

# Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 29th September, 1949.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

## QUESTIONS.

### GOVERNMENT MOTOR VEHICLES.

*As to Number and Mileage Allowance.*

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Premier:

(1) What was the number of State Government owned—

(a) motorcars;

(b) other motor vehicles;

as at the 30th June, 1946, and the 30th June, 1949?

(2) What number of cars or utilities are being purchased by the Government officers who are being assisted by Government finance?

(3) How many officers of State departments receive a mileage allowance for use of their vehicles whether such vehicles are wholly owned by such officers or are being financed through the Government Car Purchase Scheme?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) (a) 1946—148.

1949—172.

(b) 1946—548.

1949—972.

(2) 204.

(3) 601.

### HOUSING.

(a) *As to Applications Lodged and Outstanding.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) What is the total number of applications for rental and permit dwellings received each month during this year?

(2) What is the total number of rental and permit dwellings which have been allocated each month during this year?

(3) What was the total number of outstanding applications for dwellings at the end of each month of this year?

The MINISTER replied:

As the answer is voluminous I will lay the papers on the Table of the House for perusal by the hon. member.

(1) Applications received for rental homes and permits to build:—

1949.	Rental Homes.	Private Permits to Build.	State Housing Act.	McNess.	War Service Homes.	Total.
Jan. ....	485	278	3	6	94	866
Feb. ....	238	491	2	1	163	895
Mar. ....	679	421		7	118	1,225
April ....	316	440	4	5	92	858
May ....	314	547		11	157	1,029
June ....	424	482		7	205	1,118
July ....	283	387	2	4	105	768
Aug. ....	445	566	3	5	166	1,187
Total....	3,160	3,623	14	46	1,100	7,952

(2) Rental homes occupied and permits to build issued:—

1949.	Rental Homes.	Private Permits to Build.	State Housing Act.	McNess.	War Service Homes.	Total.
Jan. ....	31	42	—	2	23	98
Feb. ....	79	82	—	2	88	251
Mar. ....	100	124	—	1	69	294
April ....	48	194	1	—	64	307
May ....	89	288	—	1	86	464
June ....	101	125	2	—	97	325
July ....	88	124	9	—	44	265
Aug. ....	89	232	5	2	62	390
Total....	625	1,211	17	8	533	2,394

\* Including Groups.

(3) Applications outstanding:—

1949.	Rental Homes.	Private Permits to Build.	State Housing Act.	McNess.	War Service Homes.	Total.
Jan. ....	10,570	3,191	1,158	573	4,184	19,676
Feb. ....	10,511	3,689	1,161	573	4,283	20,117
Mar. ....	11,015	3,818	1,183	579	4,325	20,900
April ....	11,284	4,024	1,163	584	4,340	21,392
May ....	11,381	4,218	1,166	586	4,406	21,767
June ....	11,609	4,536	1,166	592	4,497	22,460
July ....	11,668	4,731	1,160	596	4,539	22,688
Aug. ....	11,826	4,998	1,120	593	4,618	23,161

No allowance has been made for applications in respect of more than one type of dwelling or for the cases of applicants who, for various reasons, would not now wish to proceed with their applications. The figures relate to all applications received irrespective of the present needs of applicants for accommodation.

(b) As to Owners Desiring Repossession.

Hon. E. NULSEN asked the Minister for Housing:

In view of the great hardship being caused to people wishing to occupy their own homes, especially where a person owns

one house only, will greater consideration be given to the wishes of the owner with regard to occupancy?

The MINISTER replied:

The regulations under the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act, 1939, were amended at the end of last year to facilitate repossession by owners in certain cases where the owner desired possession of the house for his own occupation.

These regulations are administered by the Hon. Chief Secretary, to whom I have referred the question of the hon. member for his consideration.

(c) As to Resumption of Home Building, Kalgoorlie.

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Will he give immediate consideration to the resumption by the State Housing Commission of building operations in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council?

(2) Is he aware that the housing problem on the Eastern Goldfields has become further aggravated, due to influx of people, particularly prospectors from other centres?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The State Housing Commission has a current building programme in the Kalgoorlie district—15 houses are at present under construction in Kalgoorlie and Boulder.

(2) No, but the position will be investigated.

(d) As to Purchase Price of Rental Homes.

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

(1) Has the Government yet determined the basis on which Commonwealth-State rental homes will be made available for purchase by tenants?

(2) If not, can he give any assurance that such determination will be made and the House informed accordingly before the close of the session?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) The matter of determination of the price of Commonwealth-State rental homes is one which involves many considerations of some difficulty, although

it might not appear so at first sight arising out of the fact that some houses will be sold and others will not, and also that no sales can take place, the result of which might ultimately involve a loss by the Commonwealth unless the Commonwealth is consulted and approves of such a loss being sustained. The matter of the principle upon which such price shall be determined has been discussed by me with the chairman and officers of the Housing Commission. Certain proposals have been arrived at which will be considered at the meeting taking place this afternoon. I hope its recommendations will be in the hands of the Government within a few days, and an early determination will then be arrived at on the basis of price.

(e) *As to Policy of Issuing Permits.*

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

(1) Has he noticed in the Press that a large-scale building scheme has been proposed by an association named the Blighty Club?

(2) Will permits for houses be issued more expeditiously through this association, or any other building association, than they would be through the State Housing Commission?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) No, the Commission's policy will continue to be, whilst the present policy is observed, that there shall be regard to the needs of individual applicants without preference to any particular body or class of applicants. As to the proposal to which the hon. member has referred, it has not, as far as I am aware, been placed before the Commission so far. Assuming that I am right, as I think I am, that the proposition has not been submitted, in due course the Commission will give consideration to any proposals that will be made. The Commission's policy gives no preference to any particular section.

(f) *As to Homes for Two and Three Unit Families.*

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

Can the Minister state if anything has been done by the State Housing Commission to assist two-unit and three-unit families now badly housed or not housed at all to obtain homes in the near future.

The MINISTER replied:

A programme has been developed and contracts have already been let for the construction of pre-cut, factory-built, small-type, timber-framed cottages, for use by two or three-units and other families in the metropolitan area and in the country. In addition, the Commission is developing a programme of minimum-sized dwellings for small-unit families, and designs have been prepared and a prototype of the dwelling according to the design is being constructed. It is hoped that this minimum-sized dwelling will also be capable of being pre-cut and factory-built and purchased in considerable numbers.

## EXPLOSIVES IMPORTS.

*As to Discharging at Esperance.*

Hon. E. NULSEN asked the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping:

(1) How often do boats carrying explosives call at Fremantle?

(2) What tonnage of explosives would be required for such boats to be diverted to Esperance, provided storage facilities for the explosives were made available at Esperance?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) Approximately monthly.

(2) As far as can be ascertained, a minimum cargo of 500 tons of explosives would be necessary to have a vessel diverted to Esperance.

## HOSPITALS.

(a) *As to Order of Sub-regional Construction.*

Mr. HOAR asked the Minister for Health:

(1) In view of the statement published in yesterday's "The West Australian" that tenders have closed for the erection of a sub-regional hospital at Pinjarra, will he inform the House why Pinjarra, only 54 miles from Perth, was selected for the first of such hospitals as against the claims of other country towns in far more remote areas?

(2) Is Manjimup included in the list to receive a sub-regional hospital? If so, what are the plans in connection with it?

(3) How far have these plans been advanced since 1/4/47?

(4) When are these plans likely to be implemented?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Health) replied:

(1) Upon the unanimous recommendation of the Hospital Planning Committee.

(2) No. Manjimup is designated eventually as a regional hospital. This does not necessarily involve building a new hospital.

(3) and (4) Manjimup bed average has reduced during the last four years from 21 to 14, a figure well within the capacity of the present hospital.

(b) *As to Free Medicine for Pensioners.*

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Health:

Will he favourably consider supplying free medicines to invalid and old-age pensioners who are out-patients of the Royal Perth Hospital and who are unable to attend the hospital owing to the expense incurred?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Health) replied:

The proposal involves serious risks through repetition of prescriptions without further medical examination.

Because of this, it is essential, in the patient's own interests, for him to attend at the hospital.

