is disadvantageous to the owner if he finds that the tenant has been charged with a breach of the licensing laws. Such an occurrence might prove detrimental to the future leasing of the premises. In order to give effect to what I suggest, I propose to delete the word "or" in line 3 of Subsection (2) and then, after the word "license" in line 4 to insert the words "or an Australian wine license." That will make the phraseology clear. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee.*

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; Hon. Sir Charles Latham in charge of the Bill.  
Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 15:

Hon. H. K. WATSON: As a matter of drafting, should not the word "by" at the commencement of paragraph (a) be transferred to after the word "amended" in line 1 of the clause?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I think the drafting is quite all right. It was done by the Parliamentary Draftsman and he was extremely careful about it.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think the alteration is necessary.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

#### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 2nd August.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 8.22 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 27th July, 1949.

### CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Railways, (a) as to price paid for coal	742
(b) as to Perth-Kalgoorlie service	742
(c) as to reduction of service and employees	742
Timber Industry, (a) as to Associated Timber Industries of W.A.	742
(b) as to licenses for oversea exports	743
(c) as to amenities for workers	743
Israelite Bay-Esperance-road, as to suspension of traffic	743
Royal Perth Hospital, as to beds, charges and subsidy	743
Wheat, as to receiving bins, Yarramony-Eastwards	744
Moola Bulla Station, as to supervision of homes construction	744
Prices Control, (a) as to printing of regulations	744
(b) as to inspectors employed	744
(c) as to retail charges for meat	744
"Western Australian Industrial Gazette," as to expediting publication	744
Fisheries Select Committee, as to report	745
Building supplies, (a) as to exports of material	745
(b) as to increased quotas	745
Weights and measures, as to inspection and checking of scales	745
Milk, condensed, as to permit for factory	745
Perth Town Hall, as to new site	745
"Hansard," as to expediting publication	746
Housing, as to purchase of rental homes	746
Motions : State Transport Board, as to road cartage of fish	746
Housing, as to suspension of permits for business premises	752
State Arbitration Court, as to declaring basic wage, passed	757
Mines Regulation Act, to disallow certain underground and diseases regulations	758
Timber, as to limitation of exports	771
Water Supplies, as to State-wide flat rate	780
Bills : Electoral Act Amendment (No. 3), 1r.	746
Fisheries Act Amendment, 1r.	746
Companies Act Amendment (No. 2), 1r.	746
Superannuation, Sick, Death, Insurance, Guarantee and Endowment (Local Governing Bodies' Employees) Funds Act Amendment, 3r.	746

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

## QUESTIONS.

### RAILWAYS.

#### (a) *As to Price Paid for Coal.*

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Railways:

What is the price being paid for coal supplied from the following sources as used by the railways in this State—

Co-operative Mine;  
Proprietary Mine;  
Stockton Mine;  
Cardiff Mine;  
Griffin Mine.  
Wyvern Mine;  
No. 2 Stockton Open-cut;  
Black Diamond Open-cut?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Railways) replied:

Co-operative Mine, 26s. 2d. per ton.  
Proprietary Mine, 26s. 2d. per ton.  
Stockton Mine, 26s. 2d. per ton.  
Cardiff Mine, not used by railways.  
Griffin Mine, 27s. 6d. per ton.  
Wyvern Mine, 27s. 6d. per ton.  
No. 2 Stockton Open-cut, 26s. 2d. per ton.  
Black Diamond Open-cut, 26s. 2d. per ton.

#### (b) *As to Perth-Kalgoorlie Service.*

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) How long is it anticipated that the present reduced time table will operate for passenger trains from Perth to Kalgoorlie and vice versa?

(2) Will extra passenger trains be run to cater for a large number of students travelling to and from their homes during the August school holidays?

(3) If not, why, as all accommodation is always severely overtaxed at school holiday periods?

(4) Has consideration been given by the Railway Department to the running of a special diesel coach to cater for students, utilising daylight hours, coinciding with holiday periods, and with what result?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Railways) replied:

(1) The amended time table is to continue for the time being, but trains will be increased in number, strengthened, or even cancelled, according to the patronage offering.

(2) Yes.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

(4) All diesel electric railcars are fully utilised during daylight hours at vacation times, largely in conveyance of school children on holidays.

#### (c) *As to Reduction of Service and Employees.*

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) In view of the cancellation of one-third of the normal passenger trains from Perth to Kalgoorlie, and vice versa, is it the intention of the Railway Department to reduce the number of employees now on the wages sheet? If so, by what percentage?

(2) If that is not the intention of the management, what added duties will be found for employees normally engaged in running trains which have been cancelled?

(3) What accumulated tonnage of goods is now waiting transport?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Railways) replied:

(1) No.

(2) Clearance of additional goods traffic now awaiting transportation.

(3) Approximately 300,000 tons.

### TIMBER INDUSTRY.

#### (a) *As to Associated Timber Industries of W.A.*

Mr. HOAR asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) How long has the "Associated Timber Industries of W.A." been in existence?

(2) What are the names of the timber companies, firms or individuals that comprise its membership?

(3) Has the Forests Department any official standing in this association in determining the sizes and quantities of timber to be used for—

(a) Home-building (State);  
(b) constructions works (State);  
(c) Eastern States orders;  
(d) oversea exports?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) January, 1948.

(2) Membership consists of:—Millars' Timber & Trading Co. Ltd., State Saw Mills, Bunning Bros. Pty. Ltd., The Kauri

Timber Co. Ltd., Worsley Timber Co. Pty. Ltd., Whittaker Bros. Pty. Ltd., Douglas Jones Pty. Ltd., The Adelaide Timber Co. Ltd., Anderson's Timber & Hardware, Joiners Ltd., W.A. Salvage Pty. Ltd., Buckingham Bros.

(3) Being a trade association, there is no representative of the Forests Department in Associated Timber Industries. The association does not determine matters raised in the question.

(b) *As to Licenses for Oversea Exports.*

Mr. HOAR asked the Minister for Forests:

Are licences required for overseas exports of timber? If so, who issues them?

The MINISTER replied:

Export licenses are issued by the Customs Department, the recommending authority being the Commonwealth Forestry and Timber Bureau and liaison officer in this State Mr. A. C. Shedley, Senior Assistant Conservator of Forests and Co-ordinator of Timber Supplies.

(c) *As to Amenities for Workers.*

Mr. REYNOLDS (without notice) asked the Minister for Forests:

Has further progress been made regarding an amenities fund for all timber workers?

The MINISTER replied:

No further meeting has as yet been called and in that connection I shall take an opportunity of discussing the position with the member for Forrest at an early date.

## ISRAELITE BAY-ESPERANCE ROAD.

*As to Suspension of Traffic.*

Hon. E. NULSEN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Did he see in "The West Australian" of the 25th instant that the Esperance Canning Co. has decided to suspend operations temporarily (in spite of the fact that there is an abundance of salmon at present in the water of Israelite Bay) owing to the road being untraffickable between Israelite Bay and Esperance?

(2) Will he give favourable consideration to assisting the Esperance Road Board to make the road traffickable during winter months between those two points?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The Esperance Road Board was advised in February last that an allocation of £1,000 had been provided for improvements to this road.

If the Esperance board has insufficient plant of its own for this work, the Main Roads Department would assist, but there will be unavoidable delay in finding the necessary additional plant.

## ROYAL PERTH HOSPITAL.

*As to Beds, Charges and Subsidy.*

Hon. A. H. PANTON asked the Minister for Health:

(1) How many beds are available at present at the Royal Perth Hospital in the new section—

(a) public wards;

(b) intermediate wards;

(c) private wards?

(2) What is the amount charged in each of the sections (a), (b) and (c) separately?

(3) What was the amount of the subsidy paid to the Royal Perth Hospital from the Hospital Fund in 1946-47, 1947-48 and 1948-49?

(4) What is the estimated return per year from the beds charged for?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) 230 beds.

(b) 27 beds.

(c) 12 beds.

(2) (a) No charge.

(b) £8 8s. to £10 10s. per week, less £2 16s. per week hospital benefits.

(c) £11 11s. to £12 12s. per week, less £2 16s. per week hospital benefits.

(3) 1946-47, £110,172; 1947-48, £147,423; 1948-49, £246,234.

(4) Temporarily portion of intermediate and private wards are being used for special public ward patients. Annual return on present beds available is estimated at £12,000. When all beds available, £18,000.

**WHEAT.**

*As to Receiving Bins, Yarramony-Eastwards.*

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) How many bulk wheat receiving bins are to be built along the Yarramony-Eastwards route?

(2) Is it intended to build all of them before the end of 1950?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Seven.

(2) The bins will be built according to the material available.

**MOOLA BULLA STATION.**

*As to Supervision of Homes Construction.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

What officer of the Department of Native Affairs is supervising the building of homes for natives at Moola Bulla?

The MINISTER replied:

Mr. C. L. McBeath, who is acting as superintendent and manager of Moola Bulla.

**PRICES CONTROL.**

(a) *As to Printing of Regulations.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Attorney General:

(1) Is he aware that printed regulations under the Prices Control Act are not obtainable by members?

(2) Will he take steps to ensure that ample copies of such regulations are made available forthwith?

(3) If not, why not?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) No.

(2) and (3) Yes.

(b) *As to Inspectors Employed.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Attorney General:

(1) How many inspectors are employed by the Prices Control Department in the enforcement of the provisions of the Act and regulations?

(2) Does he consider the number sufficient to protect the interests of the public and honest traders?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) Seventy-one inspectors are employed by the department.

(2) Yes.

(c) *As to Retail Charges for Meat.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Attorney General:

(1) Is he aware of the fact that meat is being sold to consumers at prices far in excess of those fixed by the Prices Commissioner?

(2) Will he take immediate action to ensure that retail butchers prominently display notices in their shops indicating the fixed prices for meat?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) No.

(2) Under the Regulations notices showing the approved maximum prices for meat must be displayed. A continuous check is made by prices officers to see that this is carried out. Where it is found that it is not carried out, appropriate action is taken.

**"WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRIAL GAZETTE."**

*As to Expediting Publication.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) On what date was the last publication of the "Western Australian Industrial Gazette" issued?

(2) In view of the importance of such publications to industrial unions of employers and employees and other bodies, will he endeavour to have the publications brought up to date in the near future?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The last issue of the "Western Australian Industrial Gazette" was for the half-year ended the 30th June, 1947, and was printed on the 8th September, 1948.

(2) Yes. To expedite publication of further issues of the Gazette, several conferences have been held with the Government Printer, the last of these being on the 22nd instant, before the President of the Arbitration Court, in his Chambers.

The issue for the half-year ended the 31st December, 1947, will be published within the next few weeks, and arrangements have been made to print the matter for the year 1948 in one publication.

## FISHERIES SELECT COMMITTEE.

*As to Report.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Fisheries:

(1) Is he aware that on account of the high price of fish, this essential diet is beyond the means of the wage earner with a family?

(2) In view of the fact that a Select Committee was appointed as far back as the 21st October, 1948, to inquire into the condition of the fishing industry in Western Australia and means whereby greater supplies of local fish at reasonable prices could be made available to the consumer, can he indicate what further period will elapse before the Committee's report is made available to members?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) I am aware that fresh fish is one of the higher-priced foods.

(2) The Government has not yet received the report of the Select Committee, but expects to receive it in the near future.

## BUILDING SUPPLIES.

*(a) As to Exports of Material.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Housing:

What amount, if any, of each of the following commodities has been exported from this State during the six months ended the 30th June, 1949—

- (a) cement;
- (b) roofing material;
- (c) flat asbestos?

The MINISTER replied:

Information relating to exports during June, 1949, is not yet available, but figures for the five months ending the 31st May last are as follows:—

(a) Cement—40 tons to Christmas Island.

(b) and (c) Galvanised iron, flat and corrugated—10 cwt. to Northern Territory.

Asbestos sheeting, flat and corrugated—£103 to Northern Territory.

*(b) As to Increased Quotas.*

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping:

Will she agree to table Western Australia's case for increased quotas compiled by

the State Department of Supply and Shipping and presented to the Commonwealth during May 1948?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

As the report is now 14 months old, it might be misleading to examine it under present conditions, which have materially changed, but I have a reserve copy at my office and any hon. member may peruse it if he so desires.

## WEIGHTS AND MEASURES.

*As to Inspection and Checking of Scales.*

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Police:

(1) How many officers are engaged in inspecting and checking weighing scales under the provisions of the Weights and Measures Act?

(2) How often are such inspections made?

(3) Are the activities of such officers confined to the metropolis?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) Four at present, normally five, one position being vacant.

(2) Inspections are carried out as far as practicable at periods in accordance with the Weights and Measures Act and Regulations.

(3) No.

## MILK, CONDENSED.

*As to Permit for Factory.*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Lands:

When will he table the papers concerning John Glass and Sons' application for a permit to erect premises for the purpose of manufacturing condensed milk, as promised by him in the Legislative Assembly, on the 16th June?

The MINISTER replied:

Today. I will place the papers on the Table of the House now.

## PERTH TOWN HALL.

*As to New Site.*

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Premier: Has the Government reached a decision in regard to the Town Hall site which was the

subject of a report and recommendation three years ago? If so, what is the decision?

The PREMIER replied:

The Town Hall site has been the subject of reports and recommendations over very many years and no Government has found itself in a position to give a decision. However, the question is now receiving further consideration.

### "HANSARD"

#### *As to Expediting Publication.*

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) In view of the fact that copies of current "Hansard" available to members relate in the latest instance to proceedings on the 23rd June last, has he made arrangements for the debates that have taken place since to be published and the proceedings brought up to date?

(2) If not, will he endeavour to make some arrangements to meet the convenience of members in this respect?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) I have not taken the action suggested by the hon. member. I will, however, see what can be done to bring the publication of "Hansard" up to date and will let the hon. member have the information tomorrow.

### HOUSING.

#### *As to Purchase of Rental Homes.*

Mr. REYNOLDS (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

What arrangements, if any, have been made for the purchase of Commonwealth rental homes by tenants and on what terms?

The MINISTER replied:

The matter of the terms of purchase of Commonwealth rental homes was the subject of some variation in views between the Commonwealth and the various States. A conference of officers representing the housing authorities of the States and the Commonwealth took place about two months ago, and I understand that following on this conference the matter is to be discussed at the forthcoming Premiers' conference.

### BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Electoral Act Amendment (No. 3).
- 2, Companies Act Amendment (No. 2).  
Introduced by the Attorney General.
- 3, Fisheries Act Amendment.  
Introduced by the Minister for Fisheries.

### BILL—SUPERANNUATION SICK, DEATH, INSURANCE, GUARANTEE AND ENDOWMENT (LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES' EMPLOYEES) FUNDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### MOTION—STATE TRANSPORT BOARD.

#### *As to Road Cartage of Fish.*

MR. GRAYDEN (Middle Swan) [4.43]:  
I move—

That in the opinion of this House the action of the Department of Industrial Development in recommending the Transport Board to refuse to grant a transport license to the Ocean Canning Co., Belmont, for the purpose of transporting fish from the south coast of Western Australia is not in the best interests of industry. This House further recommends that the aforesaid license should be granted to the Ocean Canning Co.

Briefly, this motion concerns the action of the Transport Board, on the recommendation of the Director of Industrial Development in refusing to grant a license to the Ocean Canning Co., Belmont, to transport fish from the source on the south coast of the State. This means that the company will have to close down. I move the motion, firstly, because the action of the Transport Board in refusing the license means that an established industry will go out of existence, and, secondly, because this will create a monopoly in the fish canning industry, with the result that fishermen on the south coast will have to accept a lower price for their fish.

Mr. May: How was it formerly transported?

Mr. GRAYDEN: Previously the company was able to obtain a license to transport the fish by road, but this year the license has been refused. The action of the board will also mean that 30 employees—and in peak periods 50—will be put out of their jobs and will have to seek other avenues of

employment. In this action of the Transport Board we are carrying out a policy of decentralisation at the expense of an established industry, and in doing so are setting a precedent that will have wide-spread repercussions in the future.

Mr. Reynolds: Is decentralisation the policy of your Government?

Mr. GRAYDEN: I think it is the policy of almost all Governments, but it should not be the policy where it cuts across an established industry. This action of the Transport Board is, to my mind, in the nature of what could be expected in a totalitarian country but not in Australia. The placing of established industry wholly and solely in the hands of a civil servant, as has been done in this case—

Mr. Reynolds: Then you admit that the civil servants control the Government?

Mr. GRAYDEN: — will remove any security that exists for industry at present. The action of the Transport Board cuts completely across the policy on which the Liberal and Country Parties were elected at the last election, and it is therefore a breach of faith with the electors. We believe in a policy of decentralisation, but also that private enterprise should be fostered.

Hon. E. Nulsen: You believe in it in theory, but not in practice.