(c) *As to Free Transport for Pensioners.*

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Premier:

(1) Is he aware—

(a) that invalid and old-age pensioners who are patients at the Royal Perth Hospital are compelled to leave the hospital before being cured owing to scarcity of beds;

(b) that such patients are instructed to attend the hospital as out-patients two or three times weekly;

(c) that many of them are unable to travel in bus, train or tram unless accompanied by an attendant and cannot afford the cost?

(2) If so, will he favourably consider providing free transport in such cases?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) (a) Patients are not compelled to leave owing to scarcity of beds. All patients listed for discharge are reviewed by the medical superintendent or his deputy before they are permitted to leave hospital.

(b) Attendance as an out-patient three times weekly would be unnecessary except in very rare cases.

(c) The Royal Perth Hospital Voluntary Car Drivers Auxiliary operates an ambulance and also private cars to provide free transport for out-patients to hospital for treatment where they are unable to travel on public transport and cannot arrange or afford other suitable transport to hospital.

(2) Answered by (1) (c).

(d) *As to Bed Average, Pinjarra.*

Mr. HOAR (without notice) asked the Premier:

Arising out of the Premier's answer to my question on regional hospitals, could he tell me what the bed average is at the Pinjarra Hospital?

The PREMIER replied:

I have not the figures with me, but I know that the position at the Pinjarra Hospital is at present, and has been for some considerable time, that it is not possible to accommodate patients who wish to enter. To my own knowledge, on numerous occasions well over 20 people have been in-patients, in the hospitals, and even then the hospital has had to refuse to take patients from out-lying districts.

## MEAT.

*As to Weight and Price Dockets.*

Mr. OLIVER asked the Attorney General:

(1) Is he aware that the Kalgoorlie and Boulder butchers refuse to give dockets setting out the weight and price of the meat they retail?

(2) Is there a law that requires a butcher when retailing meat to provide the customer with a docket setting out the weight and price of the meat purchased?

(3) If the answer to the preceding question is "yes," will he take the necessary steps to enforce the law?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (for the Attorney General) replied:

(1) No.

(2) There is no regulation under the Prices Control Act, 1948, which makes it incumbent upon butchers to provide a docket or invoice to the purchaser when retail sales are made for "cash over the counter." Out-

side the metropolitan area, however, an extra allowance is made for delivery of meat to purchasers' premises, and in this case in order to support this extra charge a docket must be delivered with the meat. These conditions are not peculiar to this State Act, but are common to all States Prices Act and such was also the case under Commonwealth control.

(3) It has not been the practice of price control to interfere with common trade customs more than is absolutely necessary for the successful operation of such control.

### EDUCATION.

*As to Home for Backward Children.*

Mr. SHEARN asked the Minister for Education:

(1) What progress, if any, has been made by the Government towards the proposed establishment of a home for backward and mentally deficient children?

(2) In view of the depressing fact that a number of affected children have had to be accommodated at Claremont Mental Hospital, can he indicate when suitable premises are likely to be available for the reception of these children?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Government is cognisant of the need for a suitable home for backward and mentally afflicted children.

During the past year or so, no less than six properties have been inspected in the inner and outer metropolitan area with a view to purchase or resumption. The main difficulty is in obtaining suitable premises which are accessible, so that relatives and friends of the inmates may visit, also that reasonable amenities are available for the staff necessary to conduct such a home. In every instance the buildings offered have been too small or lacked playing areas so necessary for any home catering for children. Short of building, efforts to obtain a suitable home have been fruitless to date. As a necessary preliminary step, the Government intends to establish a Child Guidance Clinic in the very near future. Such a clinic will have the staff and facilities to assess the treatment necessary for any afflicted child and it is confidently hoped that an early announcement in regard to the establishment of this clinic will be made.

(2) The search for suitable premises for the backward and mentally deficient children is continuing and all possible avenues are being explored. Meanwhile, where possible, backward boys are accommodated at the Salvation Army Home, Gosnells.

### BUILDING SUPPLIES.

*As to Queensland Ply-wood Doors.*

Mr. SHEARN asked the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping:

Some weeks ago a statement was made in the Press that ply-wood doors imported from Queensland could be supplied locally in quantities sufficient to meet the needs of housing requirements in Western Australia at prices lower than those made locally: Will she inform the House if this statement is correct?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

Yes. I am informed that ply-wood doors to meet Western Australian demands of the housing programme could be made locally.

Regarding prices, the imported article is cheaper, and I have ascertained that the wholesale prices in Brisbane were as follows as at July, 1949:—

Pine—42s.

Oak—45s. 6d.

Maple—49s. 3d.

Kauri doors ex Cairns—present price approximately 50s.

It is pointed out in connection with these prices that these doors are made up in bundles of three and include package by two by two sheets of 3-ply with each three doors. The value of the two sheets is approximately 13s., which is included in the price for the doors, as against local prices of 56s. 9d., less 2½ per cent. for Borneo aloes doors; Local Karri doors—49s. 3d.

### PETROL.

*As to Allocation for Goldfields.*

Mr. McCULLOCH: (without notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

(1) In view of the fact that petrol rationing is to be reintroduced, will the Minister see that better allocations of fuel for prospectors will be provided?

(2) Will the Minister also investigate the need for having small emergency reserve supplies of petrol at isolated centres for cases of sudden illness or accident, particularly on the Goldfields?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) and (2): The matter of petrol supplies will, very possibly, be the subject of Commonwealth jurisdiction.

### MINING.

#### *As to Cartage Subsidy, Exemptions and Advances.*

Mr. McCULLOCH (without notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

(1) Is the Minister aware that customers at the Kalgoorlie State Battery are being told that the cartage subsidy from the Menzies district to the battery has been cancelled?

(2) If this has been cancelled, when was this step taken, and why?

(3) Has the Minister taken steps to cancel any other cartage subsidies, and if so why?

(4) In view of the increased price for gold and the fact that after the New Year there will be a keen demand for mining country, will the Minister adopt a policy to discourage continued mining exemptions by companies which have tied up ground since before the war?

(5) Has the Minister agreed at any time to a proposal from the Amalgamated Prospectors' Association that prospectors who have liquidated their finances may be advanced money on crushings left at the State Battery if the mill is not running?

(6) If so, have battery managers been notified of this?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

I am not in a position to answer those questions, but shall be glad to take the matters up with the Minister for Mines and supply answers as soon as possible.

### FISHING INDUSTRY SELECT COMMITTEE.

#### *As to Presentation of Report.*

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: (without notice) asked the Premier:

Can he give the reason why the report of the Select Committee on the Fishing Industry which was appointed last year and then

converted into an honorary Royal Commission has not yet been presented to the House?

The PREMIER replied:

I am unable to say why this report has not yet been presented. I did ask the chairman of the honorary Royal Commission when he expected to Table the report and requested that it be done as soon as possible. I was hoping that it would be tabled before Parliament rose.

### PARTY TITLES.

#### *As to Changes of Name.*

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Premier and Deputy Premier:

In view of the fact that both the Liberal Party and the Country and Democratic League have this year changed their names, can they give any information as to when the next change is likely to be effected?

(The question was not replied to.)

### DEVALUATION OF POUND.

#### *Statement by Premier.*

The PREMIER: Members will recall that yesterday the Leader of the Opposition asked the following question:—

In view of the necessity to enlighten all sections of the public on the rail import of the British financial situation, will he have a statement prepared to be presented to the House tomorrow on the reasons and necessity for the devaluation of sterling in regard to Britain's external debts, her internal economy and her overseas trade position; and will he express his views on any alternatives that were open to the British Government in that connection?

I have no source of information regarding the reason for the devaluation of British currency other than that already available to the hon. member. A Press statement was made by the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister and a statement was also broadcast over the air, and as members are aware, a statement was made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps. Judging from particulars that have been published in the Press, it appears to me that there were many reasons why Great Britain has been unable to earn sufficient dollars to meet the cost of her imports from dollar areas.

When such an occasion arises, the country suffering this disability may attempt to correct it by governmental action in limiting

and rationing imports from dollar countries, or, if the exchange of goods is left in the hands of financial institutions, it is corrected by an increase in the exchange rate as against the importing country.

I do not know what alternatives were open to the British Government but, from the oft-repeated statement by Sir Stafford Cripps that Britain would not devalue the pound, I can only assume that other alternatives were under consideration.