Mr. GRAYDEN: In this instance I am sorry to relate that we have deviated from that policy. This action on the part of the board completely ignores the rights that the individual has traditionally enjoyed in this country—rights to which members of all parties, except the communist party, subscribe.

Mr. Reynolds: You will have my support on this motion.

Mr. GRAYDEN: This, unfortunately, is the most high-handed action with which I have personally had the misfortune to become acquainted, on the part of a civil servant or Government department. I feel sure that when members become aware of the facts they will agree with me in that regard. In 1937 Mr. Gardiner commenced the canning of sheeps' and lambs' tongues at premises situated at South Belmont. In about 1940 the Chief Inspector of Fisheries, Mr. Fraser, suggested that experiments be initiated in relation to the canning of Perth

herring, which at that time were of no economic importance at all. Soon the company established a satisfactory pack and the Army contracted to take the whole of the output of the cannery for the Fighting Forces. Perth herring in tomato sauce soon became an established line, making possible the creation of the Ocean Canning Company in 1941.

The introduction of fish canning rendered necessary the transfer of the company's meat canning activities, which had been proceeding at Belmont, to new premises at Robb's Jetty, and also the building of additional space at the Belmont factory. After many experiments at the Ocean Canning Company Mr. Gardiner was successful in pioneering the manufacture of agar agar jelly from local seaweed. Hitherto all the agar agar used in Australia had been imported from Japan and, that source of supply having dried up, the provision of the jelly for meat canning, ice cream manufacture, the preparation of bacteriological cultures and so on was placing an enormous strain on the accumulated stocks of the material in this country. Mr. Gardiner was the first man in Australia to produce agar agar on a commercial basis.

In 1944 Mr. Gardiner turned his attention to the canning of Western Australian salmon. His first product was a fish cake mixture that was sold under the trade name of "Frelish." In less than a year he was successful in producing canned salmon outlets of excellent quality which, under the trade names of "Sea Harvest" and "High Seas" have, since the termination of hostilities, enjoyed a ready market throughout the Commonwealth. Since that time he has also produced sea herring and blue sprats, and in doing so has been the pioneer in Western Australia of these two lines on an industrial basis. He has always been dependent on catches made at Hopetoun, Albany, Cheyne Beach and on the lower south-west coast and towards Cape Naturaliste for his supplies of salmon. Salmon were first procured from Hopetoun in 1944.

The Minister for Education: How were they then transported to Perth?

Mr. GRAYDEN: They must have been transported by road first of all and later I think they came by rail, but it was subsequently found impracticable

to send them by rail. Mr. Gardiner's first purchases of salmon in commercial quantities were made at Hopetoun in February, 1945, and at Cheyne Beach in May, 1945, thus providing fishermen—and this is the important point—for the first time in the history of Western Australia with a steady and lucrative market for Western Australian salmon. The whole of the pioneering work, experiments in canning technique, building extensions, installation of freezers, canning equipment, etc., not to mention the transport organisation from point of capture on the South-West coast to the factory at Belmont, was carried out at the personal financial risk of Mr. Gardiner. At the outset the State Treasury guaranteed his operations under the Industries Assistance Act but, after a relatively short time, Mr. Gardiner was able to clear himself of all liability to the Government and in May, 1949, he opened a new cannery at Busselton, costing several thousand pounds. On the 22nd September, 1948, the Western Australian Transport Board wrote to Mr. Gardiner as follows:—

Applications for Transport Board licenses have been submitted recently by a number of operators mainly in respect of the transport of fish from the south coast to Belmont. In considering these applications, the board has had the benefit of the advice of the Director of Industrial Development and also of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries. The former has protested somewhat strongly against the granting of these licenses and his views cut right across those of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries. The board has been in somewhat of a dilemma, but, by direction, has submitted the whole question to our Hon. Minister. Mr. Seward has advised that, provided fishermen do not suffer any financial loss by supplying the Albany factory, then as much as possible should be directed there, particularly as it is claimed that the Albany factory is not working to capacity and would handle considerably more fish than has been received.

The Minister further directed that, whilst the board might grant approval for temporary licenses covering the period to the 31st March, 1949, the management of your cannery should be notified that the supplies of salmon particularly from Hopetoun may not be available after that date. Mr. Fernie suggested zoning the coast in such a manner as to link a canning factory with each section, and that allotted to the Belmont cannery extends from Mandurah to Lancelin Island.

I am inclined to agree with Mr. Fraser, the Chief Inspector of Fisheries, that the potentialities of this zone are so meagre as

to result in the virtual closing of the Belmont factory in the event of this proposal being adopted. This advice is now submitted in order that you may be warned of the possibilities and give you an opportunity of placing your views before the board, if desired, so that further consideration of the subject may be given prior to the proposed date of expiry of the temporary license on the 31st March, 1949.

Whilst all this was going on, canneries had been erected by Mr. D. S. Hunt at Albany and at Esperance, and a cannery built at Hopetoun by Mr. Young had subsequently been acquired by Mr. Hunt. The Transport Board's letter, which I have just read, was naturally a tremendous shock to the Ocean Canning Co. It expected, after doing all that heavy spade work and others had noticed their success, that it would have competitors. It has no objection to healthy competition but, as one who was the pioneer, who has shown to the world the possibility of Western Australian salmon, Mr. Gardiner did not expect the State Government to take such action as would, in effect, remove all competition from his competitor. That, in plain language, is the effect of the Government's action in refusing him the right not to purchase fish but to transport it from the south coast to his Belmont factory.

The Director of Industrial Development has stated to the Transport Board that the Ocean Canning Co. should be permitted, without any competition at all, to obtain supplies for the Belmont factory on that part of the coast between Mandurah and Lancelin Island. The Government should be aware, if the Department of Industrial Development is not, although it actually is, that there are no salmon in this area. I will correct that by saying that there are some salmon but they are not there in commercial quantities. That is the zone that has been allocated by the department to this established salmon-canning factory at Belmont. Two or three months ago, Mr. Gardiner was summoned to a meeting convened by either the Minister for Industrial Development or the Minister for Transport to discuss the future transport licenses for fish. At that meeting, Mr. Gardiner asked Mr. Fernie, "What about fish for my Belmont cannery if these transport licenses are refused?" Mr. Fernie replied, "If the Belmont cannery is dependent upon fish from the south coast, the sooner it is shut up the



better." That is the viewpoint of the Director of Industrial Development. Subsequently, Mr. Gardiner received a couple of letters from the Transport Board. The relevant portion of the second letter was to this effect—

Further to my letter of the 9th instant concerning the transport of fish supplied from the south coast to Belmont, I have to confirm that after expiry of the present permit on the 31st March, it is not the board's intention to grant any renewal or to grant any other permit which will permit the transport of fish supplies from Cheyne Beach—Albany zone, to Perth.

Later, Mr. Gardiner wrote to the Transport Board concerning the transport of salmon from Hopetoun to Belmont, and the crucial part of the reply to him was—

The question has been referred to the Director of Industrial Development recently. However, and advice received to the effect that in the event of any such application being received it would not have the recommendation of his department. In these circumstances, the board cannot grant approval of the informal application submitted by you to undertake this work.

It appears that although the Chief Inspector of Fisheries was formerly the officer to whom applications for licenses to transport fish were referred by the Transport Board, Cabinet has decided that in future this duty will devolve on the Director of Industrial Development who is not as competently fitted to advise on fish, fishing and fisheries, as is Mr. Fraser, Chief Inspector of Fisheries, whose experience extends over a period of 30 years. Up to the 18th May, 1949, the Ocean Canning Co., Belmont, was down 98 tons clean weight of salmon from Albany and the lower South-West compared to 1948, and this deficit will be increased to 265 tons if any portion of the Hopetoun catch is denied it. Last year it obtained 167 tons from Hopetoun clean weight and, if it is not permitted to transport from that centre this year, its total intake will be 313 tons approximately, whereas, to fulfil orders, it requires 625 tons. Naturally, the company feels that it is most unfair that its transport arrangements should be upset at such short notice. It has contracted with distributors in the Eastern States for an estimated output of 25,000 cases totalling in value £75,000. If the company is forced to cancel these orders, it will be compelled

to give reasons to the Eastern States distributors as to its inability to deliver. I submit that that is a grave reflection on the State Government.

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

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: We agree with you.

Mr. GRAYDEN: The true position today is that the salmon intake of this Belmont factory is lower and its canning facilities have doubled by virtue of the fact that it has opened a new establishment at Busselton. It will be apparent to everyone that unless a transport license is granted to the company, the Belmont factory will have to cease operations as soon as the reserve stocks are exhausted, which will be early in September. The Busselton factory, a branch recently established, has already closed, and the Minister for Industrial Development has been advised to this effect by letter dated the 10th June.

Mr. Graham: What has the Minister done about it?

Mr. GRAYDEN: The letter stated—

Referring to your visit to Busselton when you were good enough to inspect my new cannery, I now desire to inform you that owing to the scarcity of fish, this cannery was closed down at the beginning of this month and will not be re-opened for fish canning until next year.

I desire to advise you also that my Belmont cannery, unless something unforeseen happens, will cease operations about the mid-September or as soon as our reserve stocks are exhausted. This state of affairs will be due to denial of fish transport from Hopetoun.

It is regretted that the enforcement of decentralisation as carried out by the Director of Industrial Development is at the expense of an established industry.

In common with most new enterprises, the Ocean Canning Company expects to run the Busselton cannery at a loss for the first 12 months and it is obvious, therefore, that it is doubly important that the Belmont plant should be enabled to continue production in order to meet that loss. But there is another angle to the question. Mr. Fernie had suggested zoning the coast to link up a cannery with each section. Mr. Gardiner was under the impression that this scheme had been abandoned and drew this conclusion from an interview he had with Mr. Fernie on or about the 16th September last. Mr. Gardiner's object in meeting Mr. Fernie on that occasion was to obtain a clarification

of the transport position, as he had previously emphasised to Mr. Fernie and his staff that he could not proceed with the establishment of a cannery at Busselton unless his Belmont cannery was kept supplied with fish as in the past, in order to provide finance for taxation and permit sufficient capital investment and running expenses for the Busselton project. Had Mr. Gardiner not understood that to be the position, he would not have committed himself to the high initial cost entailed in the establishment of the plant at Busselton.

The fishermen also want the competition. At a general meeting of fishermen held at Albany in November last, the opinion was expressed that the fishermen desired the two canneries to be in a position to buy the fish in order that their price for salmon might be maintained. In the interests of the fishermen, therefore, as well as of the Belmont cannery, it would seem that the arrangements of last year should be continued and that the Belmont cannery should be granted a transport license for the carriage of the fish.

The Ocean Canning Company has been able to secure the continued services of its original fishermen who, with their sons, made a team of eight to operate at Cheyne Beach. The company was quite content with this small team compared with a team of 16 or more engaged by the Albany cannery. This tonnage did not affect in any degree the operations of the Albany cannery since it was in a position to draw supplies from other parts of the South coast, including Denmark and Bremer Bay, and it is extremely doubtful whether it will be in a position even now to handle all the salmon caught at peak periods at Cheyne Beach.

The Ocean Canning Company has an agreement with Mr. Hunt, who controls the factories on the South coast, to catch and deliver to its Belmont factory one-third of the salmon taken at Hopetoun. That suggestion apparently originated in a letter from Hunt's Canning Company dated the 6th February, 1948, and a final exchange of letters was made between the canneries concerned on the 16th February, 1948. The full 1948 season was conducted on that basis. Apparently this year Mr. Hunt has made no effort to obtain a Hopetoun-Perth transport license. Yet he is transporting

salmon from Hopetoun to his factory at Albany. The latter movement of fish took place towards the end of June this year with a load of four tons of salmon, and doubtless it is still continuing. The inference is that the Hopetoun cannery is not capable of handling all the fish caught there.

To sum up the position, a factory to can salmon has been established at Belmont. That was the first factory to undertake fish canning in this State. The factory cost some £20,000 and employs some 30 persons residing in the Rivervale area. Possibly those people could obtain employment elsewhere at present, but later on they will depend to a large extent upon work at the factory for a livelihood. The company has been refused the right to transport fish from the south coast to the factory, and the result will be that the factory will go out of existence. It must go out of existence unless the transport license is granted.

Mr. Graham: Do you think there is bias in favour of Mr. Hunt?

Mr. GRAYDEN: I should say that the department is biased in his favour. If a transport license is denied the company, the fishermen will suffer loss. I had a letter from the fishermen which has been handed to the Minister. They made it very plain that they want the competition to continue in order that they might get a higher price for their product. At present the Ocean Canning Company is paying a higher price than the other company; hence the desire of the fishermen for a continuance of the competition.

What is the reason for trying to force the Belmont factory out of existence? It is because the Government has a policy of decentralisation. We all approve of decentralisation, but we do not agree with it when it cuts across an established industry. The Government has entrusted the Director of Industrial Development with the task of giving effect to its policy of decentralisation and the Director is carrying it out at the expense of an established industry.

Mr. May: What is wrong with the railways that they cannot transport the fish?

Mr. GRAYDEN: Perhaps the cost is prohibitive, or maybe there are no refrigerated vans. I had an interview with the Director of Industrial Development, who told me,

as he had told Mr. Gardiner, that if the Belmont factory were dependent upon fish brought from the South coast, the sooner it was cut out, the better.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Did he mean that the fish should be obtained from the Swan River?

Mr. GRAYDEN: He said the Belmont factory could deal with Perth herring and various other fish. I asked him, "How long would it take to develop on those lines?" and he replied, "Possibly a couple of years."

Hon. A. H. Panton: Did he intend to breed them up?

Mr. GRAYDEN: He admitted that there are few salmon in these waters, but said the company could concentrate on other fish instead of on the lucrative line, salmon, which it had pioneered. I asked him, "How on earth is the company going to develop the fish in waters close to Perth if it has to close down next month or the month after, because it must close if the salmon is not available? Why not permit the company to bring the salmon from the South coast for the next two years and meanwhile ascertain whether the fish in our local waters are worth catching?" To that he had no reply, and there is no reply to it. If we want the fish in Perth waters developed, we must give the company an opportunity to do the work and that is not being done at present. Mr. Fernie told me there was no objection to the company's bringing up the fish by rail. I said, "Obviously. The only thing you are concerned about is the waste of petrol, seeing that you are prepared to allow the company to have fish from the south coast provided rail transport is used." He had no power to stop them bringing the fish by rail and he said something to that effect. He made it very clear there was no objection because he knew it was completely impracticable. He said they could bring the fish by rail but he knew it was impracticable. He said he had told this particular individual—this Mr. Gardiner—two years ago to "go to the south coast," and not put his factory here where labour was available.

I said to Mr. Fernie, "There is no hostility about this, but who are you to dictate to a company as to where it shall put its factory? Surely the company knows where the labour is available and where it is economically desirable to establish a factory! What

right have you to dictate to a company?" His reply was, "I am charged with the task of carrying out a policy of decentralisation." He said that, irrespective of the fact that in this instance it cuts across an established industry. I had hoped that it would have been possible for the House to decide this particular issue tonight. I had hoped that the Minister for Industrial Development would have been able to reply. Unfortunately he is still waiting for further information and will not be able to speak on the matter. As a result, this motion will go to the bottom of the notice paper, and the cannery will have to close down because the salmon run has started and the factories which muscled in—there is no other word for it—after the Ocean Canning Company had pioneered the work, are exploiting the salmon run.

Mr. Graham: Exploiting the fishermen, too.

Mr. GRAYDEN: Yes.

Hon. E. Nulsen: There is an answer to that.

Mr. GRAYDEN: There is not an answer to it.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Yes, there is.

Mr. GRAYDEN: There is not.

Hon. E. Nulsen: You will find out.

Mr. GRAYDEN: The hon. member will support what is happening because he represents that particular electorate and naturally wants the industry in his area. There will probably be a lot of support from Albany, too; but the hon. member will make a tremendous mistake if he does not contact his fishermen first, because I have their written comments and know their views. I was in Albany a few weeks ago, and even then the fishermen had a meeting with Mr. Hunt, who has a monopoly of all these factories, and complained about the price. What are they going to do when there is no competition? That is the point. They are being deprived of the competition. There are two or three factories down there, but they are owned by the one man. They are getting no assistance from the Department of Industrial Development; because I brought that point up and the director said, "The fishermen have never been better off in their lives." The inference was that they could afford to take a lower price.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is not fair.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That is not true.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I think it is fair.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The inference is not.

Mr. GRAYDEN: That is the inference I obtained.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The inference is most unfair. You do not have to bring in that sort of thing.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I disagree with the member for Northam, because I had the interview and know what the inference was. I might be unjust to Mr. Fernie on that particular point, but I gathered that inference.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is your inference.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I had hoped the matter would have been dealt with tonight in order that this factory might continue. I am going to request the Government, in view of the facts, to grant a provisional license to the company in order that it may carry on until such time as this issue is settled by the House. I assure members that I will be tremendously disappointed if the Government is not prepared to do that.

On motion by the Minister for Industrial Development, debate adjourned.

### MOTION—HOUSING.

*As to Suspension of Permits for Business Premises.*

**MR. BRADY** (Guildford-Midland) [5.35]: I move—

That owing to the continuous increase in applications for tenancy homes and building permits, as disclosed by the Minister for Housing in "Hansard" on Thursday, the 23rd June, and the failure of the State Housing Commission substantially to reduce the existing applications, this House considers immediate steps should be taken to stop further building permits being issued to business enterprises until the present housing crisis has been overtaken.

In moving the motion I am actuated by a desire to obtain some relief for those people in the metropolitan area, and particularly in my own district, who are endeavouring to secure houses and building permits through the State Housing Commission. The position in my electorate is that there are approximately 200 people with a No. 1 priority for tenancy homes and at the present

rate of supply it will be many years before they will be able to secure homes. There are approximately another 200 people who are desirous of obtaining homes but who, owing to the fact that they comprise either two or three unit families, have no priority. The position is becoming very serious; and I feel I would be lacking in my duty as representative of the district if I did not bring the matter before the House, with a view to persuading Parliament and the Government to realise their responsibilities in this connection.

I would remind the House that in addition to the people already homeless, there are certain movements of population which will result in conditions none of us would like to contemplate, unless something is done very shortly to deal with them. Under the migration arrangements between the Commonwealth and the State Government anything up to 2,000 or 3,000 displaced persons and migrants from the Old Country are landing in Western Australia each month. When they arrive here, these displaced persons and other immigrants are obliged for a time to accept employment with the Government, which provides accommodation for them. Alternatively, they are housed by the people who sponsored their admission to the State. But the time is coming when they will be released from the obligation to remain on Government jobs where temporary homes are allotted them, or when they will no longer want to remain with the people who nominated them, and they will be entitled to apply for homes just the same as do people who were born and reared in the State.

According to the Minister's figures, there are about 20,000 people seeking houses, and that position will be aggravated by the influx of 10,000 to 15,000 people in the near future who will also require accommodation. The people known as new Australians, and migrants from the Old Country, are going to demand homes; and this will cause many headaches and heartaches for all Governments, irrespective of their political complexion. In addition to all this, we have a problem arising from the fact that marriages are in the vicinity of 5,000 to 6,000 a year. The marriage rate is increasing considerably and people are being wed at a rate quicker than that at which homes are being provided. So the position

will be considerably aggravated by the leeway that will have to be made up in that respect. Then there are those who have not long been married and who are going to bring children into the world. Whereas at present they come in the category of two-unit families, in three or four years' time, if they do their duty by the country, they will be three and four-unit families. If there is not such an increase there will be another problem, which all concerned should realise.

According to the "Quarterly Statistical Abstract" No. 331—the latest copy is dated September, 1948—the marriages in 1943 were 4,528, and in 1947 they were 5,282, an increase of approximately 700. I see nothing to indicate that there will be a decline in marriages and consequently a lessening of the demand for homes by married people. In 1943 births totalled 10,481, and in 1947 the figure had risen by 2,500. Here again, I can see nothing that will tend to lessen the birthrate. I believe it is now at one of its lowest ebbs in the history of our nation. It is about 16 or 17 per thousand, whereas in 1895 it was about 40 per thousand.

If the Government does not do something about restricting building permits for business concerns so as to enable us to catch up the leeway in housing shortages, it will be a colossal tragedy for this State. I would like to make reference to a day's interviews which I had last week in connection with the housing problem. The Minister for Housing will be interested in one or two of the cases because of certain legislation he has before the House, which is timely, but unfortunately not timely enough for certain people. Last week I was interviewed by a man named Kunicic who is a returned soldier on a 50 per cent. pension. He thought he was buying his house; but when he came back from the war, he found there had been some funny business and that the house had been sold over his head. Last week he was faced with an eviction order. That is bad for a man who has served his country for four or five years. However, to aggravate the position of this particular case the Kunicics, out of the goodness of their heart and trying to do a charitable turn for an immigrant family who came to this State in the early part of the year, took this family of five into their home.

Now, when this household is to be evicted, there will be seven people, five adults and two children. They are all in the house and an eviction order has been given against them.

The immigrant family, too, feel that they have an argument in favour of getting a house. When they came out here and saw the home they were to occupy with their nominee they found that the house was not sufficient to accommodate the nominee's family, and certainly could not meet with their requirements. This accommodation had been approved by a Government official and because he fell down on his job this family found, when they came to the State, that they could not possibly live under the housing conditions of their nominee. Because of that the Kunicic family tried to accommodate the McDonalds in their home and as a consequence, when the eviction order was served on them, there were seven in the home instead of two. Therefore by the evictions of the Kunicics, two homes will have to be provided.

That was one case with which I dealt last week, but before leaving the subject I want to give the House an idea of how this is affecting production. The Kunicic family, knowing that they were to be evicted from their home, have had their furniture packed for over a fortnight. When I called at the house, either last Wednesday or Thursday, I found that both Mr. McDonald and Mr. Kunicic were home from work and expecting the bailiff at any time. In addition the two wives, who are both capable of doing work, were home. Therefore, due to the fact that there is a housing shortage and these people were expecting to be evicted, they were losing employment and the State was losing production.

Another family, in the same area at Bassendean, has been trying to get a house for three years. The name is Steele and they have three children. The house in which they are living has been sold and in my opinion it is not fit for human beings to live in. Despite the fact that I have made representations on their behalf to the Housing Commission on a number of occasions, the Steele family are still living there with an elderly lady. They are desirous of getting out of the house but the Housing Commission advises them that it has nothing available.

There is another family, named Lynch. In this particular family there is a young son who is a returned soldier and who served his country for three or four years. He has had an application before the Housing Commission and because he has only one kiddy he has been told that his priority is not as good as that of other applicants. Because of that he is compelled to live with his parents in a four-roomed house in Frederick-street, Midland Junction. In that house there are seven adults and they are sleeping on the back and front verandahs. Members can imagine what that must be like because most of us, at this time of the year, prefer to be inside and away from the elements.

Last Wednesday I interviewed another family in connection with housing. The name of the family is Bonser. The man is from Katanning and he has been trying for over three years to get a house in Midland Junction. He has a young family and a sick wife and he must leave Katanning because of the health of his wife. He has been told that his family circumstances are not such as warrant him obtaining a house in Midland Junction. He has also been told that he is comparatively well off in Katanning.

Here is another instance! It is a bad case and I interviewed the family last week. It concerns a young man named Thompson and he is living with his wife and one child in a tent in Keamy-street Belmont. This young fellow is desirous of getting a house for a two-unit family and I consider that he should be given one in Midland Junction as soon as possible. No member needs to use much imagination to realise how it must feel to live in a tent, almost in the heart of the city, in times like these, particularly in the cold and wet weather.

There is also a man named Williams who received an eviction order last week. One of his sons served in the Navy for a number of years and the man himself is getting on in age. He has not been able to secure a house and his file was lost for some time in the department. Despite the fact that his application has been before the Commission for a number of years it has not yet been dealt with. Some officers of the Housing Commission have even had the temerity to suggest, to families such as these, that they should split up and let the

younger members of the family, who are 21 or 22 years of age, go elsewhere and find board and lodgings. They state that that would lessen the housing problems of those families. The Housing Commission staff are overstepping the mark by making suggestions of that kind. They would better serve the people of this State if they employed ways and means whereby the building industry could be stimulated and raw materials produced instead of issuing statements of that kind.

The next case is typical of all those I have mentioned previously and it is one I think the Minister for Housing might keep in mind in connection with legislation which is at present before the House. It concerns a Mrs. E. O'Brien who lives at 24, West-road, Bassendean. This lady received the following letter from the Legal Service Bureau on the 30th July:—

Dear Madam: The magistrate this morning made a final order that you give up possession of your premises to Mr. Haufe on or before the 13th September next. It will, therefore, be necessary for you to find some other accommodation before that date and, if you have no other prospects, I suggest that you press your application with the State Housing Commission as diligently as possible.

Yours faithfully  
(Sgd.) M. H. Killen.

LEGAL SERVICE BUREAU.

The husband of this lady is a returned soldier and he is engaged on important work producing asbestos at Wittenoom Gorge. This man has fought for his country and it is impossible for him to be down here to protect the interests of his family. This is the first occasion for many years that this family has had a home. During the past number of years this man has been forced to work on road board jobs in the country areas where main roads have been maintained. He has also been on railway construction jobs and other similar work, and for the first time in his life his family has decent housing accommodation. Now the family have an eviction order against them and they are to remove themselves from the premises. This order takes effect on the 13th September. This is the second returned soldier who is to be evicted in my district since the Commonwealth legislation was declared invalid by the High Court.

These are all cases that I dealt with in one day. There is another family named Begovich. The husband is a returned soldier

on a 50 per cent. pension. He has a wife and one of his children suffers with asthma. There is also a baby 16 months old and the Begovichs are living in the father's home. The father resides temporarily at Geraldton but desires to return to his home before retiring from the railways so that he may take advantage of the free transport of his furniture. In any case the father desires his own home in his retired days. The family is a four-unit one and the husband has been endeavouring for many years to get housing accommodation.

All these cases are typical of the many with which I am dealing and which are represented to me as the member for Guildford-Midland. I know also that there are many substandard houses in Midland Junction, Guildford and Bassendean and they should have been pulled down many years ago. In fact, some of these houses have been condemned for as long as six or seven years, but due to the housing shortage the local governing bodies have permitted them temporarily to remain. However, these local authorities are becoming tired of allowing these substandard houses to remain because they have received so many complaints of ill-health as a result of their use.

In addition to all the other features that I have mentioned in regard to immigrants, increased marriages, and increased families, we have the problem of substandard houses which must be removed. When this happens it will further aggravate the housing position. If my motion is agreed to it will imply that building permits are to be refused for the construction of business establishments until such time as difficult cases are overcome, and the many applications before the Housing Commission are dealt with.

At this stage I think the House should be reminded of the figures submitted by the Minister for Housing for the period ended the 31st May, 1949. The Minister gave them to the House in June and he stated that there were 1,053 outstanding applications for State Housing Commission homes. There were 586 outstanding applications for McNess homes and 4,406 for War Service homes. There were 11,381 applications outstanding for Commonwealth-State rental houses and 4,218 for private permits. That makes a total of 21,644 outstanding applications for houses, but it excludes 1,863 applications for other buildings. In other

words, the number of outstanding applications before the Housing Commission is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  times greater than it was on the 1st January, 1947. Therefore it is evident that the housing position is becoming worse day by day.

There are also applications for other classes of buildings which cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be called applications for new dwellings. They are for the erection of hotels and guest houses, and total 83. There are 208 applications for factories and 42 for halls, theatres and clubs. There are also 159 applications outstanding for rural industrial establishments, whatever they may mean. I presume these are for establishments which are likely to supply farming implements and implements used in the rural industry generally. Therefore, there are approximately 600 outstanding applications for the building of industrial and business premises, apart from housing applications.

I feel that a number of building premises that have already been erected in the metropolitan area could well have been held over for some years, though eventually they could have been built. At the moment there can be seen instances of unnecessary building operations. I have inspected a number in the metropolitan area and in my opinion their erection could have been long delayed. For instance, there are garages that have been built and that work was surely unnecessary. In these days, when there is provision for the garaging of motor vehicles, those facilities could be availed of without the necessity for the State Housing Commission issuing permits to contractors to undertake the erection of small garages and buildings of that description. One aspect I want to refer to is that when the representative of an average family endeavours to secure a permit for a home he is told in many instances that he should not insist upon 14 squares. That is the attitude with regard to buildings requiring anything from 12 to 14 squares.

People are told that if they cut their requirements down to six or seven squares there is a greater likelihood of the permits being forthcoming. To some extent I agree with that policy, but the irony of the situation is that business concerns are subjected to no limit respecting the squares they can obtain when it comes to the erection of

commercial and industrial buildings. I have in mind work like that undertaken by Harris Scarfe & Sandovers, who built a very fine structure behind their original building. The new work consisted of several storeys and necessitated the use of thousands of squares. All sorts of building requirements were put into the structure. At Bassendean, Westralian Farmers Ltd., recently put up a building covering anything from 500 to 700 squares. Right alongside, the firm of Tutt Bryant & Co. has put up premises necessitating the use of 400 or 500 squares. Then again, at South Guildford Wigmore Ltd. have erected a huge factory involving the use of 300 or 400 squares.

This indicates that the Government and the State Housing Commission are not facing up to the situation when they are allowing such buildings to be erected, and families requiring buildings of six or seven squares are not succeeding in having their requirements met. Within two minutes' walk of Parliament House, I saw this afternoon a building that has been under way for some months. I understand Mortlock Bros. hope to have the premises completed within three months. It will necessitate the use of many hundreds of squares. The best of building material is going into the structure. Pressed bricks are being used, and as ordinary lime mortar is not good enough only cement mortar is being put in. The best steel is being availed of for reinforcing the building, on which 10 or 15 men are working at present. If that sort of thing is allowed to go on for another 12 or 18 months, the position will be such that the Government and all members of Parliament will be thoroughly ashamed of themselves, particularly if the misery and trouble at present experienced with regard to the people's housing problem are permitted to continue. The time has arrived when definite steps should be taken by the Government to correct the situation.

This afternoon I was passing through Bassendean where I saw a couple trying to get a home together. They could not get supplies of bricks, tiles or even cement tiles and galvanised iron. They have had to resort to malthoid and sisalkraft for roofing purposes. At the same time, factories are being built which necessitate the use of thousands of sheets of asbestos and thousands of tiles for roofing purposes.

The Minister for Housing: The Housing Commission has closed down on that class of building.

Mr. BRADY: I am glad of that. Such action by the Government is very timely. I can see something bordering on revolution if business firms are allowed to continue as they have been in the past. The whole situation is so obvious, particularly if we consider the statistics in relation to this question. They are sufficient to indicate that something must be done.

Mr. Graham: I said that years ago, and little has been done.

Mr. BRADY: I fully appreciate that efforts have been made before to direct the Government's attention to the position. No doubt it was considered that with the stepping up of production and with the demand for certain classes of goods, business firms should be allowed some latitude in building operations. Here again I agree with that policy, but there must be a limit to it in the interests not only of the people who want homes but of the State generally. I am inclined to think, also, that such a course would be in the interests of business people themselves. In certain respects, I believe production has reached its peak. I think our exports of certain lines have reached their highest point. If that be so, there must be a falling off in the output of some industries so that the necessity for the construction of large factories will not continue.

When money is plentiful, business is brisk and the export trade flourishing, all sorts of companies spring up. People look for investments and anything that tends to promise a decent return is supported and fostered. To my mind that is rather dangerous, and it will have serious repercussions if permitted to continue. I believe that the existing businesses and firms will be in a position to cope with all requirements for many years to come, so that there is no necessity for the Government to permit a continuance of what has been happening during the last three or four years. I have been looking up some statistics regarding building operations over the last two or three years. According to the information in "Statistical Abstract" No. 1331, buildings that have been erected in recent times, apart from dwelling houses, have cost in the vicinity of £450,000. That will



indicate what a number of homes could have been built if there were a cessation of the erection of business premises.

An expenditure of £450,000 would enable the Government to build another 450 homes. If that were continued for several years, it would go a long way towards making up the lee-way in house construction. I estimate that the money would provide for 450 homes by assuming that the average cost of a dwelling today would be £1,000. The statistics I have quoted relate to the period to the 30th September last. I believe that the quantity of material used in those business premises could have been better employed in providing homes for desperate people, including not only our local applicants, migrants and displaced persons but children who were recently born and even those not yet born. In order to serve their needs, the Government could well undertake the building of those 450 homes, and the erection of business premises could be left in abeyance for the time being.

Every member of this House knows that for a long time firms in the metropolitan area have been renovating their premises and effecting improvements, both internally and externally. In fact, the whole face of some premises has been changed. Extra storeys have been added, and the internal arrangements have been completely altered. At the same time, we know that business premises in the city have every appearance of not being properly or adequately used. One has only to inspect shops in Hay and Murray-streets to appreciate that many of the firms are carrying minimum quantities of stocks. I certainly believe that if the Government closes down on the erection of business premises for a period, no great harm will ensue. If that policy were adopted, what would happen would be that much of the business normally done in the city would be driven to the suburbs. That would advantage the suburban shopkeepers and I have not the slightest doubt that many of them would be glad of the extra trade. They could certainly cope with it for they have ample storage room.

I know of business premises in Bassen-dean that could cope with three times the present turnover and could easily carry much greater stocks. Furthermore, any such commercial trend would tend to overcome the congestion in the city. I trust

the motion will receive favourable support, particularly from members sitting on the Opposition side of the House, because the workers are looking to Labour members to protect them in the crisis of today. The only way I consider that can be done straight away is to shut down on permits for the erection of business premises.