The effect of the devaluation of the pound will be to increase the cost to the British consumer of imports from dollar countries. As against this, it will increase the income of British exporters of goods to dollar countries. This was made apparent in the statements that were recently issued. Apparently the hope entertained by the British Government is that the stimulation to British exports will more than offset the disadvantage that will fall on British importers.

From statements made by Sir Stafford Cripps and by the Prime Minister of Australia, it is quite clear that the problem that faces Britain is to close the gap between her dollar earnings and her dollar purchases. This problem will become more acute if it is not rectified by the time Marshall aid ceases in 1952. Members have a knowledge of what is happening with regard to Marshall aid. It is being provided for what might be called the anti-communistic countries or the democracies, and this aid cannot be continued indefinitely. After all, it really amounts to a gift from the American taxpayers.

It is obvious, therefore, that Britain hoped, by the devaluation of the pound, to stimulate the export of British goods to dollar countries to close this gap, or substantially reduce it, by the time Marshall aid ceases. When this time is reached, it may be that the pound will appreciate in value in relation to the dollar, but this is a matter that will be determined by the British Government in the light of its policy at that time. I think it has to be recognised that the devaluation of the pound is a drastic remedial measure and is evidence of the extreme economic difficulties now being experienced by Great Britain.

#### **BILLS (4)—THIRD READING.**

- 1, Footwear Regulation Act Amendment.
- 2, Reserves (No. 2).

#### **3, Road Closure (No. 2).**

Transmitted to the Council.

#### **4, Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment (No. 3).**

*Passed.*

#### **BILL—PIG INDUSTRY COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

Report of Committee adopted.

#### **BILL—LIQUID FUEL (EMERGENCY PROVISIONS).**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 23rd September.

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth)** [3.0]: It has been suggested that I should formally advise the House of the decisions of the conference held yesterday between the representatives of the States, and reported to the Premier by the Minister for Transport. The advice received from the Minister was that the conference arrived at the following determinations:—

(1) The Commonwealth Government has complete control over the importation of petrol.

(2) If as the result of the exercise of such control, rationing becomes essential to ensure an equitable distribution to essential users, the imposition of such rationing is a matter for the Commonwealth Government.

(3) The States of New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia having already referred powers to the Commonwealth raise no objection to the exercise of such powers by the Commonwealth.

(4) Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania agree to introduce legislation to give Commonwealth regulations the effect of State law to enable a uniform system of rationing to become operative.

Members will recollect that by a measure passed by this Parliament in 1943—the Commonwealth Powers Act—power was referred to the Commonwealth to ration goods in short supply in this State provided there was no discrimination between the States and provided that the fact that goods were in short supply was affirmed by a resolution of the Commonwealth Parliament. That power was for a period of five years from the cessation of hostilities and will be operative until August of next year. The resolutions adopted by the conference held yesterday indicate that, if they are implemented, the Commonwealth will establish a rationing system in all the States and that

rationing system will be in similar terms in all the States, with the possible exception that some reservation may be made as to the North-West area of this State.

That area had not been subject to Commonwealth control previously in respect to liquid fuel; and the Premier, at the recent Premiers' Conference in Canberra, represented to the Prime Minister that if rationing were reintroduced by the Commonwealth the same exemption should apply to the northern areas of this State as applied previously. By and large, however, it would seem that there will be a rationing system introduced by the Commonwealth which will not discriminate between the States; and in those circumstances, it is thought that there will be power operating under the State Commonwealth Powers Act, 1943, to enable the Commonwealth to proceed with a rationing system for Australia when the other States implement the proposals or undertakings which are contained in the resolutions of yesterday's conference.

The question arises, as far as this Parliament and this State are concerned, whether the Bill introduced by the Minister for Education to this House need receive the further attention of members. That Bill, very briefly, gives power to obtain information as to the petrol which is hoarded and to deal with that petrol, such power to come into operation as soon as the Bill is assented to by the Governor. In the second place, the Bill provides that Parliament may adopt, in respect to rationing by the Commonwealth, a procedure similar to that which is proposed to be adopted by the States of Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, by which Commonwealth regulations are given the force of State law. Thirdly, the Bill before the House contains powers for the control of liquid fuel to be undertaken by the State itself, irrespective of any Commonwealth control at all. The last two powers—that is, the power to make provision that Commonwealth regulations regarding petrol should apply in this State, and the power of the State itself to undertake the control of liquid fuel—will come into force by proclamation if and when they are required.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Could those powers be upset by any individual through the High Court?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is thought not. Apparently it was considered by the conference that there is a reasonable assurance that rationing by this method would be constitutional.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It would be a funny sort of law that would not be subject to legal challenge, anyway!

Mr. Styants: It would be a funny sort of position for legal practitioners if laws could not be challenged.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I think I may say that it would perhaps not be a very desirable thing for the people at large if laws could not be challenged when they should be.

Hon. E. Nulsen: It was intimated in New South Wales that there would be a challenge.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I saw that; but in the Press report no grounds were given, and it appeared to me to be rather a windy statement. But laws are challenged from time to time, even by the member for Murchison. I have spoken in order to advise members formally of the terms of the resolutions arrived at by the States at the conference yesterday, and to express the view of the Government that, notwithstanding such resolutions, Parliament should be invited to pass the measure now before the House. The reason is that unless there is some degree of control, it is possible that a condition of great difficulty might occur in the very near future. I do not need to enlarge upon the situation of farmers in connection with harvesting or the condition of essential industries if there should be a shortage of petrol for those purposes.

Notwithstanding resolutions of the conference yesterday, we are aware that there is always a possibility of some hitch occurring in their implementation. It may be that difficulty will be experienced in some State on account of the views taken by one House or both Houses of Parliament; and if that were so, the whole scheme as proposed at the conference yesterday might be in danger of breaking down. The Government feels that if this Bill is passed there will be a reserve power under our law which could be exercised in case of need. If the resolutions of the conference yesterday were not by some chance put into execution, that



power under State law would be available to enable the Government to exercise such control over liquid fuel as would safeguard essential industries and ensure some measure of equitable distribution.

It is felt, therefore, that the measure should be proceeded with. If the proposals of the Melbourne conference for Commonwealth distribution are implemented that, I think, would be the most desirable way in which the distribution could be undertaken throughout Australia and in this State in the circumstances obtaining today. But if there should be a difficulty or some factor which hinders Commonwealth rationing, the existence of a State law would be an important safeguard to industry and essential users of liquid fuel in this State. Members are therefore invited to consider the measure in that light, and as one which it would be most wise to pass, so that we may have the additional assurance of our State law to meet any emergency that may arise.

**HON. F. J. S. WISE** (Gaseoyne) [3.13]: This Bill, introduced prior to the conference of Premiers, obviously did not anticipate the decisions which the Premiers and Ministers in conference would make. It is a very interesting example of the attitude of most of the Premiers and their anxiety to have somebody else bell the cat, no one being very anxious to accept the responsibility. It is, too, a very interesting position in regard to most States that while they object very strongly to a reference of any power to the Commonwealth, or any resumption of power by the Commonwealth and are as a general rule very critical of the Commonwealth, when the Commonwealth relinquishes power they are very reluctant to take the responsibility if there is any political significance attached to it, and would rather have the Commonwealth or anybody else accept that responsibility should there be any difficulty or political odium attaching to it.

The Premier: Has not that position arisen owing to Commonwealth action?

**Hon. F. J. S. WISE**: I would expect the Premier to say that. I shall ask him some pertinent questions shortly, but shall be surprised if he answers them. The States, particularly those with a Government of the kind we have here, are reluctant to refer

powers to the Commonwealth, even though it may be the most desirable thing to do. But as soon as the Commonwealth has authority, they are very free in their criticism of its administration. That is the popular attitude. In this case we find that States such as Victoria with its vicious hostility to the Commonwealth, are falling over themselves to have someone else accept the responsibility.

The Premier: I do not know what other course is open to them. The Commonwealth controls imports and interstate trade.

Mr. Styants: That does not stop the States running it under the ticket system.

The Premier: It prevents them doing it effectively.

**Hon. F. J. S. WISE**: That is an easy answer. The Minister for Housing explained a few moments ago that the Government was anxious to continue with the Bill, in spite of the Premiers having reached agreement, because, with the Commonwealth controlling imports, it is desirable that the Commonwealth should control rationing. As a result, they are pleased to have the Commonwealth assume responsibility. It is possible that, on presentation of the Bills, in this connection, to the different Parliaments, some sections of those Parliaments will not approve of the proposal. That has often happened in the past when matters of serious national importance have been unanimously approved by the Premiers in conference. The State Parliaments have upset the decisions.

There is nothing new in the set-up as affecting the legislature of the States. The rationing of petrol has been going on in this country for about nine years. Rationing did endeavour to achieve equity in distribution. There is no doubt that although that was its aim, there was considerable inequity. Those who were favoured with some preference, which was somehow hidden from authority, were anxious to indulge in all sorts of malpractices because the tremendous demand for the commodity made it possible for people to go in for blackmarketing to some extent. Even so, there was considerable equity in the matter of supply which was less than the demand even for petrol for proper use, and not abuse. The Deputy Premier when introducing the Bill the other evening made some pertinent comments on

that angle. He went on to say that although he had never been able to satisfy himself of the absolute need of the long continuance of the rationing system, it was obvious that with the import position obtaining something had to be done to assure equity in distribution.

The hon. gentleman said that the Government did not intend to introduce petrol rationing by tickets under State management unless all other expedients failed and dire necessity dictated it. Included in those expedients is the one which is involved in the decision of the Premiers that the Commonwealth should assume the responsibility. In that connection I am anxious to ask the Premier and the Deputy Premier to clarify their attitude as to whether they, having a greater knowledge of this subject than the average citizen, and certainly than any other member of Parliament, think that more petrol should, in the light of the circumstances and the information they have, be brought into Australia.

I would like to know from the Premier himself whether, with the information he was given by the Prime Minister as to the true position in relation to the export ability of the Commonwealth, and in relation to the discussions which have taken place between Sir Stafford Cripps and the Prime Minister as to the sterling-dollar position in relation to the Commonwealth of Australia and the Mother country, he will come out in the open in this Chamber and say, in expressing an honest view without any political prejudice or bias, that the Commonwealth has no alternative but to restrict imports and to impose on the people of Australia a system of rationing.

That is the information that should be given to this House. If it is not made available, it is simply begging the question that the ultimate objective is that of casting a slur on someone else who is responsible. The Premiers in conference had that information given to them. I can quote from the newspapers which published, I take it, as much information as was given to them.

Mr. Ackland: If the newspapers had not entered into this unholy alliance there would be no need for rationing now.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I do not agree with that, but I shall express myself on the point later.

The Premier: The newspapers had all the information. The conference was open.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Reports were published in "The West Australian" of the 8th and 10th June, and there was a leading article on the 7th June. A summary of the position was given as the Prime Minister saw it, as Mr. Dedman saw it, as "The West Australian" saw it and as Mr. Menzies and Mr. Fadden saw it. It is interesting to note that in "The West Australian" of the 8th June, Mr. Chifley appealed to users not to buy more petrol than they were entitled to under the rationing system. He said there was no challenge, or question of challenge of the Commonwealth's power to control imports. Mr. Chifley went on at some length, but I shall not weary members or take up the time of the House by quoting all that he said, although it probably should be recorded in "Hansard" because it is clear that Mr. Chifley had told Sir Stafford Cripps exactly what he told Mr. Menzies, and all Australia, which was precisely what Mr. Menzies had said in regard to the necessity to introduce petrol rationing once the facts and figures were presented to the public.

I think it is a most unfair attitude, because of the irksome restrictions brought about by the rationing, that the central Government should suffer odium if there is no avoidance of the action or of the restrictive nature of the proposals involved in petrol rationing. Otherwise there would be an unfair attitude of mind being built up by every Australian citizen, irrespective of his politics. I refer members to an interesting comment made on the 10th June by Mr. Dedman. In supporting the points raised by Mr. Chifley he made it clear that Sir Stafford Cripps had requested the Commonwealth to take certain action in this connection in the interests of the whole of the British Commonwealth. We should, in all fairness, have all the facts.

In that connection, one of the most temperate of "The West Australian's" leading articles for a long time is that which appeared on this subject on the day following the announcement of the High Court decision. The leading article of the 7th June, 1949, headed "The Petrol Decision" makes it very clear that public co-operation is more likely to be forthcoming if the people are

satisfied by the various Governments of the necessity for the Commonwealth Government to restrict imports. I would like to have some expression from this Government in that connection. The story associated with the mad rush by the people to take advantage of the unrestricted position is indeed an unfortunate one, and a sad commentary on the commercial practices obtaining.

I pay a compliment to the organisation known as the Service Station Proprietors' Association and to the temperate language of such men as Mr. Hearne, who, in his published announcements implored the members of the community not to panic, but to buy as usual, as rationing was necessary and vital in our economy. He asked the public to co-operate with the service stations in their difficult task of distribution. But I am afraid that neither the service stations spokesman, nor the pleadings of "The West Australian" newspaper, had very much result because we find that there was an obvious desire on the part of some oil interests to stress to the public that ample supplies to meet any demand were available within Australia.

The Premier will have a recollection of that being said. There was an encouragement to the public, and heavy users particularly, to buy whatever petrol they thought they would need, and with what result? Panic buying continued and although it was thought that an 8 per cent. or 10 per cent. increase in total supply would be the effect—that is above the added effect of the strike—figures show us, speaking in an Australian-wide sense, just how the people did panic and did attempt to obtain, irrespective of their avocations, sufficient petrol to protect their industries and interests to cover many months' usage; or at least many months of what would have been their ration under the rationing scheme.

We had screaming headlines on the point, as the member for Irwin-Moore remarked. They undoubtedly were an incentive for the public to buy, and were a stimulus to the fear complex created. Side by side with that we had the assurances that ample supplies were available. That did not have the effect of stopping panic buying but rather increased it. Then we had the attacks on the Commonwealth Government because it was not buying petrol in dollar countries and was not buying petrol from sources

where sterling would not be affected. Members who have followed this subject will recall the comments about the oil fields of one company in the Persian Gulf. That company appeared to be committed only to sterling purchases but until the matter was properly publicised, the dollar impact of such purchases was not realised.

In spite of that, the criticism of the Commonwealth Government's not doing something to bring more petrol into this country—it must be remembered that the Commonwealth had examined this position years ago and had to discard the idea—still went on. The Commonwealth Government gave no indication of the prospect of an added quota but rather that the reverse was the position. The people and the market went hay-wire, some people to the degree of self-preservation for a restricted period only, but others went with reckless abandon on to the market and purchased tens of 44-gallon drums and others hundreds of 44-gallon drums. But what was the oil companies' attitude? I understand that some oil companies were anxious rigidly to continue supply on a basis somewhat comparable with the basis under rationing. But, high-pressure salesmanship and the return to open competition meant that what happened legally was morally one of the worst examples of commercial practices we have ever had in this State.

It is idle to say companies did not know that, from central points of distribution, and from district points of distribution, thousands of drums of petrol, over and above what had been normality, were passing out. Although there was nothing legal to assist the companies in withholding it, they had everything in their own hands to do so. But they encouraged it!

Mr. Styants: They adopted the policy of "get rich quick."

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It may not have meant profits to them but it did mean an attempt—irrespective of the national position—to embarrass the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. Triat: That's the point.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It was an attempt to embarrass the Australian position as a whole and incidentally to damage a political Party.

Mr. Triat: That was the idea.

**Hon. F. J. S. WISE:** Had the oil companies applied more reason, normal deliveries to garages and service stations could have been continued until now. In my view, although the service station people have an axe to grind in looking after their own businesses, they are people who give an important service to this community. They have been embarrassed by the developed position from being encouraged to believe that plenty of petrol was to be available and no tickets needed. I have in my hand advertisements, with letters feet long, stating, "Plenty of petrol, no tickets needed." From those advertisements we pass to others which could be seen in the "Daily News" of yesterday, where garage after garage, in the city of Perth, had to turn away customers because they had no petrol in the bowers. A warning of that situation was given by the Prime Minister from the very inception. He said that the bowers would be empty if the public were encouraged to panic on this question.

We have now reached a stage when the Premiers in conference have decided that where the powers have not already been referred, they will introduce legislation to the Parliaments in the different States to refer those powers. However, unless those Parliaments do agree the whole thing may break down. Although there is provision for a ticket system in the schedule to this Bill, the intention expressed by the Minister for Education was, if possible, to avoid the issuance of tickets. I have no doubt the Government did give consideration to what developed and what obtained in New Zealand, and to the unbalanced trade that took place in that country because no tickets were issued. The same would happen here. We would have serounging for petrol wherever a person could get it. Either that or people would be dealing on the black market and all sorts of malpractices would enter into it.