On motion by the Minister for Housing, debate adjourned.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

## MOTION—STATE ARBITRATION COURT.

### *As to Declaring Basic Wage.*

Debate resumed from the 6th July on the following motion by Mr. Hegney:—

That in the opinion of this House Section 123 of the Industrial Arbitration Act, 1912-1948, should, in all the circumstances, be amended to enable the Court to declare a basic wage to take effect forthwith, after due inquiry, in the event of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court increasing the Commonwealth basic wage before the 1st July, 1950.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—North Perth) [7.30]: As the member for Pilbara has stated, and as I would like to refresh the memory of the House, the Industrial Arbitration Act provides that the basic wage must be declared each year and that the declaration is to be implemented on the 1st day of July in each year. This is of vast importance to every worker in the State, because the declaration affects not only those on the basic wage but, under the provisions of the Act, it also affects every industrial award. Consideration was given to the basic wage in May of this year. At that time it was well known that a comprehensive inquiry into a basic wage for Australia was about to be undertaken by the Federal Arbitration Court. It was anticipated that the results of that inquiry would not be known until the beginning of the New Year.

Mr. President Dunphy expressed the opinion that it would not be wise for him to enter upon a comprehensive inquiry almost at the same time as this was being done, on an Australia-wide basis, by the Federal Arbitration Court. He expressed this opinion to the parties who were appearing before the State Arbitration Court on the

inquiry I have mentioned, and suggested that his inquiry should not be comprehensive so far as concerned the basic wage which had to be declared before the 1st July of this year. His suggestion was accepted unconditionally by all parties with the exception of those representing the Western Australian industrial unions, who pointed out that some hardship might be caused if this procedure were followed, for the reason that under our Industrial Arbitration Act the result of any comprehensive inquiry into the basic wage after the 1st July of this year could not be implemented until the 1st July of next year.

This position was fully appreciated by the President, who approached the Government and pointed out the difficulty in which he was placed owing to the existing provisions of the Industrial Arbitration Act. He informed the Government that he felt it would be an injustice if he did not inquire into the matter in the way desired by the industrial unions and, as a result, the court was not able to implement any increase in the basic wage until the 1st July next year. He asked the Government what its attitude would be should he forbear to hold such a comprehensive inquiry and the Federal Arbitration Court increased the basic wage to a higher level than that existing at the time in the State. The Government informed him that it would not desire to take advantage of the existing law if by so doing an injustice would be done to State employees. The Government further said that it considered it would be doing injustice to State employees if it were not possible to implement any advantage the workers might get by an increase in the Federal basic wage.

The Government gave Mr. President Dunphy an assurance that if any injustice were done to Government employees by the State Arbitration Court because it could not implement any increase that might be awarded to the workers as a result of the Federal inquiry, it would remedy the injustice. I understand that an approach was made by Mr. President Dunphy to the Employers' Federation. Of course, I am not in a position to know what assurance the Employers' Federation gave him; but, as a result of the assurances he did get both from

the Government and the Employers' Federation, he decided not to hold a comprehensive inquiry for implementation on the 1st July of this year. That is the position today.

The member for Pilbara has rightly pointed out that in spite of assurances that might have been given by the Government and by the Employers' Federation, there was a number of workers who were employed neither by the Government nor in any industry affiliated with the Employers' Federation, and that injustice might be done in that respect. The Government considers that is a position that should not be allowed to remain. So far as the essence of the hon. member's motion is concerned, I have no objection and I do not intend to oppose it.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

## MOTION—MINES REGULATION ACT.

### *To Disallow Certain Underground and Diseases Regulations.*

Debate resumed from the 6th July on the following motion by Mr. Marshall:—

That Regulations Nos. 172, 173, 179, 182, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 192, (of Part X); and No. 252 (of Part XIV) made under the Mines Regulation Act, 1946, as published in "Government Gazette" on the 4th April, 1949, and laid upon the Table of the House on the 15th June, 1949, be, and are hereby disallowed.

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING** (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [7.40]: The member for Murchison has moved this motion with the intention of disallowing certain regulations under the Mines Regulation Act, 1906. The regulations which are the subject of his motion refer to two differing matters. The first set of regulations which he seeks to disallow refers to the employment of underground diesel engines or locomotives in mines. The other regulation to which he objects refers to miners who may be suffering, or be likely to suffer, from what are known as miners' diseases, such as miner's phthisis and silicosis. I propose to deal first with the regulations relating to the employment of underground locomotives. I fully appreciate the hon. member's solicitude for the health of miners.

I entirely agree that every possible precaution should be taken to ensure that those men work under conditions which are not likely to affect their health. As far as that is concerned, the Government is entirely in agreement with the views of the member for Murchison and I think I can show that, in the regulations regarding underground locomotives, every precaution is to be taken to ensure that there shall be no deleterious effect on the health of miners from the employment of machines of that kind. The real question is whether there is any reasonable apprehension of ill effects to miners from the employment of diesel locomotives underground. I think the evidence is that there is no reason to fear any such ill effects and I hope to show, to the satisfaction of the hon. member, that there are reasons why these regulations should be supported in the interests of the goldmining industry. I hope to illustrate that if these regulations were disallowed, as the motion proposes, the effect would be to prejudice the industry and the men engaged in it.

The first regulation that the hon. member seeks to disallow is No. 172, made under the Mines Regulation Act of 1906. It states—

No locomotives powered by internal combustion engines shall be installed underground without express permission from the Minister. The regulation that is sought to be disallowed is practically identical with general rule No. 50 of Regulation 4, made under this Act, which has been in operation since the inception of the legislation. In other words, Regulation 172, the disallowance of which is now sought, is practically identical with the regulation that has operated under the Act for something more than 40 years. This regulation prohibits the use of internal combustion engines underground unless by written permission of the Minister. It was introduced to prevent the use of petrol, kerosene or gas-driven engines underground, engines the exhausts of which might contain lethal quantities of carbon monoxide gas which, in sufficient concentrations, is of a poisonous nature.

The very fact that provision was made some 40 years ago—in this regulation—for the installation of such engines by permission of the Minister, indicates that even in those days there was seen the possibility that at some later date modern engineering

might devise an internal combustion engine that could safely be used underground under proper conditions. If Regulation 172 were to be disallowed there would be nothing to prevent the use of internal combustion engines underground in mines. The regulation prohibits the use of such engines underground unless by permission of the Minister for Mines. If we disallow it there is nothing to prevent such engines being used underground. I therefore submit it would not be desirable to disallow the regulation and open the door to the use underground of internal combustion engines which, if the other regulations were also disallowed, could be so used without any proper precautions being enforced in respect of their use.

The regulations that are the subject of this motion and that follow Regulation 172 lay down the rigid conditions under which locomotives powered by internal combustion engines may be used underground in mines. I will refer to the headings of those regulations that are the subject of the motion. The locality of the use of such locomotives must be specified by the inspector. There must be a weekly examination of each locomotive. There are limitations provided as to the maximum load and speed of any such locomotive. The exhaust has to be fitted with a proper trap to ensure the non-escape of any gases that might be deleterious to health. There must be through ventilation of the roads underground in which these locomotives run. The engine is not permitted to be left running whilst stationary.

At intervals of not more than every three months a sample must be taken of the exhaust gas from the engine of the locomotive. The oil that is to be used as fuel in the locomotive must conform to certain standards to ensure the minimum escape of gas that might be obnoxious. The regulations go on to deal with the filling stations at which the locomotives are re-fuelled. They deal with the flooring and ventilation of filling stations and the prohibiting of the use of naked lights in the vicinity of filling stations. Modern mining practice has tended for some years past towards the use of diesel locomotives underground and intensive research, including analyses of exhaust gases, has proved conclusively that their use, properly controlled, is productive of no

harmful effects. In fact, the amount of noxious gas emitted from these locomotives operating under proper conditions, or even under poor conditions, is infinitesimal when compared with the gas produced by the common practice of blasting in mines.

Mr. Triat: Who gave you that information?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The information was supplied to me by the Department of Mines. Regulations for the use of diesel locomotives underground have been introduced into the mining laws of Great Britain, the U.S.A., Belgium, Germany and other countries. Regulations 173, 179, 182, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189 and 192, which are the subject of this motion, were taken directly from the British Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1911, after an exhaustive study of literature connected with this matter, and they deal with the safety provisions controlling the use of diesel locomotives underground, in the way that I have just described. It is considered that the introduction of diesel locomotives, where approved—and that means subject to the very stringent conditions laid down by the regulations—will not cause pollution of the mine atmosphere but will, on the other hand tend to improve the ventilation conditions in mines.

In other words, where diesel locomotives are allowed to be introduced, the ventilation conditions will be better than those normally found in mines. The reason for that is simply that although the regulations lay down certain standards for the ventilation of mines in the ordinary way, diesel locomotives can be used underground only under much more stringent regulations with regard to ventilation. The result, I am advised, is that when diesel locomotives are permitted to be run underground the mine concerned must conform to ventilation standards that will ensure a greater purity of air than would be the case where the diesel locomotive regulations did not apply. The introduction of these regulations was recommended by a committee consisting of technical officers of the Mines Department, technical members of the Kalgoorlie Chamber of Mines, and representatives of the mining division of the Australian Workers' Union. It is considered that their introduction is a step in the direction of bringing our mining legislation into line with modern mining practice.

Reference was made to the use of diesel locomotives underground by the Australian Blue Asbestos Company at Wittenoom Gorge. Samples of air containing exhaust gases from the locomotive in the mine at Wittenoom Gorge did not, on analysis by the Government Chemical Laboratory, reveal any measurable vitiation of mine atmosphere by the products of combustion of diesel locomotive fuel. I think it was suggested by the member for Murchison that the Blue Asbestos Company intended or might decide to discontinue the use underground of its diesel locomotive. The manager of the company has advised that it is intended to discontinue the use of the locomotive at present in service as soon as a more modern machine of the same type can be obtained to replace it. The manager of the mine at Wittenoom Gorge was previously in charge of large collieries in England where diesel locomotives are used underground. He vouches for their safety and says their prime cost is one-half and their operating cost one-quarter of that of the battery-operated locomotive. He also says that the operation of the diesel locomotive is considerably more trouble-free than that of the electric battery-operated type.

I think it can be said that the position in the goldmining industry as to ventilation is incomparably better than it was 25 years ago. This is due to the introduction and the enforcement of regulations by the Mines Department and the cooperation of the Chamber of Mines and the Australian Workers' Union. I think it can be said nowadays that no modern mine manager wishes to work his mine under unhygienic conditions, and the majority of the big mines have appointed ventilation officers whose duty it is to examine and report on all matters connected with ventilation. In addition, as members from the Goldfield areas know, the Mines Department itself has special officers appointed to watch ventilation matters only in addition to the district inspectors of mines, who also keep a close watch on this particular phase of mining safety. I think, in the course of his speech, the member for Murchison has said that the introduction of diesel locomotives underground was well guarded by the regulations which have been made, but he expressed an apprehension that those regulations might not be properly policed. I do not think there is any reason

for that misapprehension. We have every reason to believe that the inspector and officers of the department, the mines themselves and all the mining unions will keep a very close scrutiny on the conditions to ensure that these regulations are properly observed.

Once we accept the principle that the safety of miners is adequately protected by the nature of the regulations, if observed, then I think we remove the grounds for any apprehension of the kind expressed by the member for Murchison because, quite apart from diesel locomotives used underground, there are many operations in mines which, if not safeguarded by adequate regulations and restrictions, would be dangerous to the men employed in them. There are winding machines; there are blasting operations; there are various installations used in mines, mechanical and otherwise. There is a wide variety of appliances of all descriptions which are the ordinary and necessary part of the working of a mine in respect of which regulations are made to ensure the safety of the men and, in the absence of those regulations or their proper observance, might be a source of some danger or ill effect to the miners. But we do not discard the use of all those necessary mechanical appliances just because there might be a possibility that the regulations which govern them might not be properly observed. We rely upon the observance of the regulations, we rely upon the proper officers who see they are observed and we find in practice, I think I can say, that, with all those appliances of so many descriptions which are features of the working of our mines in these mechanical days, those regulations are in fact observed and are being observed and those appliances do not have any deleterious or dangerous influence on the men.

Mr. Marshall: We have a good and efficient instrument in lieu of these locomotives without the dangers to which you have referred. You have not justified the use of diesel engines. That is the point.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I will come to that because the point is contained in my notes. The suggestion made by the hon. member was that diesel locomotives underground had nothing to commend them. He suggested that the old electric battery type of locomotive which had been relied upon in the past was all that need be utilised.

In effect he said, "Why introduce any new type of traction underground? Why not be content with the old type of traction which we have had for so many years?"

Mr. Triat: He said, "A new dangerous type."

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: When it comes to danger, I have, I think, shown on authentic evidence and the experience in practice of many other countries that no danger need be feared at all and I think that evidence is conclusive.

Mr. Triat: We will bring forward evidence to show it is not conclusive.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I pass now to the remark made by the member for Murchison when he said, "Why progress? What was good enough for our forefathers is good enough for us." I hope to show that there are reasons, in the interests of the mining industry and the men themselves who are employed in the mines, why modern practices should be allowed to be introduced. I do not need to remind the member for Murchison, because I know he has been vocal on that point on prior occasions, that the goldmining industry in this State is passing through a period of extreme difficulty. Nor do I need to repeat at any length the well-known fact that that difficulty is due to a fixed price for gold and steadily rising cost of production. Nor do I need to emphasise that some mines are in such a parlous financial state that they have had to be assisted by the Commonwealth Government.

It is also well-known that unless some solution can be found between rising costs and a fixed price for gold the mining industry may be reduced in volume. Some mines may close down, the proper long-term practice of mining would be prejudicially affected and when that happens then employment in the mining industry is reduced, and when employment is reduced there are reactions not only to the whole State but in particular to mining communities and all the townspeople; the business people who are parts of those communities. So when we look, in the first place, at the safety or health element of these regulations with which I have dealt, and when we turn then to the economic aspect, we find that there are very important reasons why our minds should march with the times and we should

adopt modern mining practices when those methods are free from any objection as far as the health of the miners is concerned.

The fact is I am advised that the cost of installation of a diesel locomotive for underground use is about one-half of the cost of the electric battery type of locomotive, and the running costs are approximately from one-fifth to one-fourth of those of a battery locomotive. So if we are to assist the mining industry, if we are to give the mines a chance to meet their present difficulties, if we are to maintain employment there as well as the economic position of mining towns, then the Mines Department would be sadly wanting if by obsolete regulations it shut out modern mining practices which would save costs without incurring any danger to miners and give these mines a chance of continuing their operations by a reduction of their costs.

Mr. Marshall: So you put costs before the health of the men?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No, if the hon. member will allow me to say, I started on health first. I have never put health before costs; I would sooner close the mines down straight away if it became a matter of health. If members have noticed, when my remarks commenced I opened on the note of health which is the most important thing and it is only on the experience of so many other countries of the world and the States of Queensland and New South Wales in our own continent that we find that health was not influenced or endangered that I then proceeded to deal with the economic aspect of this type of locomotive. Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to read a letter from the State Mining Engineer of Queensland, Mr. I. W. Morley, written from Brisbane and dated the 11th July, 1949. When the member for Murchison moved this motion, the Mines Department communicated with the Queensland Department of Mines to find out what its views were on this particular matter. This letter is in reply and I will read it. The Queensland Mining Engineer under the heading of "Diesel Locomotives Underground" says—

I have to acknowledge receipt of your wire concerning this matter, and I enclose herewith copy of the telegram I sent you this morning. As I have advised you, we have no Diesel locomotives underground in Queensland, but have

Diesel trucks at Mt. Morgan where they have now been operating over four years without any trouble whatsoever.

I have previously advised other inquirers that I would have no hesitation in recommending the adoption of diesel locomotives underground in Queensland mines under similar conditions, and the Chief Inspector of Coal Mines informs me that he intends to approve the introduction of diesel locomotives in Queensland under similar conditions.

Since Mr. Redmond's article in 1945, the use of diesel lorries at Mount Morgan has extended, and there is now no restriction on their use throughout the mine subject to the usual conditions applicable to the mine. A copy of such general conditions is attached.

I have just received your letter of the 8th instant and now appreciate the reason of your urgent inquiry. I trust that my advices were in time for you, and give you a sufficiently strong case. I will be interested to hear the outcome in due course.

So I may summarise the position by saying that, if the hon. member succeeds in securing the disallowance of Regulation 172, it will open the door to the use of internal combustion engines underground in mines without any restriction at all. Should he succeed in securing the disallowance of the other regulations, he would be doing away with regulations that are designed to permit an advance in modern mining practice which has been endorsed in so many other countries, which is free from danger to miners and which could have an important effect in the lowering of costs and thus assisting the financial position of the gold-mining industry in this State.