I can appreciate that this Bill, if passed, will refer power to the Commonwealth. It will also enable us to take stock of the petrol position and overcome the hoarding that has taken place. But, I am rather unhappy on the point of how hoarding is to be determined as such. At what point does a person meet a reasonable requirement—and the word "reasonable" is used in the Bill—and cease to be reasonable and become a hoarder? I wonder whether

there are provisions in other statutes in this State which have been examined by the Minister for Education, from the point of view of storage of inflammable materials. If he has not done so, I make that suggestion to him because the Government might be buttressed very strongly if we have a law to prevent indiscriminate holding of inflammable material which could be of detriment to communities.

**Mr. Shearn:** Local authorities have by-laws.

**Hon. F. J. S. WISE:** I intended to discuss that point. In addition to the authority which two of our statutes, at least, give us, the Government might readily seek the co-operation of local authorities in the enforcement of bylaws designed to prevent the storage of explosives or highly inflammable material. I would like the Minister for Education to state more clearly what he has in mind in order to determine whether a person is a hoarder, or is a person who has a quantity of petrol which could be said to be reasonably appropriate to the type of industry or interests in which he is engaged. I take it that it is the intention of the Government, when this legislation is passed, to have it proclaimed immediately so as to enforce those particular provisions.

**The Minister for Industrial Development:** Yes, steps are already in hand for that to be done.

**Hon. F. J. S. WISE:** Will those steps include the opportunity to check deliveries by oil companies since the 6th June, both to private users, service stations and the like?

**The Minister for Industrial Development:** I will answer that, to the best of my ability, in my reply.

**Hon. F. J. S. WISE:** It is very necessary that the Government should be assisted with all the information that can be provided, particularly in regard to country depots where I understand the fault began through one company. Because it began, other companies unwillingly had to fall into line. If there is any doubt on that point I can refer members to the file that I have compiled and it contains all the newspaper cuttings from the 6th June. There is an indication that some companies implored the public, and their customers, to continue a self-imposed rationing be-

cause of the threat to the future and the chaos that could ensue unless that course were adopted. I have no objection to the legislation but there are two points upon which I think the public are entitled to be enlightened. Those points are, firstly, the question of what are the Premier's views with regard to any possible avoidance of rationing bearing in mind the responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government to the Imperial Government and, secondly, how far it will be possible to probe and reasonably to adjust the question of petrol held by different people, both private and public.

*Sitting suspended from 3.47 to 4 p.m.*

**MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet) [4.0]:** I am very pleased indeed that the Government has decided to continue with the Bill before the House in order to deal with the matter of petrol supplies. I am glad for various reasons. People in the city who use petrol realise the seriousness of the matter, but the city position, comparatively speaking, is nothing at all contrasted with the situation in many parts of the country. I do not refer so much to the agricultural districts as to the outer parts. I am given to understand that many farmers, being now in an affluent position, have been able to accumulate reasonably large stocks of petrol; but in the mining districts fuel has not been available to the same extent, and in consequence there is a definite shortage. We have to realise today that the use of livestock for transportation purposes has definitely ceased in this State. I can remember the early days when people depended on horses, bullocks or camels for the transport of essential goods. Today, those means of transport have absolutely disappeared, and it is all done by motor vehicles. During the war period, when petrol supplies were so short, we had the horrible spectacle of gas-producers coming into general use.

Unless some definite steps are taken to deal with the present situation, I am afraid gas-producers will be again resorted to, particularly by those residing in the far distant parts of the State. On the Goldfields, in particular, petrol supplies are essential; we must have them. The Leader of the Opposition pointed out that leaders of political thought and the Press have been anxious to see that the use of petrol was

not abused; and that might have been a very good idea. At any rate, one or more of the oil companies appear to have had different ideas. I do not know whether that is so or not, but certainly there was a great leakage of petrol and a shortage occurred very rapidly. It could possibly be a fact that political intrigue enters into this matter. I do not know if that has been a consideration. I realise it is easy to damage the reputation of a Government by the creation of a shortage of supplies.

The immediate reaction of the public is against the Government which, they would say, was responsible for the shortage of the particular commodity concerned. We have heard in this House the statement that some farmers purchased as much as 100 44-gallon drums of petrol. That is the statement that was made. Whether it was a fact or not I do not know, but it would be quite easy to investigate the matter. Inquiries could be made among the people who supplied the petrol, whether they be retailers or wholesalers, with a view to ascertaining what sales in excess of 44 gallons in any one month had been made. I suggested to the Premier some time ago that members of the C.I.B. should be called upon to inquire as to the accuracy of that particular statement. Since then I have made further inquiries, and only this morning I went to one garage to inquire for petrol, and was informed there was none available. I complained bitterly and told the garage proprietor that it was wrong that ordinary customers should not be able to secure supplies.

**Hon. F. J. S. Wise:** Did you not go there for a gallon and have to be towed home?

**Mr. TRIAT:** I did have to go for some petrol and had to be towed home. This garage proprietor told me on that occasion that no petrol was available and none could be obtained until Tuesday of this week. Today he told me that there would be no petrol until next Monday. I told him I thought the position was very bad, and he explained the situation. He said, "I can give you my assurance, and it could be found out by inquiries, that certain oil companies in Western Australia advised the farmers to buy petrol heavily in order to save taxation." That is a very definite statement. He also said, "I know one man who bought 500 44-gallon drums of petrol."

I am sure the Government has no desire to allow people who are so anxious to damage the reputation of themselves or of the Commonwealth Government, and who are willing to create a chaotic situation, to go scot free. There is the statement about a farmer in the Northam district who bought 100 44-gallon drums of petrol. I shall not mention his name; I am not sure that I have the correct name. Then there is the definite statement made to me today that farmers were advised by oil companies to buy heavily to save on taxation, as a result of which one man bought 500 44-gallon drums of fuel. In view of these facts, the time is long overdue for the Government to take some definite steps.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is hard to believe the quantity was so large.

Mr. TRIAT: We could find out whether the statement is true. The fact cannot be hidden. Someone was responsible for selling the petrol, and he could be found.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: They would be a long time carting the fuel.

Mr. TRIAT: Not long ago, a man was held up on the highway by the Transport Board because he had an overload of petrol. He was carrying several drums and I presume action was taken against him. Such cases should be investigated, owing to the serious position of the people in the outback country who are so heavily dependent upon petrol to secure their supplies. I do not think that rationing will affect the majority of the people who own private cars in the city; they can probably get enough for their requirements and in any case can use other means of transport. That is not so as regards the people in the outback, who must have petrol in order to get their food and water supplies. In many instances they have to travel hundreds of miles to railheads to pick up their necessities. It is these people who must be protected.

Reference was made by the member for Hannans to a prospector in a small way who had an issue of four gallons of petrol a month. Now, he does not prospect for gold in the middle of Hannan-street; he has to go 100 miles into the bush, or perhaps 200, and he must return in order to replenish his supplies. How can he do so on four

gallons a month? The result is that prospectors are fading out. I presume the same applies to workers in the timber industry. I support the Bill, but would ask the Government to make sure that whoever is responsible for creating the present chaotic condition in regard to petrol supplies in this State shall be brought to book.

These people should be made to disgorge their huge supplies of petrol, or alternatively, they should be refused rations under the new system until their present stocks have been depleted. What a reasonable quantity is for farmers I do not know, but I am certain that no man is entitled to hold 500 44-gallon drums of petrol. He must either intend to sell it privately or black-market it. I hope the Government will insert every provision possible in the Bill to protect the men in the outback country.

**MR. ACKLAND** (Irwin-Moore) [4.10]: Unlike the member for Mt. Magnet, I am not enthusiastic about this Bill. In fact, I regret the necessity for its introduction. It is a sad and sorry state of affairs that has forced the Government to introduce this measure. The old system of rationing was found to be unconstitutional, but the Prime Minister intended that there should be rationing in Australia.

Opposition members: No.

Mr. ACKLAND: I believe so. I believe the Prime Minister deliberately set out to reintroduce rationing of petrol. Many people seem to have fallen into the trap that he set for them.

Mr. Needham: That is absolutely contrary to fact.

Mr. ACKLAND: Since petrol has been decontrolled, we have had one statement after another from Canberra on the position and in this connection the Press has been equally criminal. It has given great prominence to all the statements made in Canberra and this has created a fear complex, as the Leader of the Opposition put it recently, in the people generally.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You can hardly say the Press is on Chifley's side.

Mr. ACKLAND: In my opinion, the oil companies must also be held blameworthy.

Mr. Graham: What do you think of the farmers?

Mr. ACKLAND: I will mention them in a minute.

Mr. Graham: Good!

Mr. ACKLAND: I think the oil companies have encouraged sales which were unjustified. The farmers, in common with other sections of the community, have fallen for this propaganda and talk about the scarcity of petrol. It is my belief that all people who needed petrol were able to secure reasonable supplies during the rationing period. The industry in which I am engaged certainly got sufficient for its reasonable requirements, and I think this remark applies to other industries as well. But after petrol was decontrolled, we had the statements from Canberra to which prominence was given in the Press, and then the oil companies set out on a selling campaign. Therefore, is it any wonder that farmers, as well as other people, bought far greater supplies than they needed?

The only provision in the Bill which I really like is that which will compel a man to disgorge petrol when he has a greater supply than he reasonably needs. There is no excuse for a man buying greater supplies of petrol than he needs, but we know that to be the case. We hear of instances where men in various parts of the country have 40 to 100 drums of petrol. I am told that as close to Perth as the Swan there are hundreds of drums of petrol on vineyards, petrol which cannot possibly be used legitimately by those holding it. It seems to me that it must have been secured with the idea of blackmarketing and I suspect that that is so in other cases, too. The present position is one which I believe should never have arisen. It has been engineered and I am extremely glad that the responsibility for rationing will be on the Commonwealth and not on the State.

Mr. Graham: I bet you are.

Mr. ACKLAND: I think the Government decided to create such a feeling in the community that rationing would be regarded as necessary—

Mr. Reynolds: You have always been a howling Thomas!

Mr. ACKLAND: —because, it will be remembered, in Western Australia the Commonwealth staff has been retained to start operations again at the right moment. I regret having to support the measure because I believe it should have been absolutely unnecessary.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [4.15]: I am not particularly enthusiastic about the provisions of this measure, as I do not think it will have the necessary effect should any one of the other States decide not to hand over the rationing of petrol again to the Commonwealth. I do not think the measure provides for rationing under an effective system. It does provide for the rationing of petrol by the ticket system as a last resort, but in my opinion that system will never be resorted to if the rationing is left to the State Government, because the Government will pass the buck to the retailers and service station proprietors. I believe the only successful way of rationing petrol is by the ticket system, as it is impossible for service station proprietors to ascertain the real needs of the motorists whom they supply. The service station proprietor has no authority to discover that information and if he attempts to do so without authority, his action will be resented and he will find himself in hot water with his clients.

Apart from the provision for the declaration of the amount of petrol held, I do not think the Bill is worth the paper on which it is printed. I am glad that the rationing of petrol is not being left to the States, because I do not think any of them would have the political courage to stand up to the odium attached to rationing. Rationing of any commodity is necessarily unpopular and is avoided as much as possible by all concerned, and particularly by State Governments. Immediately after the decision of the High Court, which was engineered by certain interests that induced some obscure individual in the Eastern States to challenge the validity of the Commonwealth regulations governing petrol rationing, the Prime Minister issued a warning as to what the position would be.

It is no use the Premier saying that the present position has been brought about by the Commonwealth Government because, even though the amount of petrol available

is not sufficient to meet the demands of the motoring public of this State, there is nothing to prevent the State Government introducing an effective system of rationing if it is disposed to do so. I am sure the Bill is not an honest attempt to cope with the chaotic conditions that have been created in this State during the last month or six weeks. The Prime Minister warned us that there would not be sufficient petrol available, but a lot of small men with a limited knowledge of the facts thought they knew more about the matter than did the Leader of the nation.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Their ideas were fallacious, and they themselves were avaricious.

Mr. STYANTS: They went their own sweet way and quickly found themselves in the position of which the Prime Minister had warned them. It is common knowledge that during the last month essential users of petrol have not only had to pay for it, but have had also to beg for it to be sold to them. We can see round the metropolitan area scores of cars from remote portions of the State, and the owners of those vehicles must be getting petrol from somewhere. Non-essential jobs are being done and those who require petrol for essential services to the community are either not able to get it or are having great difficulty in securing sufficient supplies, in spite of the fact that others are receiving unlimited quantities for the purpose of making long journeys solely for pleasure.

It is unfair to place the responsibility of enforcing rationing on the shoulders of the service station proprietors. When the Minister introduced the Bill, in outlining what he thought would be the action taken under it by regulation, he said that the first approach would probably be to get the oil companies to ration supplies to the retailers in quantities comparable with those supplied prior to the High Court decision in the matter. He then inferred that it would be left to the service station proprietors to ration the petrol out to their regular customers in quantities similar to those drawn by the customers prior to the decontrolling of petrol supplies.

The Minister for Industrial Development: The second part of that inference is not fair.

Mr. STYANTS: I have no wish to be unfair to the Minister and if I have incorrectly interpreted his meaning I am prepared to withdraw my statement. However, I understood him to say that the first approach would be to the oil companies.

The Minister for Industrial Development: That is correct.

Mr. STYANTS: And that the oil companies would be requested to ration the petrol to the retailers. The Minister also said that the Government had no intention of introducing the rationing of petrol by the ticket system except as a last resort.

The Minister for Industrial Development: Can you not conceive of any other way of doing it?

Mr. STYANTS: The reasonable inference is that it will be left to the service station proprietors to ration petrol to their customers. That is unfair because, with the best intentions in the world, they will not be in a position to ascertain the essential requirements of their customers, and will have no legal means of obtaining that information. With the possible exception of the provision for the declaration of hoarded stocks of petrol, I do not think the Bill will satisfactorily meet the position existing in this State at present. I doubt even whether the provision dealing with hoarded stocks will be carried out in its entirety. Ample power is certainly provided for that purpose in the Bill, but I doubt whether it will be used to make influential interests in this State disclose the amount of petrol—petrol that could reasonably be regarded as being hoarded—held by them. Even if that information is obtained, I doubt whether the Government will be prepared to make those interests disgorge that hoarded petrol in order that it might be distributed on a more equitable basis.

I was not surprised to hear the member for Irwin-Moore adopt a purely political attitude on this question and state that the Prime Minister, out of sheer perversity, had decided that petrol rationing should again be brought into operation in Australia.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is well known that when a man is drunk he often thinks everyone else is drunk also.

Mr. STYANTS: There is a lot in that. Unless the Premier, who knows all the implications of the sterling-dollar situation,



as explained to the Premiers' Conference recently by the Prime Minister, is prepared to give this House an explanation and an assurance that in his opinion there is no necessity for petrol rationing, we must assume that his representative, at the conference which yesterday decided unanimously that petrol rationing should again be introduced in Australia and that it should be under the control of the Commonwealth Government, agreed with that decision. I agree with that decision entirely. I think it ridiculous to say that the Commonwealth Government would find any pleasure in restricting supplies or imports of petrol unless that course was imperative. Having arrived at the conclusion that there is not sufficient petrol available to meet the demands of unessential and essential services to the extent desired by our motorists, the only thing to do is to reintroduce petrol rationing by a ticket system, so that each consumer will get sufficient to meet his personal requirements, in relation to the requirements of the community.

There was a most unsympathetic response to the appeals of the Prime Minister and others—men like Mr. Hearne, the President of the Automobile Chamber of Commerce in this State—who, right from the moment when petrol was decontrolled, appealed to the public to buy petrol only in quantities comparable with those they had secured under the rationing system. Unfortunately, many people bought not only their necessary requirements of petrol, but also large quantities to be hoarded. I know a gentleman, living in the same street as myself, in Wembley, who owns a ten horsepower Vauxhall car and who has two 44-gallon drums of petrol that he has acquired since the control over petrol sales was lifted. He, of course, would not be alone in that respect. There seems to be not only an epidemic for the buying of petrol to be used for pleasure and other non-essential uses, but in addition people are buying it to hoard in large quantities.