I pass now to the second part of the motion which relates to miner's phthisis and which seeks to disallow Regulation 252. This regulation forms portion of Part XIV of the regulations under the Act and deals with occupational diseases. The whole of Part XIV, which includes Regulation 252, was drafted with the advice of a special sub-committee consisting of representatives of the Mines Department, the State Insurance Office, the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, the Commonwealth Laboratory, the Chamber of Mines and the Australian Workers' Union. My information is that all the members of the sub-committee were men who had continuous dealings with regulations concerning occupational diseases and their combined opinion is authoritative. I am advised that they reached complete agreement with regard to Regulation 252.

The hon. member, in challenging the regulation, said it was not necessary. The regulation requires that when a man seeks to work again in the mines, he being one who had previously worked there but had been absent for some years from the industry, he must obtain from the proper authorities dealing with occupational diseases a certificate of re-admission. As I understand the matter, Regulation 252 is in substance similar to the prior regulation dealing with the same matter. Certificates of re-admission in these circumstances have been required for very many years.

Mr. Marshall: But we have records of the health of the miners taken over 25 years.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The hon. member asks why we should provide for a certificate of re-admission.

Mr. Marshall: No, why have this regulation?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The regulation provides for a certificate of re-admission.

Mr. Marshall: We have records of the examination of every man and his condition when he goes out and when he comes back.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The regulation provides for a certificate of re-admission when a man re-enters the industry and the hon. member seeks to wipe out the regulation. Therefore he seeks to wipe out the necessity for a certificate of re-admission, saying that such a certificate is unnecessary because the records at the Kalgoolie Laboratory contain particulars of the health of the miners over the last 25 years. Therefore he says in effect, "Why bother to have a certificate of re-admission?" I might answer with equal cause, "Why bother to abolish it?" After all, when we are dealing with the health of miners and when we seek to ensure that a man who having once been in the industry and having left it for some years and desires to return, shall return in a physical condition so that he might engage in the industry without danger to his health, I say for heaven's sake let us have this additional precaution. After all, a certificate of re-admission for a man who has been away from the industry for some years is an additional safeguard that he may re-enter the industry without danger to his health.

Mr. Marshall: When he gets the certificate.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes.

Mr. Marshall: He could get that without the regulation.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: On the advice tendered to me—I do not pretend to have a knowledge of the mining industry equal to that of the hon. member—a certificate of re-admission is a desirable safeguard and, when I say that, I am speaking with the authority of the sub-committee consisting of representatives of the Mines Department, the State Insurance Office, the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, the Commonwealth Laboratory, the Chamber of Mines and the A.W.U., all of them men with long experience in dealing with the regulations governing occupational diseases.

Under the old regulation, a man might receive compensation for an occupational disease, then return to the industry, again contract one of these occupational diseases and secure compensation a second time.

Mr. Marshall: He could not do that. The Workers' Compensation Act was amended long ago to prevent it.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: That does not coincide with the advice given to me.

Mr. Marshall: Your advisers are altogether wrong.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: They are men of considerable authority.

Mr. Marshall: Ask the manager of the State Insurance Office and see what he says.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: He is amongst the advisers I have mentioned. It is not in the interests of the fund, which has been provided to protect the miners, that a man should make two claims on the fund and thereby deplete it, and it is not in the interests of the miner that he should ever be exposed to such conditions as would lead to his contracting the disease again after having once received compensation from the fund.

The hon. member referred to the consolidation of the legislation dealing with occupational diseases incurred in mines. On that I am entirely in agreement with him. This matter has already received the consideration of the Government, a committee has been appointed and steps have been

taken with a view to consolidating all the different Acts in one measure. The regulations now under discussion have been so drawn that the latter part dealing with occupational diseases may be lifted out in due course without disturbing the rest of the regulations as soon as the consolidated measure dealing with miners' diseases has been passed. The hon. member was quite right in urging the desirableness of consolidating such legislation.

On Regulation 252, which is being attacked because a re-admission certificate is required whereas the hon. member says it is not necessary, I would say to the House that even though this should be a little extra formality for the miner, by all means let us keep it if it is going to be an additional safeguard to his health. The fact that it is desirable is shown very strongly indeed from the circumstance that it has been framed by the most experienced and authoritative committee that could be assembled in the State to deal with regulations of the sort. That is the position with regard to the matters referred to in the hon. member's motion, and I would hope that, while I share with the hon. member his desire that nothing shall be done which might endanger the health of men working in the mines, members will give consideration to the facts. No justification exists for putting the clock back and rejecting regulations which can be implemented without danger and can result in an appreciable assistance to modern practices in an industry which needs all the help we can give it. I therefore suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the motion should not be endorsed by the House.

**MR. TRIAT** (Mt. Magnet) [8.29]: It is always difficult to follow a speaker who puts up an argument as the Minister for Housing does. He certainly has the best of authorities to draw upon for his opinions and he always submits to the House what sounds correct to people who are not really conversant with the facts. I have listened to him on this occasion very carefully and, had I not been connected with the mining industry, I would have been convinced in my mind that the Minister on this occasion was right and the member for Murchison wrong, especially as the Minister quoted a letter from the State Mining Engineer of Queensland which definitely

stated that Queensland was utilising diesel trucks in its mining operations. That is the most misleading letter I have ever heard read from one man in authority to another man in authority. Queensland has not used diesel engines or diesel trucks underground. It uses them in open-cuts.

The Minister for Housing: I have read the letter exactly as I got it.

**Mr. TRIAT**: Yes, but the Minister knows that Queensland has big open-cut coalmines which are not more than 50 or 60 feet below the surface in a space covering many acres open to the atmosphere. That is not underground, although in Western Australia we argue that any opening beneath the earth's surface deep enough to cover a man's head is underground so far as the worker is concerned. In Queensland, however, a man might go for two or three hundred feet in an open-cut and not be considered to be working underground. Nor does Queensland use diesel engines; it uses big 10-ton trucks which are not employed underground in a mine in an aperture four, six or seven feet high. Therefore, the position as represented by the State Mining Engineer in Queensland is misleading when applied to Western Australian conditions.

**Mr. Marshall**: Let him go 4,000 feet down the Great Boulder mine and see how much air he gets there!

**Mr. TRIAT**: The Minister was concerned about the health of the miners. I sincerely believe he is, because he is a humane man; but there is no doubt that, according to what was submitted to the Minister by a leading man in the industry in Western Australia, costs have got out of hand today. Therefore, in addition to the health of the miner, we have to give consideration to the costs of mining. If an occasion arose when the costs had to be considered before the health of the miners, and the miners were to be sacrificed, then the mines should be closed down. The mines are not worth men's lives. Men are too valuable to sacrifice their lives or lose their health for the production of wealth.

**Mr. Marshall**: Too many have gone to an early grave already.

**Mr. TRIAT**: Great sacrifices were made in the early days of mining in Western Australia, especially in the Great Fingal



mine before it was known that miners were losing their lives by inhaling dust. Too many of those miners died in their early thirties; after four years' work underground some of them died through inhaling dust. We do not want to go back to those conditions. The Minister also said that Regulation 172 controlled the use of internal combustion engines underground and I believe he had some justification for that statement. But if there were no regulation prohibiting the use of such engines underground—and there is none apart from Regulation 172—an attempt would probably be made to use them in a mine by some unscrupulous manager who wanted to evade the Act.

The Minister says that the protection is the written permission of the Minister for Mines. If it were desired to use such a machine in a mine at Nullagine, I presume the Minister for Mines, Hon. H. S. W. Parker, would leave Perth for Nullagine, make a thorough examination of the mine and of the place where it was intended to work the engine, and then, if satisfied, give written permission to the mine manager to use the machine. That is what one would gather from what the Minister who represents the Minister for Mines in this House said. In actual fact, what happens is that the Minister for Mines receives an application from someone in Nullagine who wants to use a diesel truck underground in a mine. The Minister does not go to Nullagine to make an examination; he delegates his power to some person who makes the examination. That person may be anybody appointed to the position for the time being to represent the Minister for Mines, and might not have the slightest knowledge of underground working or of the effect of noxious fumes emanating from internal combustion engines. It would be on that person's recommendation that the Minister for Mines, who has never left the metropolitan area, would give the manager of the mine permission to utilise the machine underground.

Do members consider that is right? Where does this theory of the Minister's special permission come in? The Minister's permission is merely given on a recommendation made by some person. The Minister does not make a personal examination. He would not do so in any case, because he has no personal knowledge of mining; nor would he select a high class engineer to

advise him on whether these machines working underground would be deleterious to the health of the men. The Minister also made a vague statement about carbon monoxide, but does he know what quantity would kill a person? He spoke of certain quantities.

The Minister for Housing: The ventilation and such matters are specified in the regulations.

Mr. TRIAT: There is a lot about ventilation, but what do the regulations say about carbon dioxide? Carbon monoxide is more deadly than carbon dioxide. We all know that if we enter a motorcar in a closed garage with the engine running we are liable to die from the inhalation of a small quantity of carbon monoxide, which is the most deadly of gases. It is fumeless and invisible.

The Minister for Housing: Carbon monoxide is dealt with in Regulation 178—five parts in a thousand.

Mr. TRIAT: The Minister mentioned sufficient quantities. A very small quantity of carbon monoxide is enough to kill a person.

The Minister for Housing: That quantity would not be fatal. There must not be more than five parts in a thousand.

Mr. TRIAT: Would six parts be fatal?

The Minister for Housing: No.

Mr. TRIAT: Seven parts?

The Minister for Housing: I could not say what the quantity is.

Mr. TRIAT: Then my guess is as good as the Minister's; five parts in a thousand would not do harm to anyone.

Mr. Bovell: You do not go out suddenly with carbon monoxide.

Mr. TRIAT: I think so.

Mr. Bovell: You fade away!

Mr. TRIAT: Like old soldiers!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. TRIAT: I do not want any worker to fade away underground. I want him to remain normal. He should not be made to fade away merely for the purpose of earning a few more pounds for speculators in mining. A weekly examination of locomotives has to be made, but who is going to make this weekly examination in isolated

places? It might be made in Kalgoorlie in one mine. One inspector could not inspect more than one mine at Kalgoorlie in a week, and there are only four inspectors for the whole of the Kalgoorlie district, including Norseman. How could the examinations be made weekly? It would be totally impossible to do so.

Mr. Marshall: This is all theoretical.

Mr. TRIAT: Of course it is. The Minister got his information from officers. A monthly inspection is not made of the mines at Kalgoorlie, let alone a weekly inspection. A weekly inspection cannot be made unless we have 50 or 60 inspectors. The department says there is no danger from fumes. I asked the Minister who told him that and he said the department had done so. Unfortunately, I am not an expert in internal combustion engines or diesel engines; but I have met many people who came back from the war and who said they had had a lot of experience of them, especially in under-water craft; and recently, in the library of this House, I saw a picture of a wonderful invention produced during the last war by the Germans. The English call it a snortle. I presume members have read the account.

The Americans have been able to provide their latest submarines with this device which will permit a diesel-powered submarine to continue under water for a long period. The submarines do not have to come to the surface now to recharge their batteries. During the recent war British submarines were compelled, when they exhausted their batteries under water, to come to the surface to recharge them by means of diesel engines. For what reason? They took the risk of bringing a valuable machine above the surface in the face of danger to recharge it because they could not recharge it under water in the contaminated atmosphere, since the diesel engines would in those circumstances kill the men.

Mr. Styants: They used up the oxygen.

Mr. TRIAT: Of course! Yet the Minister told us that the Mines Department said that diesel fumes create no danger and are not detrimental to a man's health. I am not an expert. I know nothing about diesel engines, but I do know that a submarine was definitely a death-trap. The moment a

diesel engine was turned on, if the submarine was not on the surface—until the advent of the new device which was invented by the Germans and is now utilised by the Americans and the Russians—it was a source of danger. Yet the Mines Department has the audacity to tell this House that a machine driven by diesel fuel has no detrimental effect on the health of the men. I would need a better authority than the Mines Department to convince me; and I hope members of this House will not be convinced by any statement from any officer who has no better knowledge of poisonous gases than to state that it is perfectly safe to operate a diesel engine in a confined space.

The Minister said that in modern mining the ventilation conditions and sanitation and hygiene are so good that there is no danger. I do not know how far he goes back when he talks about modern mining. I can go back to 1930, which is not long ago. In that year a modern mine was started with American and English capital, called the Wiluna Gold Mine. They started from the surface and took over no old workings. They put a brand new mine shaft down from the surface capable of lifting 60 men every time the cage was pulled up. Ten tons of ore were raised from the bottom within a few minutes. Everything was automatic and up-to-date and this was the most modern mine in Western Australia until it closed down. Since then the Big Bell has come into operation; but Big Bell consisted mostly of open-cuts on the surface.

I was secretary of the Miners' Union when the modern mine started at Wiluna. Fortunately I was able to obtain dust counts made by Inspector Phoenix; and I was dumb-founded to find that on this mine, this very latest and most up-to-date mine, opened by American and English capital and on modern lines, had a very high dust count. The first page of the report indicated that the dust count was considered to be 1,000 plus. Everything over 350 per cubic centimetre is considered detrimental to a man's health; yet the count on this mine was 1,000 plus. That is to say, it was not possible to count the number of dust particles in a cubic centimetre. The result was that a man became totally incapacitated in 12 months. He was not then tubercular but he definitely developed T.B. in addition to

silicosis subsequently. So that up-to-date mine gave a miner four years of life. Yet the Minister talked about modern mines.

The officials soon took notice when I drew the attention of the Arbitration Court to this fact and called Inspector Phoenix as a witness, producing evidence signed by him. The activities of this mine that was working men in an atmosphere where the dust count was 1,000 plus were soon stopped. It was not the desire of the company, but pressure was brought to bear on it by the organisation I represented. At a later stage an older mine opened—the Lancefield—and it started operating on a very similar system. I will admit that it was a very old mine. It had big open spaces that could not be properly branched off. Conditions were so bad that we had to take action again with the Mines Department; and as a result instructions were issued that if the manager did not put in a new ventilation shaft and an exhaust fan, the mine would be closed down. That was the threat that had to be levelled against the mining company which was producing something for its shareholders instead of doing something for the health of the men. The company did not care about their health, but the Mines Department said, "If you do not ventilate the mine properly, we will close it down."

The company was given a certain time to make the improvement. I was there and the fan was installed within a few hours of the time at which the mine would have been closed down. They are facts. That is not a statement made by somebody in Queensland but is something that can be substantiated from Mines Department records. I can remember the very old days when the men had little protection; when the common statement made was that men were cheaper than timber. When men were put into a bad stope and a fall took place, the victims were regarded as being cheaper than timber. We do not want to return to those conditions, but the moment we introduce diesel engines underground in a mine we shall be reverting to that state of affairs. I would say for the benefit of this House that the most important thing in mining is the dust factor. People do not realise what dust is. When one talks about it they imagine swirling clouds of dust. They think the place is covered with it. Nothing of the kind!

The dust that causes miner's phthisis is in an atmosphere as clear as that which prevails in this Chamber. It is 150 times too fine to be seen with the naked eye and it takes six hours to sink five feet in still air. That is how fine the dust is. These mines are impregnated with this dust; but fortunately when there is no work being done the dust settles and remains on ledges, on timber, all over the place. It is not active. It settles in six hours when the mines are at rest. But the moment there is an explosion it immediately becomes circulated in the atmosphere and stays there. Members can imagine what would happen with an engine continually pulsating. I believe that some internal combustion engines run to 2,000 revolutions a minute. Imagine the engine which we had at Parliament House to provide power during the recent strike! Remember the noise, the pulsation of it!

Do members think that that would be any good underground continually pulsating and raising fine dust and creating bad health for the men? Of course it would not! We shall be taking a retrograde step as soon as we attempt to introduce anything in the nature of pulsating engines. In modern mining practice in other parts of the world companies are not permitted to fire in a mine during the time men are underground. In South Africa the firing is done between midnight and 8 a.m. and there is a special firing squad to prevent dust being raised underground, because in South Africa they compensate a man when he is in the anti-primary condition. In Western Australia the miner is not compensated until he is 70 per cent. or more dusted, with a 70 per cent. loss of his lungs. Here they call that early silicosis. In this State they wait until a man gets tuberculosis and has four years to live.

This House will be on the wrong track if it ever agrees to the introduction of regulations to permit the utilisation underground of any engine or machine that pulsates. The member for Murchison has mentioned an engine that makes no noise, although it costs a considerable sum of money. It does not pulsate and emits no gas, but it costs too much. The Minister mentioned the purchase and running costs of the diesel locomotive. He said the original cost was only 50 per cent. of the battery-operated locomotive, so the mining company, for the sake of that 50 per cent.

saving in cost, wishes to put in an engine that will tend to destroy the health of the men.

Mr. Marshall: And I would like to check those figures.

Mr. TRIAT: I will take them as being correct. There is no member in this House who would agree to such a thing as wilfully endangering the health of the men because of cost. Even if it cost nothing to install this class of engine, I do not think some of the companies would agree to it. The Minister says the running costs of the diesel locomotive are only one-fifth of those of the battery-operated loco, but to me that makes no difference at all. No member with a single thought for the health of the men who work underground would give consideration to that factor. There is no chance of operating underground in our deep mines in Western Australia any internal combustion engine without damaging the health of the men. Even a machine drill of the percussion type is detrimental in that regard although recently they have been able to reduce the movement of the drill to a mere rattle. However, it still raises a certain amount of dust.

No man receiving a re-admission ticket is permitted to work in a mine alongside a machine because it is realised that he will get too much dust if he does so. He must work in special parts of the mine for that reason. I feel confident that the House would not agree to any regulation likely to be detrimental to some of the citizens of the State, merely because this type of locomotive will be cheaper to purchase or a bit easier for the company in the matter of running costs. If a company cannot afford to work its mine at a profit under decent conditions, it should be closed down. I hope regulations from 172 to 192 will be disallowed. If No. 172 is the only regulation that can be used to protect the men, it should be disallowed and new regulations brought down for that purpose.

MR. OLIVER (Boulder) [8.55]: I support the motion for the disallowance of these regulations. It is true that a conference of responsible bodies discussed what are now the new mining regulations, but it is not necessarily true that these are the regulations agreed to by that conference. I wish it to be understood that I am not speaking

in a provocative spirit, but in order to define the attitude of the A.W.U. towards the introduction of diesel locomotives to underground mining I will read a letter addressed to me by the secretary of the union. It is as follows:—

Re Diesel locomotives: I have been requested to bring to your notice this management committee's strong objection to the introduction of Diesel locomotives underground in the metalliferous mining industry. In the experience of this union Diesel locomotives were not a success at Wittenoom Gorge, which is a comparatively easy mine to ventilate and the regulation to allow their use should be vigorously challenged and a move made to disallow it.

I can speak with some authority on the experience of the use of diesel locomotives in mining operations at Wittenoom Gorge. I recently participated in a lengthy hearing in the Arbitration Court with regard to conditions and rates of pay at Wittenoom Gorge. I was curious to know how diesel locomotives came to be used there and after a great deal of probing I found that the authority had been given by someone in Perth. I wish to make it clear that that authority was not given by the district inspector on the job. Apparently he would not accept the responsibility of recommending the introduction of diesel locomotives to underground mining operations. I was able by close questioning to get from the mine manager the fact that it took him three months of endeavour in Perth before he was permitted to use diesel locomotives. He got the permission from some high dignitary in the Mines Department.

Mr. Marshall: And we were told they were enthusiastic about its introduction.

Mr. OLIVER: I desire also to make it clear that during the period of use of diesel locomotives at Wittenoom Gorge the district inspector visited the mine on three occasions, once per year. That is how much supervision the diesel locomotives got, and they are now worn out. It is true that after agitation by the A.W.U. tests were taken to ascertain the amount of poisonous gas from the exhaust of the locomotive, and the reports disclosed that there was no dangerous proportion of gas present in the atmosphere of the mine. However, that would depend on where the tests were made. To illustrate the problems associated with the use of

diesel locomotives underground, it may be necessary for me to go into some detail with regard to methods of ventilation of mines.

To take Wittenoom Gorge as an example, I point out that it is a particularly easy mine to ventilate. It is a flat mine and is worked on lines similar to a coalmine. The bord and pillar method is used and there are huge drives and crosscuts in which to get the air through. I am suggesting that the air tests were not taken in the deadends at Wittenoom Gorge because every precaution would be observed to see that the locomotive was not in a deadend when those tests were taken; but the use of the locomotive did take it into the deadends. The air was sufficiently foetid from the use of the locomotive in the ends to cause the workers to be completely nauseated and they had to be taken home sick. That was the experience at Wittenoom Gorge.

The manager did give an undertaking, during the hearing in the Arbitration Court, that the use of the engine would be discontinued. At a further stage in the hearing he said that it would not be used in the mine works, but when they had a tunnel through the mine they intended to use it on their mine hauls. The Minister quoted Wittenoom Gorge as an example of the successful use of this type of engine and he said that it would be of great assistance to the goldmining industry if permitted in goldmines. To my knowledge, I do not know of any through airway in any goldmine. If it is suggested that the engines should be used only in through airways, then I can honestly say that there are not any airways in any of the Western Australian goldmines. The best example I could give of a through airway, would be the tunnel at Swan View. I think members know the experience of locomotive drivers in that tunnel, and there is nothing resembling that tunnel in a goldmine.

I would like to convey to members an impression of the conditions in a mine such as the Gwalia, where it was proposed to introduce mechanical means of hauling to replace the horses. The Gwalia is a mine that exhausts all its foul air up its main shaft. The air which goes into the mine to ventilate it is sufficient, but the outlet at the mine shaft is insufficient to allow the foetid or foul air to come out. There is a mine

where it is impossible completely to ventilate satisfactorily. Even though it is possible to get air into the mine, it cannot be taken out in sufficient quantities to allow it to be properly ventilated.

A through airway is something that can be kept completely clear of mine working. Even at Wittenoom Gorge, where there are all sorts of openings for air, the locomotive, if it came in at one end, completely contaminated the air that went through the mine because there was no direct outlet. I am suggesting that it will be impossible for many years to have a through airway installed in the majority, if not all, of our goldmines. Therefore the use of diesel locomotives in our underground operations is not, at this stage, a practicable possibility. The Minister did mention that they gave less trouble than electric locomotives. I cannot speak with any authority on that but I must rely on information that I have obtained from the Canadian Mining Journal. I have here an extract from a paper submitted to the Canadian Mining Journal, and it states—

In France, it was found that, "Examination and repair of 13 locomotives requires daily the services of five special workmen, to which it is necessary to add the additional half hour of the engineers in the morning for daily inspection, which makes six repair shifts for 13 locomotives."

If it is a question of maintenance costs, it appears to me that diesel locomotives would be very costly compared with electric locomotives, of which I have had some knowledge. I cannot recollect, during the whole of my mining experience, electric locomotives requiring very much maintenance. Therefore, I must accept the Minister's statement with some reserve that the costs are less for diesel than they are for electric locomotives. I have a comparison of haulage costs which was set out in a paper by Georges Scherrer and entitled "Haulage by Mechanical Means in Coalmine Haulage-ways." He gives the costs in cents per ton mile and they are 2.88 cents for electric trolley loco and 2.70 cents for diesel loco. That shows a difference in cost of 18 cents. Where the health of workmen is concerned, 18 cents is not worthy of consideration. It is only natural that diesel haulage would be attractive to mining engineers and it is true that it has been used successfully in tunnels and open-cuts, but the mining system in Western Australia is such that it should

not be permitted. There is not sufficient supervision by the Mines Department to ensure the proper use of diesel locomotives in underground haulage.

As stated by the member for Mt. Magnet, at present it takes at least a week for any individual inspector to inspect one of our mines on the Golden Mile. Those inspectors have to make all sorts of reports, which ties them down week in and week out. I would say that of the total number of inspectors, only about three are available to do mine inspections. What possible chance would they have of supervising the use of diesel locomotives underground? In addition to that, the ventilation officers who test the air in the mines and who make reports, which in the past have always been looked on as valuable documents, would have to be in the mines continually attending to their duties. At this stage I might mention that these reports are now denied to the union, it being claimed that they are of a confidential nature. Perhaps at some future stage I may be able to deal with that aspect. To be quite frank I think it is a reflection on the department and the Minister that these reports should be refused to the union. They are made by public officers and there should be nothing confidential about them.

It would be impossible for any number of inspectors to police the use of locomotives in our mines. The experience at Wittenoom Gorge was that to stop the engine at any time, as is suggested in these regulations, when it is used in deadend work is practically impossible, because if the operator stopped the engine he would have all the trouble of starting it, which is worse than leaving it running. When it is restarted it makes such a cloud of smoke and fumes that it not only affects the men in the deadend but also affects the operator. The best illustration I can instance to members is that they should watch the big busses in the Terrace when they are leaving, and it will be noticed that when the engine starts up a considerable volume of fume and smoke is emitted from the exhaust. Imagine that quantity of fume and smoke being emitted in a confined space with no possibility of its escaping! The men cannot avoid inhaling it and this is what nauseates them and forces them to leave their work.

It would be a revelation to members if they realised the turnover of labour at Wittenoom Gorge. It is not 100 per cent. a year but 100 per cent. every three months, and it is a condition such as we are discussing that causes such a turnover. It is not a question of money at that centre but the conditions under which the men work. I feel unequal to the task of dealing with such a problem as this. I hope I have given the House some information as to what the introduction of diesel locomotives to the mines in Western Australia might mean. I know this: If their introduction is persisted with it will cause no end of industrial unrest in the bigger mines because they are inadequately ventilated. I do not think anyone who has a knowledge of underground mining work would even suggest that the mines on the Golden Mile, with perhaps one exception, are in any way adequately ventilated and that mine is adequately ventilated in parts only.

I am suggesting that even to think of introducing diesel locomotives in those mines would be a crime and their introduction would be resisted by the workers. In dealing with Regulation No. 252 I say that if it meets the wishes of any representative body of people it does not meet the wishes of the Australian Workers' Union. Let me deal with this regulation in detail. It says—

Any person who has been issued with a certificate except a provisional certificate . . .

The question arises, what is a provisional certificate? It might interest the House to know that it is one that can be given to a worker by any medical practitioner. It will permit a man to work in any part of a mine entirely at his own risk. He is not accepted as a liability under the Workers' Compensation Act nor under the Mine Workers' Relief Act. So when he is issued with that certificate he, himself, accepts all the risks. To say that the union would agree to such a proposition as that would be just stupid. The union has always resisted the issue of provisional certificates and it still does. The regulation goes on to say—

which entitles him to be employed as a mine worker and is not eligible for examination under the provisions of the Mine Workers' Relief Act.

If he is not eligible under that Act under which Act is he eligible? The Mines Regulation Act only! It is quite possible for

a person to work in the mining industry for 20 years and for some reason, such as lack of employment in the industry, he has to find a living in some other industry. He has only to be out of the mining industry for two years and he forfeits his right to work in it because his certificate is taken from him. So we come to the next part of the regulation which says—

May be issued with a Re-admission Certificate.

Obviously that suggests that he may be refused re-entry into the industry and he is refused if for any reason he is found to be medically unfit. A man was recently refused admittance to the mining industry because he had the lower part of his leg missing. Would that man be refused admission to any other industry? There is any amount of room to employ a man such as that in the mining industry but he was refused admission as being unfit. That regulation is stretched to that extent. The main objection to it is that after 20 years in the gold-mines a man contracts some silicosis but if by some misfortune he leaves them he is not allowed to return. He is found to have contracted something which will not permit him to remain eligible as a mine worker, although a considerable amount of the complaint which bars him could have been caused as a result of working in the industry for 20 years. Having run the gauntlet as to that, we come to the latter part of the regulation which reads—

and providing further that he has not previously received compensation on account of silicosis and pneumoconiosis.

In my opinion the man who drafted the regulation was more concerned with the employers' than with the workers' welfare. Evidently the reason for that addition was that a few men have been able to wangle their compensation. If that was in the mind of the draftsman, I point out that the employer is absolutely protected by Section 8 of the Workers' Compensation Act, which provides that a man, having received £750 or the £1,250, cannot receive additional compensation. He has had it and that is the end of the business.

Mr. Marshall: He has certainly had it!

Mr. OLIVER: The effect of this provision will be to prevent the honest worker from following his legitimate occupation.

This will be detrimental, not only to the workers but also to the employers, because it will denude the industry of some of the best and most highly skilled workers. The regulation says—

Provided further that he had not previously received compensation on account of pneumoconiosis or silicosis.

He may have received a disability such as any other worker might receive in the course of his employment and yet he is to be denied re-entry to the industry. He may have received compensation to the extent of £100 or £150 on account of silicosis and because he has received that compensation and because he has acted on the advice of his doctor and has remained out of the industry for six years, he cannot return. That is ridiculous. If the House permits the regulation to stand, it will be doing an injustice. Obviously the regulation should be disallowed because it is not even intelligently drafted, and to say that the union was a party to it is not true. If members give the regulations a moment's thought, it must be agreed that they should be disallowed and I hope they will be.

On motion by the Minister for Education, debate adjourned.

## MOTION—TIMBER.

### *As to Limitation of Exports.*

Debate resumed from the 6th July on the following motion by Mr. Reynolds:—

That in the opinion of this House, the oversea export of timber should be suspended, and that exports to the Eastern States be reduced by 50 per cent. until the 1st January, 1950, for these reasons:—

(1) That supplies catch up with local demand for building purposes;

(2) Reduction in cost of house-building by elimination of costly stoppages due to tardy delivery of requisite timber;

(3) Speedier completion of house-building targets.

**THE MINISTER FOR FORESTS** (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [9.23]: The member for Forrest has moved for the limitation of timber exports for certain reasons which relate to the expansion of the housing programme. With the general objective of the motion, the Government is entirely in agreement.

Mr. Reynolds: I am delighted to hear that.

**THE MINISTER FOR FORESTS:** We have felt that exports oversea in particular and to some extent interstate should be subservient to the needs of the State, having regard to the various factors which are associated with an industry of this sort and with a long term view based upon the utilisation of the industry in the best interests of the State. To that end, as I told the House previously, conferences have been held, particularly this year, with a view to a reduction in the exports of our timber and especially of timber of the description known as sawn timber or general purpose cutting, which is the type that can be utilised for the building programme.

In consequence of that attitude and following these conferences, on two occasions this year the sawmillers have reviewed their programme with the idea of limiting what had been previously proposed to be exported oversea or interstate. Speaking from recollection, which I think is exact, at the last conference held some three months ago, the monthly export oversea of sawn timber was to be reduced from 1,500 to 1,000 loads, so with the objective of the hon. member I am entirely in agreement.

**Hon. F. J. S. Wise:** Did that include sleepers?

**THE MINISTER FOR FORESTS:** With regard to the terms of the motion, I shall suggest an amendment that I think will put the matter in a more practicable form. Members will recall that the distribution of timber has followed, and to a large extent still follows, the pattern set during the war. During the war years, under the Defence Powers, the control of timber was in the hands of the Commonwealth, and the chief Commonwealth officer charged with the supervision of timber production and distribution was the Commonwealth Director of Timber Supplies, Mr. Kessell, who was originally Conservator of Forests in this State and was loaned to the Commonwealth for this war service.

When the war ended, it was decided, after consultation between the Commonwealth and the various State Governments, that a substantially similar system should continue. The result of this system is that the Commonwealth exercises a certain degree of control over timber distribution by reason of its power to control exports. External trade is a power of the Common-

wealth and not of the States. When, therefore, the timber industry in any State desires to export, it must obtain a permit from the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth, in granting the permit, is able to express the desire that the production of the industry in any State shall be distributed partly to that State and partly to other States as well as oversea.

In those distributions, which are arrived at according to half-yearly programmes, the Commonwealth, through its Director of Timber Supplies, consults the various States as to what the programme shall be for the ensuing six months. That has been the practice in this State and I was able to bring to the notice of the House on a former occasion some indication of the trends of the distribution of timber over the various years, pre-war, during the war, and since, and also indicate that during the current year exports of sawn timber were down to a minimum volume compared with exports of that class of timber in any previous year.

**Mr. Reynolds:** The export of sleepers increased considerably.

**THE MINISTER FOR FORESTS:** No. As a matter of fact I made some inquiries about that matter and was informed that the Commonwealth Statistician—whose figures I gave to the House—had included a shipment of sleepers in the 1948-49 programme which in fact had been shipped in the 1947-48 programme; and when that adjustment is made it will be found that in fact the export of sleepers in 1948-49 was materially less in volume than the export of sleepers in 1947-48. But it is true, as the hon. member I understand suggests, that when that timber has to be considered a distinction must be drawn between timber produced from general purpose mills, which is of a kind that can be employed for a great variety of uses, particularly house-building, and timber produced from sleeper mills which, as the name indicates, is almost entirely used for the purpose of sleepers.

Although I agree with what was said by the mover of the motion that to some extent sleeper timber can be used for other purposes, by and large we can say—to use perhaps an obvious expression—that sleeper mills produce timber for sleepers. The reason for that is—without going into an undue explanation of these branches of the



industry—that sleeper mills are mainly located in country which has been previously cut over by the general purpose mills. That means that the original forest has been denuded of the long-length logs which can be used for general cutting and that the forest, broadly speaking, does not contain much more merchantable timber than short lengths capable of being converted into sleepers from 7 ft. to 9 ft. in length.