It would be interesting to members if the Minister would let us know what quantity of petrol he thinks should be allowed to a motor vehicle owner before he is asked to declare the stocks he has on hand. While there is a provision in the Bill relating to that there is no information as to whether the motorist or user should have five gallons,

20 gallons or 100 gallons on hand before he is called upon to declare, under the regulations, that which he has in store. For what little value or power the measure has I propose to support it. As far as it is an effective means of controlling the rationing of petrol on an equitable basis in accordance with the personal and essential needs of the community, the Bill falls far short of requirements.

**MR. SHEARN** (Maylands) [4.31]: I know it is the wish of the Minister and it is certainly the wish of the House that this measure should be passed as quickly as possible. Therefore I do not propose to speak at length on it. On general principle I am strongly opposed to controls, but with petrol, in addition to a number of other commodities in short supply, one must recognise the imperative necessity of ensuring that the available supplies of these commodities are distributed to the consumers on an equitable basis, and this applies particularly to petrol. I cannot see that any good can accrue by holding a postmortem into the Party-political atmosphere prevailing in this matter. I think we have got beyond the stage of debating as to who was responsible for the situation. The point from which we should start is that at which we find ourselves now, realising as we do the urgency of grappling with the problem at the earliest possible moment and in the most effective way.

I share many of the views expressed by the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon on a number of aspects associated with this extremely serious question. Like him, I would be interested to know from the Minister when he is replying if he can tell us precisely how he proposes to deal with hoarding. I think there is a considerable amount of hoarding going on in this State and also in other States. Just what can be regarded as a reasonable amount for a petrol user to have on hand is something which involves a wide interpretation.

**Hon. F. J. S. Wise:** Do you think that the equivalent of a month's ration would be fair?

**Mr. SHEARN:** That would be a suitable basis on which to start. We are all familiar with the processes that were used by the Liquid Fuel Control Board when rationing

was in existence, and the way in which users were allocated their respective petrol supplies.

The Minister for Industrial Development: That system has more difficulties than any other.

Mr. SHEARN: If that system is adopted it will cause a considerable amount of inconvenience with an equal degree of ineffectiveness in the operation of the Bill as it is now. Considering the co-operation that existed between every section of the community during our war crisis I think it is unfortunate at this stage that there should be people who are so insensible to their responsibilities to the rest of the public as to indulge in undue hoarding of petrol. I feel confident from inquiries I have made at service stations in my district and elsewhere that had there been a sane approach to the need of all consumers and a recognition of the responsibilities which every person was urged to exercise much, if not all, of this difficulty with which we are now confronted would not have arisen. However, we now have to deal with the position as we find it. I therefore support the Bill in the fervent hope that whatever machinery is set up to deal with hoarding that the Government will not show any favour and that the regulations will be stringently administered because if there is to be discrimination shown with hoarding then not only will the system break down but also it will be totally inequitable.

I hope that the Government, in dealing with hoarding offenders, will approach the difficulty with impartiality and give it its proper attention. I am also pleased to see that the Minister has on the notice paper several amendments relating to retailers. It is well known that when prosecutions had to take place in many instances there was a measure of justification, but in others there was none. Apart from that there was an extremely undemocratic system operating, in as much as the Liquid Fuel Control Board not only laid the charge against offenders but also, in the final analysis, was the sole arbitrator. So I am pleased that the Minister, when this matter was brought to his notice, recognised the injustice of this and proposes to rectify it.

It now appears that there is some obstacle to the passing of the amendments at this stage in this House. I have, however, the

assurance of the Minister that he will see that his colleague in another place introduces these amendments, and I am hopeful he will take whatever steps are necessary to impress upon him the need for this urgent reform in order that a measure of justice will be done to these people who, as the Leader of the Opposition has rightly said, are an important factor in the distribution of petrol in this State. Like him I consider that the retailers, because of the present shortage of petrol, have been placed in a most unenviable position. For some reason which I am unable to understand, there has been a certain amount of unfairness meted out to some country distributors because a few of the retailers have been getting a larger supply than others. The result has been—and I can speak personally of this—that one who had dealt with a service station over a considerable period found that it was impossible to obtain any petrol at that station, and yet if one went further down the street queues of cars could be observed waiting for and obtaining petrol.

If one queued up at that garage one was justifiably told that he must return to the garage where he normally obtained his petrol supplies. This is unfair and places the garage proprietor in a false and untenable position. So I feel that, distasteful as the re-introduction of petrol rationing is to everyone, the situation as it is now leaves us no alternative but to do this. Indeed, there is a definite responsibility, which I am glad to see the Government has accepted, to ensure that all the available supplies in the near future shall be controlled and what is equally important shall be equitably distributed to all of those that need it.

MR. HOAR (Nelson) [4.40]: In company with other members I welcome this Bill. My only regret is that it has not been possible or desirable to have such legislation introduced earlier and before the chaotic conditions that undoubtedly exist today in some parts of the State had arisen. There is no question in my mind that the sound advice that was given to the whole of Australia by the Prime Minister, Mr. Chifley, was not followed from a political point of view or, at any rate, by those in the State Parliaments, mainly because they did not believe in federation and all that it is supposed to represent. They are opposed

to any form of control by the Commonwealth and have the insane idea, to my way of thinking, that the States should retain, wherever possible, all control over any particular commodity or anything else, even of those commodities which are known to be in short supply. This unfortunate fallacy is shown in the example we have now before us of petrol supplies being short in the country, and the reluctance by the States to do anything in the matter. There is no doubt there has been a great deal of over-buying in petrol and, if there is provision in this Bill, as I believe there is, to give the Minister or the Government power—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Clause 13 does a lot more than that.

Mr. HOAR: —to make a search for petrol supplies which have been unnecessarily hoarded, and even to confiscate them if necessary, then I think that this is a most desirable feature of the Bill. It is the general opinion that the result of hoarding has been mainly responsible for the chaotic condition which has occurred during the last four weeks. I have received three telegrams from road boards in my electorate in which clear indication is given that unless immediate supplies of petrol are made available for essential services such as sanitary, school busses, road board work and the like, which depend on petrol and are under the control of the road boards, such services would have to cease within a matter of days.

At the time I was able to secure a quantity of petrol from the Vacuum Oil Co. for the Manjimup Road Board about 10 days ago, but a telegram received yesterday from the Bridgetown Road Board sets out exactly the same set of circumstances experienced by the Manjimup board and it had to be refused supplies by the petrol companies. The position now is that whether they like it or not, the moment this Bill becomes law, and the Commonwealth again assumes control of petrol, the oil companies will be obliged to issue less petrol to country districts than they have in the past because of the over-buying that has been taking place. Consequently road boards and those who are in charge of essential work and services in the country areas will have less fuel with which to carry on their operations than previously they had, and some of them today have

none. If it is possible under the measure for the Minister to have a search made and to confiscate, I suggest that he gets on to the job the moment it becomes law. We have waited far too long; we have seen chaotic conditions developing since control was relinquished by the Commonwealth, and the State has done nothing whatever to relieve the situation, and I believe for political reasons, as I said before.

If we have an opportunity to examine cases of over-buying, it should be possible to have a search made with the approval of the oil companies, taking into account their sales in bulk and instances where excessive quantities have been supplied. It will not be necessary to send officers around the country to examine sheds on remote farms to see what stocks are held there. Most of the information should be obtained in the metropolitan area.

I do not think the Minister should accept the suggestion made by one or two members that, in cases of over-buying, the supply should be gradually reduced over the forthcoming few weeks or months by not permitting any further purchases until the stocks on hand have been used. Rather would I see him confiscate the excess petrol immediately and return it to the common pool in order that essential services in country areas might be continued. If that is not done, then those innocent of this selfishness and hoarding will be penalised for several months and be made to suffer as a result of the selfishness of people in various parts of the State. This matter is of such urgency that the Minister should treat it as a case of emergency and enter upon the investigation the moment he receives power to do so. If he delays, he will have a lot of trouble on his hands from the road boards in the South-West, which today are suffering the most serious shortage of petrol in the whole of their history.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [4.48]: There is one aspect of the matter to which I desire to refer. Because there is a definite shortage of petrol, resulting in considerable hardship, and because it will be some time before supplies can be such as to compare with those available under rationing, earnest consideration should be given to the question of reducing the licence fees for motor vehicles. It is unreason-

able that persons who have been called upon in some instances to pay very substantial license fees should not receive some refund if they are unable to use their vehicles for anything like the period of time they anticipated.