So the sleeper mills mainly produce sleepers and their capacity to produce other classes of timber is limited, although I am prepared to say that the Forests Department and the Assistant Conservator, Mr. Shedley, who is now the State Director of Timber Supplies, are addressing their attention to the possibility of getting a return, in a certain volume, of timber from sleeper mills which can be used as scantlings and for other building purposes. But I have to confess that as far as I can learn the possibility of getting any great volume of timber from that source for building purposes is not very great.

I would like to say a few words about the timber position, because I think anybody who has given it any study will realise that it is a most intricate industry, one which is possessed of features which can be said to be exclusive to it. The industry, unlike those various products which are produced annually, or perhaps over a period of years, relies upon a growth extending over many years. In the case of a hardwood tree, I think the member for Nelson would agree with me that one could not expect a tree to grow to a size that would give merchantable timber under 90 or 100 years.

Mr. Reynolds: Longer than that.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I am taking the minimum. There are karri trees in the Pemberton area which were growing when William the Conqueror came to the throne of England, so I am informed. The industry is an individual one and differs to a great degree from other industries. That being so, I desire to refer to the general policy of the industry without unduly trespassing upon the time of members. From the passing of the Forests Act, 1919, which was a landmark in the forestry history of the State, the general policy, in broad outline, has been so to manage our forests that they will represent a permanent asset. Prior to that time there had been

some danger that the forests would be, so severely cut that it would not be many years or decades before they ceased to have any commercial value as a forestry asset to the State. But by the type of management envisaged by the Forests Act of 1919, it was deemed possible—and it is possible, broadly speaking—to maintain our hardwood timbers as a permanent source of wealth for the State.

The last review of this policy took place in 1945. In that year the general working plan provided for the maintenance of an output of 600,000 loads a year from Crown Lands from the general purpose mills. The plan envisaged that this output of 600,000 loads per annum from Crown Lands would continue for a period of 30 years from 1945. It was then anticipated by the plan that at the end of 30 years the whole of the virgin part of the forests of the State would have been cut over, and that at the end of the period of 30 years the permissible cut of 600,000 loads from Crown Lands would have to be appreciably reduced. The reduction of the annual cut at the end of 30 years under this programme can be regarded as a matter of considerable concern to the economy of the State; but the plan envisaged that to meet that reduction in cutting the State would embark on a programme of pine plantation.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Does that plan take into account the increase of the internal demand because of population increases?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I do not think it does adequately take into account increases in internal demand.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is a very important point now.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: It is a most important point. Having that in mind, the Government has authorised a review of the 1945 general plan. In view of the situation, it is our opinion that the long-term management of our forests needs to be reviewed.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Forests in perpetuity could only be planned 20 years ago on a certain population at that time.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I would not quite say that; because in the management of forests you can either arrange your permissible cut on such a basis as to provide for your then population and

the normal annual increase, or else you can, if you expect rather more increase than is normal, limit your cut so that the growth will be coming forward from the hardwood forest to enable a larger forest area and a larger cut to be obtained at a future date to meet the increased population.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: An emergency such as a war can knock that sideways, too.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Precisely! All these plans are subject to the exigencies of the times, and no country has experienced that more vividly than Great Britain. That country has a national forest area of approximately 3,000,000 acres. In other words, although her country is infinitesimal compared with the State of Western Australia, the national forest area of the United Kingdom is, broadly speaking, exactly the same as ours. Our State forest covers about  $3\frac{1}{3}$  million acres.

Mr. Reynolds: It is nearer  $5\frac{1}{2}$  million acres.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: It is about  $3\frac{1}{3}$  million. I propose for a moment or two to deal with the long-term policy relating to our forests because I think it is a matter of very great importance and I believe the Leader of the Opposition is entirely in agreement with that view. Speaking from memory—but I am pretty closely accurate—the total area of pines planted in this State is about 12,000 or 13,000 acres. It is nowhere near the pine planting that is needed to make good the reduction in cut which, under the 1945 plan, is to take place in 30 years' time in our hardwood forests; and it is still less adequate to take care of the increase in population which we may expect from the Commonwealth Government's migrant programme.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You do not oppose that migrant programme, do you?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: No, I feel that the migrant programme, to the limit of our absorptive capacity, is something we must undertake in the interests of the defence of this country; and nobody has put that more clearly than the Prime Minister. But in view of the urgent need to build up our pine plantations to take care of the reduction in cut in our hardwoods at a future date, the Government last year placed £30,000 on the Loan Estimates to recommence and expand the area

of our pine forests. The Department of Forests feels that a programme of 5,000 acres a year of pine planting for the next 40 years should be the objective at which we should aim, but owing to lack of labour it will be some years before we even reach a pine planting of 2,000 acres a year. Still, there it is! The forestry programme of the future will be a combination of the care of our hardwoods and the expansion of our production of softwoods; and that programme has a certain validity, because I think all members realise that in the past we have been lavish of hardwoods, which are very rare and very precious and which have been used for purposes for which they should not have been used.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is Australia's history in forestry.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: It is. The objective of pine planting is that we should be able in due course, from the product of our plantations of pines, to serve the needs in wood of very many purposes and reserve our hardwoods for uses of very much greater value. I agree with the hon. member that the matter of the long-term policy of our forests is one of importance; and since I have been responsible for this portfolio it is a matter in which I have been deeply interested. In consultation with the Conservator of Forests, who is a forester of very high professional standing in Australia, I have found that he also, more than anybody, is concerned that we shall adopt the best possible measures to conserve our hardwood forests, to maintain and continue them and to have these reserves of softwood timber which will lessen the demand at present being made on our hardwood reserves. That is the working plan of 1945 following the working plans which have been provided from time to time since the Forests Act was passed in 1919. For the reasons I have mentioned, and particularly because of the impact of the migration programme of the Commonwealth Government, the Government of this State feels that the forests plan should be reviewed in the light of existing conditions and future needs, in order that we may conserve our forest assets as far as possible and ensure their utilisation to the best advantage as a permanent asset of the State.

I come now to deal more specifically with some references made during the debate. The motion deals with exports of timber

oversea. The policy in that regard is traditional for the timber industry of the State. I said—I believe truly—that timber was the first oversea export that this State ever made, and our general-purpose mills have been constructed and organised for that trade. They are designed and co-ordinated to cut the class of timber required for the oversea market. One of the difficulties involved with a large industry in which millions of pounds have been invested is that if we try to alter the nature of its trade suddenly we come across all sorts of difficulties due to the reorganisation of plant and processes that have been carried on at particular mills, based on the class of export and the type of cutting.

Mr. Hoar: What alterations would have to be made to the mills today if we abandoned the export trade?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: As I understand it, the mills are arranged with different benches. Some can cut timber of long lengths and some cannot, in the proportion suitable for export. The timber clears the mill rapidly, whereas if we took those same lengths of timber and endeavoured to cut them to smaller dimensions such as are used in house building, we would impose a much greater demand on the appliances and machinery of the mill than would otherwise be the case. The export policy of this State in the past has been that timber has formed a valuable part of our external trade. State representatives have been sent oversea from time to time to secure markets for our timber. Prior to the war, something like 44 per cent. of our total timber production was exported, which meant that about the same proportion of the employees in the industry depended on that trade for their employment.

To meet existing conditions, the exports have been curtailed to a comparatively small percentage of what they were formerly. For the year ended the 30th June last, the estimate was about 5.6 per cent. of the sawn timber. Sleepers, of course, have gone oversea because they would not be absorbed in the Western Australian market. However, I am advised, though I could not put a definite period to it—it might be within a year or two at most—that the time is rapidly approaching when the export of sleepers oversea from this State is likely to cease. The reason for

that is that the sleeper production of Western Australia will be required in its entirety for the use of State and Commonwealth railways throughout Australia. So, from causes now operating, I am advised it is likely that in the comparatively near future all sleepers produced in this State will be reserved for Australian requirements, particularly in view of the large railway rehabilitation programmes of this and the other States. The policy that has been followed has been that the export oversea of our hardwoods to a certain volume constituted an important contribution to our external trade, and helped to provide the credits by means of which we were able to import those things that we did not ourselves produce.

A further factor, expressed to me by those qualified to speak, is that on a long view it may not be many years before the oversea trade is needed for some of the products of our timber industry. I refer particularly to karri. At present, the balance of production is shifting to the south of the timber areas, and it is to be expected that before many years have passed the output of karri will be much larger. I am advised that possibly within a comparatively few years we will be looking for export markets for our karri because we will not be able to absorb it all within the State.

Mr. Reynolds: The annual production of jarrah will be considerably decreased, so that one will balance the other.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: We hope the production of jarrah will be expanded sufficiently to meet our needs, but the production of karri may be expanded much beyond our needs.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You are thinking of the limitation of the purposes for which karri is used?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yes. Karri is in great demand for certain purposes. It is used in Victoria in the manufacture of agricultural implements that are later sent to this State, but, in comparison with jarrah, its uses are limited. I can only pass on to the House the expert opinion given to me, which is that it is by no means unlikely that within a comparatively few years, with the new mills coming into production in the southern karri areas, we may be looking for markets oversea for our karri. It is also felt—I desire

to mention this shortly—that it is good economic practice for a State to export articles for which it can get a comparatively good return, even though that means importing softwoods at a comparatively cheap rate to serve the purpose for which the valuable hardwoods would otherwise have had to be utilised. It is a policy on a long-term basis of earning credits by the sale of valuable hardwoods overseas in aid of the State's external trade, and at the same time importing cheap softwoods in order to serve the purposes for which the hardwoods would otherwise have been used. That policy has a certain amount of justification as an economic measure.

A moment or two ago I said that if we can achieve our objective we will build up our pine forests in this State and in due course meet our needs, or go a long way towards doing so. The motion proposes that all overseas exports shall cease until the end of this year. I intend to suggest in my amendment that the resolution shall not be so absolute. We realise that an industry, a very large industry, such as this one, in the past has been permitted to proceed on a certain basis under legislation and governmental administration. It is not always easy for it suddenly to terminate what is a large avenue of its trade. For example, with overseas trade, merchants may have contracted for freight and they may have brought exchange contracts forward in view of possible variations in exchange. Merchants may have made contracts with suppliers under which they are legally bound, and they may also be under some sort of moral obligation to carry out commitments which they have habitually fulfilled for people overseas. So that to cut them off with a knife, even to the end of this year, might involve a certain amount of difficulty and unfairness. I propose, in my amendment, that we shall not do that, but shall convey the opinion of the House, in general terms, that overseas exports should be reduced.

I turn now to exports interstate. In the first place we have no power to prevent interstate exports under Section 92 of the Constitution which binds both the Commonwealth and the State.\* Trade and commerce between the States are absolutely free. If, therefore, any merchant or individual in this State makes a contract to sell timber to somebody in another State, there is no

power in this State to prevent the performance of that contract. In addition there is the consideration that we depend on reciprocal trade for a great deal of the essential needs of our State. I refer particularly to iron and steel products. If we are to expect other States to observe a commercial and perhaps a moral obligation to make such a distribution as takes care of our needs in this State, then we cannot entirely disregard a duty on our part to give some reciprocal treatment to States which are badly off for commodities which we produce. I refer to one State in particular—South Australia—which has no hardwoods and without some assistance with hardwoods from our State, it would be placed in a difficult position.

Mr. Styants: We do not get iron and steel from them, do we?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: They could adopt what they call reprisals, and declare that no Whyalla or Iron Knob products shall come to our State. In any case I do not want to contemplate anything of that nature.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I thought the Minister said that he deliberately evaded the Premier of South Australia when he was over here looking for a few sticks of timber.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I admit that the Premier of South Australia, who misses very little, came over here and observed some disparaging remarks about karri in the local Press. He immediately sent a message saying that he would take the whole of our karri production.

The Premier: And establish his own mills, too.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yes, and cut it in our State. He did not bother about the merits or demerits of karri. However, I am again in agreement with the hon. member to this extent, that there are limits to which we can reduce the volume of timber that we need for our own State. I will also be in agreement with him on that point if he will accept my amendment that we should express, in this House, the desirability of reducing exports interstate as well as overseas. That has already been done, interstate as well as overseas, by the conferences which have taken place with the saw-millers.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I think the Eastern States get the quid from us, but we do not get the quo.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: We suffer a little at times, not so much from intention as from circumstances which I would not say are beyond control, but circumstances such as industrial disturbances. I believe that the Commonwealth has exercised some influence in an endeavour to see that we get our quota of such products as iron and steel. The companies, I know, have endeavoured to give us at least our fair quota but from time to time it does happen that difficulties occur in the Eastern States, we miss our shipments and it becomes impossible to catch them up again. I am sure they do endeavour to stand by us reciprocally in that respect.

So to say arbitrarily that we should cut interstate exports by 50 per cent. would, I think, be a matter of some difficulty. However, to say, in general terms, that that objective will be followed up with all possible energy, is something which I think is on lines that could be reasonably put forward as an expression of opinion from this House. The hon. member referred to a balance sheet of Millars Timber and Trading Coy. That company wrote me a letter and although I do not propose to quote the whole of it I am prepared to show it to any member who wishes to peruse it. I do not consider it to be required for the consideration of the motion. The company in Perth wrote to me on the 11th July and stated that their attention had been called to references made in Parliament by the member for Forrest. The letter went on to state—

I would like to state that the company's report and balance sheet relate to the company's operations in all parts of the world. We are interested in sawmilling in other countries besides Australia. We are very extensive timber merchants in various parts of the world dealing in timbers other than jarrah and karri. We are also quite large manufacturers of engineering equipment, particularly concrete mixers and other handling machinery.

It will be seen therefore, that figures relating to Millars' operations generally cannot be usefully applied to the problems that were being discussed. The company then goes on to refer to an expression in its report that was read to the House that over 50 per cent. of the company's output was

exported. The company in its letter here says that the export referred to was export from the United Kingdom. It was not export from this State. The company's balance sheet and report were from its London office which referred to the company's operations generally. The hon. member mentioned the Empire Forestry Conference. As I said, this industry is an extremely intricate one, and it is quite possible that unless one knows the industry fully one may be misled as to aspects of it that one may refer to, because the hon. member, quoting from a statement prepared for the Empire Conference, gives the value of the 1944-45 imports of wood and wood products into this State at £851,000, but the fact is that £851,000 of wood and wood products imported into this State in that year included wood derivatives. That figure included £155,360 for rayons, which I understand is an article of dress or hosiery and £577,250 for paper and paper products, with only £29,900 worth of primary wood products imported into the State for that year.

So it is not a matter of imports on a scale which otherwise might have appeared from a reading of that report to the Empire Forestry Conference. The hon. member asked me where the timber went. That is a pertinent inquiry because at present we are retaining in our State, for our own use, between 11,000 and 12,000 loads of timber a month, and we are certainly not using more than one-third for our housing programme. And where does the other two-thirds go? There are no records of an authoritative character to determine where timber goes. It is a commodity in such universal and general use that it goes into an immense variety of purposes; sometimes small quantities are used, sometimes large quantities, but on referring to the Conservator of Forests, Mr. Stoate, he told me that some time ago, I think two or three years, he made an estimate in which he was assisted by one of his officers, as to the destination of timber. However, Mr. Stoate says he does not suggest that any of the details are accurate. It is an estimation, as he could best make from such materials that he had available in the way of information of the destination of timber in broad outline. He took an estimated figure of 11,210 loads as being a monthly volume for utilisation in this State. He put down an arbitrary figure of 2,500 loads for housing; that

would be equivalent to a ratio of 2,500 houses per year, 1,670 loads for sleepers, 1,500 loads for cases, which includes not merely fruit cases but wooden containers of all kinds of which there is a great variety in use—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: And an increase in demand.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yes. The estimate continues—

	Loads.
Railway uses other than sleepers ..	1,100
Other permits to build and Govern- ment buildings .. .. .	1,500
Repairs and additions .. .. .	1,240
Stocks for seasoning .. .. .	500
Fencing .. .. .	100
Agricultural and pastoral .. .. .	250
Government and local government needs not otherwise included ..	300
Mining .. .. .	150
Furniture .. .. .	200
Miscellaneous .. .. .	200

The Conservator pointed out that there is, of course, such a wide variety of uses and he mentions as an example, coffin boards, which take up a not inconsiderable volume of timber per year and which he has included under the item of Miscellaneous. In that figure, because perhaps at that time it did not have quite the same significance, he has not specifically mentioned the wood that is used for the stowage of wheat on ships which take wheat oversea. That had to be taken under one of the other items. But in answer to the hon. member's inquiry, that is the Conservator's rough and ready indication as to some of the variety of purposes—

Mr. Reynolds: It is pretty rough!

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I have made inquiries, and from the statistical records that are kept by departments of all kinds, including that of the Government Statistician, it does not appear at present that any more detailed record could be obtained.

Mr. Reynolds: What would be the date of that communication?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: This information was obtained in a communication sent to me by the Conservator on the 8th of this month. But he made it clear that the rough estimate of the destination of timber had been made some considerable time before. He did not specify the exact date—

Mr. Hoar: Of course, a lot of timber of which you know nothing may go to the Eastern States.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I do not think that happens. The timber that goes to the Eastern States is, to a not inconsiderable extent, from cutting on private land. Where the timber belongs to the land owner, the Forestry Department or the Crown has no control over that at all. Some people operating in the industry acquire property in timber on private land and they do send it to the Eastern States.

Mr. Kelly: Would that be a considerable quantity?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: No, it would be a fair amount, but not much compared with our total production. With regard to the exports interstate, the particulars were obtained from the Government Statistician, and I believe he collects his information from the ships' manifests and that the data in his office may be accepted as a fairly complete picture of anything that goes oversea or interstate.

I wish to refer to one or two other specific matters raised by the hon. member. One was his allusion to the expansion of our housing programme that could be made if we retained in the State timber that is exported interstate or oversea, or reduced the volume that was used for other purposes. To some extent an additional flow of timber would undoubtedly benefit the housing programme and building rate, but there are limits to the number of houses that could be built even if we had all the timber in the world because the building of houses depends upon a ratio of several factors—the supply of roofing material, steel products, sanitary fittings and the volume of labour. All these have to be reconciled in order to arrive at the building rate. Consequently, even though we had an increase in the volume of timber available, which would be of assistance to us, there would still be limits imposed by other factors on the expansion of building.

The hon. member spoke of another very important matter, namely, the percentage of recoveries we obtain from our timber in the log and referred to the thesis written by Mr. Hartley. The writer was good enough to present me with a copy of his thesis and I have read it. I have been informed that a comparison of percentages

with other States cannot satisfactorily be made. This is not in any way to suggest that Mr. Hartley's work is otherwise than completely reliable, but I am informed that in some of the other States the recoveries make allowance for the nature of the log. If the log is not of symmetrical shape or has other defects, the portion of the log deemed to be recoverable is reduced and the recovery is a percentage of what is deemed to be the part of the log that could be commercially used. In our State, however, the whole of the log's dimensions are taken into account on which the percentage of recovery is based. That is a factor which makes a comparison of the percentage of recoveries something that is not entirely valid.

We have been negotiating very energetically to the end that there should be a reduction of exports oversea and interstate for the period just ahead, particularly in view of the stringency caused by the reduction in supplies due to the industrial conditions now prevailing.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I suppose the increasing use of plywood and its manufacture in Western Australia will spread our timber life quite a lot.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I think so. The use of new techniques such as the Leader of the Opposition has mentioned may prove to be a very great help indeed. Without branching off on to that topic to any extent, may I say that I think the most widely distributed tree is the red gum or marri, a tree that has been held in rather low esteem commercially?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Despised almost!

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yes, but it is becoming more highly thought of. Bunning Bros., at their new mill at Nyamup, have built a cottage of marri and it is a most attractive place. Our resources may make this one of the most important timbers we have.

In order that the House may consider a motion that may be practicable in all the circumstances and indicate to the industry the opinion of this House and not put it in a position of possibly becoming involved in difficulty, I suggest that the words "should be suspended, and that exports to the Eastern States be reduced by 50 per cent." be struck out and the words "and exports of timber to the Eastern States should be reduced" inserted in lieu.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That would make it a pious resolution, the effect of which would be nearly nil.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I do not think so. I am sure the industry would be prepared to give the fullest consideration to such an expression of opinion by Parliament, whereas a resolution couched in sweeping terms might represent—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: If you exclude the words "until the 1st January, 1950," we might be able to support the amendment.

Mr. Hoar: Do you think the position will improve in the next five months?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yes; in that time a number of new mills will come into production. In addition, a considerable quantity of sawn timber which is now in the lower mills should be received for general use in the metropolitan area and other parts of the State. There has been difficulty with regard to rail haulage on account of the pressure on the railways to cart water, wheat and super. Now that more rail haulage is available, plus the additional mills, a material increase in supplies should be indicated by the end of this year. That is the tenor of the advice given to me. If, however, that result should not be attained, then so far as I am concerned the objective would still be that any exports interstate and oversea should continue to be reduced until such time as supplies are adequate for the purposes of the State.

Mr. Hoar: Why not make your amendment along those lines?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I have no objection. I am quite agreeable to leaving out the date, which is a matter for subsequent consideration. If industrial conditions should be such that exports oversea would serve the interests of the State and the men working in the timber industry, then of course it would be a matter of facilitating the resumption of a larger volume of export oversea. In the meantime I have no hesitation whatever in saying that where the needs of the State in timber supplies are pressing, every endeavour should be made to see that exports oversea and to the other States are reduced as far as practicable, having regard to the various factors I have endeavoured to convey to the House. I accordingly move an amendment—

That in lines 3, 4 and 5 of the motion the words "should be suspended, and that exports to the Eastern States be reduced by 50 per cent. until the 1st January, 1950" be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

On motion \* by Mr. Hoar, debate adjourned.

### MOTION—WATER SUPPLIES.

#### *As to State-wide Flat Rate.*

Debate resumed from the 6th July on the following motion by Hon. E. Nulsen—

That, in the opinion of this House, all Government controlled water supplies in Western Australia should be on a flat charge basis, to ensure that water will be the same price to the consumer in the country as in the metropolitan area.

**THE MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY** (Hon. V. Doney—Williams-Narogin) [10.35]: Those who recall the speech of the member for Kanowna on this motion will recollect that he invited the House to agree with him that water from Government controlled supplies should be sold throughout the State at one and the same price. It will be noticed that he went no further than to assert that this should be done. He ventures only thus far and I think I would not be wrong in saying that probably every member of the House would be prepared to travel that far with him. The hon. member says it should be done. Of course it should be done, there can be no doubt whatever about that. I think we all realise, too, that if business in this State—or elsewhere for that matter—were based on pure justice and decency and nothing else, it would be done, or if we lived in Utopia or in a world suddenly bereft of selfishness. Unquestionably, it is highly desirable that what the hon. member suggests should be done, but what he overlooks is that we happen to live in a cold, hard, practical and entirely unsympathetic world where, as every member knows, our ideals are slow indeed of actual realisation.

I would be inclined to say that the hon. member had not worried a great deal, if at all, about the practicality of the flat rate to which he referred. That is rather a pity, because I am sure all members would have liked some information on the point. I feel certain that neither this Government, the previous Government, nor for that matter any Government in Australia or even outside Australia, knows the answer to this flat

rate problem that my friend the member for Kanowna toys with—I think that is a justifiable term—in so unsophisticated a fashion.

Hon. E. Nulsen: There is no toying by me. I am quite serious.

The **MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY**: I quite realise the hon. member was serious, but the big question that he left entirely untouched was, how is it to be done? The hon. member did not offer one tiny bit of assistance in that regard. I wish he had done so, because when I refer to a solution I do not mean the purely arithmetical side of it, as that side of the problem presents no difficulties whatever. The hon. member himself, members may recall, with the air of a man who had just discovered the solution, intimated that all that we had to do was to ascertain the total State cost in regard to water supplies and divide the total by the number of gallons sold, and then agree with him that the cost per thousand gallons of water would be the 1s. 9d. he referred to so very frequently.

Hon. A. H. Panton: A very good formula!

The **MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY**: I am inclined to think that the problem cannot be solved so easily. I do not think it ever has been solved or, if it has, I do not believe there is a single country in the world—I am not referring to pocket-handkerchief States like Monte Carlo or San Marino, but to countries of size and consequence—that could find an answer to the flat rate problem.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That is no reason why we should not.

The **MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY**: No. It is not in itself sufficient reason, but it supplies a pretty good reason why we have not done it here yet; and I think that so highly desirable is the principle that, had it been a feasible proposition, it certainly would have been done in many parts of the world. On two occasions during his speech the hon. member, whose voice was full of appeal at the time, said, "All I am asking for is decentralisation. All I am asking for is a flat rate for water." That is all the hon. member was asking for: nothing but that! I think he is altogether too trustful. He gave me the impression that he thought I had a few flat rates up



my sleeve, and if only I cared to be decent about it and let him have them, everything would be all right. I am sure that the hon. member, with his very lengthy Cabinet experience, must know something of the attitude likely to be adopted towards a problem of this kind by the Grants Commission.

Hon. E. Nulsen: It has nothing whatsoever to do with the Grants Commission.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: I think that in a practical approach to a problem of this kind it is absolutely essential that the anticipated attitude of the Grants Commission should be taken fully into consideration. I have already indicated that I favour the principle of a flat rate. Quite a number on this side of the House, and particularly on my right, will reflect that flat rates for electricity and water are among the objectives of the Party to which I belong. But no members of that Party, I would be inclined to say, whether they be ministerial or private members, would insist that this objective is for immediate implementation. I have never so regarded it. My personal view is that it is for piecemeal treatment.

Mr. May: For posterity!

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: I will be able to show the hon. member directly that we are not leaving it for posterity but have already started in a serious way upon the piecemeal treatment. I have no doubt that there will be those who will feel like interjecting that the Government has been sidestepping its responsibilities; but let me point out that we have been using every opportunity since we came to power to implement the principle of uniform rating, portion by portion. I think it would not be unwise if I were to give an instance or two. Members may recall that four years ago I attempted an amendment in this House in which I sought its consent to a flat rate for electric current. This was at a time when a Bill sponsored by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was going through. Upon a division being taken, I certainly lost, and lost very badly indeed.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You mean you took it badly.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: I did not take it badly at all. I had been anticipating no more success than came my way. But, on searching the division

list and naturally anticipating that I would find that one of my supporters at least had been the member for Kanowna, I discovered that not only did he not vote in favour of the amendment—neither he nor any member of his Party—but he was not in the division, on one side or the other. I am not insisting that that is the measure of the hon. member's interest in this matter; I do not think it is. But at least when he had the opportunity he did not trouble to cast his vote in favour of the principle which now he insists it is one of the chief duties of the Government to put into effect.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Put it up again, and I will support you.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: Our policy, in prospect as yet, with regard to the electricity scheme based on Collie and Bunbury is that of a flat rate in all towns likely to be supplied from that source. I had better admit, before the member for Collie slips in an interjection, that Collie has contracted out of that, or rather prevented a flat rate being applied wholly; because there is an Act of Parliament, I am given to understand, that enables it to remain for a while outside the scheme.

Mr. May: There is a right of renewal too.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: When the hon. member says they have the right of renewal, that implies there is another party to the contract, and that the two have to be in agreement before the renewal takes place.

Mr. May: That is, unless you scrap the contract.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: I will agree. But if the hon. member will cast his mind back at least for a year, he will find himself reflecting that another body, in a somewhat similar situation and having the right of renewal, did not get that renewal. I am anxious to point out that, so far as Norseman is concerned—and Norseman is the town with which the member for Kanowna is principally concerned—the Government has indicated that its intention with regard to flat rating of water is quite a serious and proper one. Recently, when the Government made a series of reductions throughout the Goldfields and on the Murchison line, Norseman enjoyed those reductions which, I think members will admit, were very sensible and sizeable. The rebate rate was reduced from 6s. 8d. to

4s. 6d. per thousand gallons. So far as the domestic excess is concerned, if the account were paid before the 10th March, the Norseman rate went from 5s. to 3s. and if payment were made after the 10th March, it fell from 6s. to 3s. 3d. The trading rate was reduced from 10s. to 7s. and the mining rate was similarly reduced. Those are quite substantial drops; the hon. member cannot get away from that. When I say that in its way that is a contribution to the uniform rate problem, no-one should feel like denying it.

Mr. Kelly: You made up for those reductions with railway increases.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: The hon. member should know what I am responsible for and what I am not responsible for.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: No-one knows that.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: The member for Kanowna said there was a flat rate for sugar throughout the State and that he therefore could not see why water should not be similarly favoured.

Hon. E. M. Nulsen: I said there was a flat rate for sugar in each capital city of Australia.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: I point out that there are a few commodities that are distributed at flat rates in most countries of the world. The principle applies to parcel and letter postage and telegrams, though telegrams are transmitted more cheaply in the city than in the country areas.

Mr. Styants: That sounds like socialisation.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: During the recent war petrol was sold throughout the United States of America at one price, irrespective of how far from the oil fields it might be sold. Singer Sewing Machines and certain other articles are sold at a flat rate throughout Australia and most parts of the world. That also applies to a number of proprietary articles, such as Enos fruit salts. I presume the hon. member favours the socialisation of industry, but he must realise that Governments generally do not favour a policy providing for flat rates. All the flat rates that he and I have quoted are on articles produced by private

enterprise. The manufacturers in some way best known to themselves have found it possible to institute such a policy, and that is one forward move that must be credited to private enterprise.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The flat rate on sugar is a healthy one.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: I took it that the member for Kanowna knew something about the matter, and I repeated it accordingly. He said that in 1941 or 1942 the Norseman local authority held a number of meetings and decided unanimously that water should be sold at a flat rate throughout the State. He intimated that all water supply centres from Mundaring to Kalgoorlie supported the view of Norseman. No doubt the House will agree that the plea is strongly backed, but I would ask the hon. member when replying to tell the House what action he took when he became acquainted with the views of the Norseman Road Board. What did he do and what results did it have? He might inform the House what obstacles he met. From memory I do not think he took any action at all. When the hon. member sets himself up as a leader in the campaign for the flat rating of water or anything else I feel dubious whether he is the right man for the job.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Flat rating would not suit the irrigation areas.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: No. I was interested in the statement of the member for Kanowna that if we had today a man like Lord Forrest we would already have the flat rate for water. I do not think that is so, because Lord Forrest had precisely the same opportunity to bring about flat rating as exists today, and I have no doubt it was suggested to him but that he declined it. We have had Sir James Mitchell, John Scaddan, Sir Hal Colebatch, Phillip Collier, John Willecock, Frank Wise, Albert Hawke and Harold Milington, who are among the best men we have had, but none of them could jump over the flat rate hurdle. In spite of that the hon. member expects this Government to overcome it easily. He has stressed that it is a simple task and that all he asks for is decentralisation and a flat rate for water.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is almost like one of your pre-election promises.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: No, it is like asking for a cheap toy. Towards the end of his speech the hon. member told the House with considerable emphasis that for the balance of his time in this House he would fight a battle for the flat rate. The hon. member came into the House in 1932 and was stirred by the appeal from Norseman in 1941, so I think he is culpably late in starting this great campaign. Nevertheless, the Government is prepared to assist the hon. member if it can find a way. I know his heart is in this fight for a flat rate, but I wish that he had started it years ago for we might now be reaping the benefits.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He did start it years ago. I can tell you that!

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: The motion as it stands is likely to be abortive if it is accepted, and I think the hon. member will agree that it would not in the slightest degree advance the requirements he has in mind. Therefore I desire to assist the hon. member and intend to ask the House to amend the motion in a way that will—

Mr. Hegney: Settle it!

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY:—give it some substance and some hope of a successful issue.

Mr. May: Anything but water.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: The hon. member must treat the motion seriously.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You ought to set an example.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: Therefore I move an amendment—

That all words after the word "House" in line one be struck out with a view to substituting the following words: "There should be an immediate investigation into the practicability of charging a flat rate for all Government controlled water supplies in Western Australia and that the result of such investigation should be referred by the Treasury to the Grants Commission with a view to ascertaining what detriment (if any) financial assistance from that source would suffer as a result."

On motion by Mr. Kelly, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 28th July, 1949.

### CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Local authorities, as to finance for provision of plant	788
Public Service, as to employment of F. Gregson	784
Timber, (a) as to Associated Timber Industries of W.A.	784
(b) as to trucks for haulage	784
Railways, (a) as to building improvements at Northam	784
(b) as to Caron refreshment room	785
Moola Bulla Station, as to building programme	785
Grasshopper pest, as to aerial spraying	785
Servicemen's Land Settlement, as to allotment of farms	785
Fisheries, as to assistance to canning companies	786
Child delinquents, as to imprisonment	786
Bills : Electoral Act Amendment (No. 3), 2r.	788
Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment (No. 4), Com.	787
Workers' Compensation Act Amendment (No. 2), Message, 2r.	806
Guildford Old Cemetery (Lands Revestment), 2r., Com., report	812
Adoption of Children Act Amendment, 2r., Com., report	813
Annual Estimates, Message, Financial Statement for 1949-50	789

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

*As to Finance for Provision of Plant.*

Mr. FOX asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Did his department set aside a sum in the vicinity of £60,000 to provide plant for local authorities?

(2) From what source was this money obtained?

(3) How much of this sum was allocated to local authorities?

(4) What are the names of such local authorities that were given money from this fund, and how much was provided for each?

(5) What became of the balance of this fund?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, during the years 1947-48 and 1948-49.

(2) The Commonwealth Aid Roads and Works Act, 1947, Clause 6 (5).

(3) £12,000.