I trust that the Government will give consideration to this aspect in order that those persons whose mileage will be considerably reduced may receive some compensation. I have had communications from business people in my electorate, who have pointed out that their services have been considerably hampered through the inability of contractors supplying them with firewood to get sufficient petrol to maintain deliveries. I had to explain that there was no channel open to me by which additional supplies could be obtained, but that legislation would be introduced to impose some system of rationing that would ensure at least something comparable to what they received previously.

I mention this to give further emphasis to the fact that business has been seriously dislocated because of the cessation of rationing and to emphasise the need for the reimposition of some system of rationing as speedily as possible. During the time this is being done, I hope that consideration will be given to the question of making a refund of license fees to licensees, having regard to the fact that they will not be able to get anything like the use from their vehicles that they expected.

**HON. J. B. SLEEMAN** (Fremantle)

[4.50]: There are a few questions I desire to ask the Minister before he replies to the debate. I agree with the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle regarding the making of a refund to owners of motor vehicles. A question on the point was asked in this House last year, and the excuse given was that the returns of local governing bodies had been made up to the 30th June.

The Minister for Industrial Development: You assisted to pass legislation that reductions should be made under certain conditions.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: But they were not made. The Minister used the argument that it would be unfair to the local governing bodies owing to the termination of the period. Now, however, we have licenses expiring every month of the year. The position has changed since all licenses expired at the

30th June. I hope that, no matter what happens, something will be done in this direction. Conditions at present are certainly chaotic so let us get back to the system of ticket rationing. Motorists are still suffering mileage reduction and should be given some consideration. The average motorist has quite enough to put up with at present without having to pay the full license fee when his mileage is so restricted.

Another question I wish to put to the Minister is this: If Victoria and Tasmania do the unexpected and turn down the proposition of the Premiers' Conference, how is he going to control the distribution? When he was moving the second reading, I understood him to say that ration tickets would not be used. If he is going to allow the garages to do the rationing, we shall have a repetition of what happened in New Zealand. If the unexpected happens and Western Australia is left to deal with the matter on its own, some form of tickets must be introduced. We cannot leave it to the garages to give Smith what they think he is entitled to and Brown what they think he is entitled to. There must be a system of ticket rationing so that every motorist will know what gallonage he is entitled to receive each month.

A further question is: What does the Minister regard as a reasonable quantity? If, after this legislation is passed, he finds a hoarder with, say, two 40-gallon drums of petrol, would he regard that as reasonable? I do not represent the farmers, but I have been informed that quite a number of them always hold a certain gallonage in reserve. Consequently, it is going to be a question to decide what is reasonable. There are business people who hold a certain quantity and we have to decide what is reasonable for them, as well as what is reasonable for a private motorist. If a private motorist had four or eight gallons of petrol, I should not call him a hoarder, but inspectors working under such legislation often become very officious. If a farmer had four or five drums of petrol, the inspectors might say he was hoarding, or if a private person had four gallons, they might say he was hoarding. We should set out in the measure what is reasonable.

On one occasion a Minister was asked in this House, "What is the meaning of 'reasonable'?" and he replied, "Well, reasonable means reasonable." That is not good

enough for me. I want some idea of what the Minister considers a reasonable quantity and I hope he will tell us. If the Victorian and Tasmanian Parliaments do not endorse the agreement, I hope the Minister will adopt some method whereby every user of petrol shall know by way of the tickets issued to him just what quantity he is entitled to receive from time to time.

**MR. REYNOLDS (Forrest) [4.55]:** While I am opposed to most forms of control, I consider that we must have petrol rationing and that it can only be done satisfactorily by adopting a system of coupons. I have held the view for some two or three months that the Government should never have permitted such an unhappy position to occur. A fair amount of criticism has been indulged in on account of the dilatoriness of the Government in not having earlier introduced legislation of this sort.

Only yesterday I called at seven garages in an endeavour to get petrol and finally I was able to get one gallon. The difficulty of getting supplies has caused a lot of unnecessary expense. A wise Government would never have allowed such a situation to develop. Had the Government taken action a couple of months ago, greater supplies would have been made available. Instead of that, some people now have thousands of gallons hoarded. I know quite a number of people who have 40-gallon drums of petrol stored, and the Government should take immediate steps to have that petrol returned to a common pool and made available to other consumers.

I realise that the Bill is necessary and, in the circumstances, it has my blessing, but I believe that the only fair method is to introduce rationing by coupons. Otherwise, we shall have blackmarketing in petrol. Consider a garage man whose normal supply is 3,000 gallons a month! Without a system of coupons, he could easily supply 2,000 gallons to regular customers and dispose of the rest on the blackmarket. The only way to prevent blackmarketing will be to revert to the old system of coupons.

**MR. McCULLOCH (Hannans) [4.58]:** I support the second reading. On perusing the Bill I was pleased to see that power kerosene is included in the definition of liquid fuel. Last week-end I tried to get

petrol in Kalgoorlie. I was unable to obtain any but, after some difficulty, I did secure some power kerosene. Not only is petrol being hoarded; power kerosene is being hoarded as well.

I agree that a system of rationing by coupons must be introduced. It is of no use the Minister's telling us that he will consider this matter later on. He must make up his mind now. I am convinced that 99 per cent. of the garages would prefer such a system. When rationing was in operation, many motorists were allowed a gallonage far in excess of what is being supplied today. Last week-end I listened to complaints by market gardeners in Kalgoorlie. One of them who is supplying eggs and vegetables received 19 gallons per month but now he is getting only two gallons per week, equal to eight gallons per month.

Should the system of coupon rationing be re-introduced, I suggest that the coupons should be issued from some place other than the post office. I think that the local governing authorities should be responsible for issuing these coupons, and they should be reimbursed financially for any work they do in that connection. We all know why this action is necessary today.

It was not the Prime Minister that caused the chaos; it was the High Court of Australia. Surely it is well known that, the National Security Regulations being held no longer to exist, rationing of petrol was declared invalid. The member for Irwin-Moore criticised the Prime Minister for making a big noise and telling all the people that it would be necessary at some time in the future to ration petrol. I wonder if he would say the same about Mr. Winston Churchill, who has recently been criticising the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the British Parliament because he did not tell the whole world that sterling was going to be devalued. He did not tell them because the big fellow would have made millions if he had done so.

I am aware that since the warning was given that rationing would be reintroduced, hoarding has taken place. That hoarding is not done by the small man but by the man with plenty of money. As was pointed out earlier in the debate, there are trucks carrying excessive weights of petrol, and I am surprised that the Transport Board has

allowed that to occur. However, there are hoarders today who are falling over themselves in their efforts to get garages to take back some of the 44-gallon drums they have hoarded, because they see the writing on the wall. I hope that this measure will be policed so far as hoarding is concerned, and that we will get down on these individuals.

I wholeheartedly support the measure, but I would like to be certain that the coupon system will be reintroduced. I know there are faults associated with it and that certain individuals will sell some of their coupons; but I believe that a system could be worked out whereby tickets could not be disposed of in that way. I am not prepared to say what could be done, but I have an idea that some scheme could be devised to overcome blackmarketing in coupons.

**THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT** (Hon. A. F. Watts—Katanning—in reply) [5.5]: Let me say at the outset that so far as I am concerned, and so far as the whole Government is concerned, there are no Party-political implications in this measure. It was introduced because at the time it was not at all certain—nor indeed is it certain now—that Australia-wide measures would be taken to endeavour to rectify the situation which has arisen. It is all very well for one hon. member—I think it was the member for Forrest—to say that the Government would have taken action long ago if it had been wise. If that be so—and referring to a State Government—there is no Government with wisdom in Australia, whether Labour or non-Labour, because none has taken action. In fact, so far from this Government not having taken action, it is the first to make any attempt to do so. Whether it was wise or unwise not to have taken action earlier is a matter which is open to discussion, but which I do not propose to take up the time of the House in discussing. But certainly, if it were unwise, that charge applies to all State Governments of Australia of all political persuasions.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The virtue you are taking unto yourself would not be a virtue if this session had been prolonged. This Bill would not have been here at all in those circumstances.

**The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** I am not taking any virtue unto myself at all. I would not have referred to the matter if it had not been for the observation of the member for Forrest, and I was entitled to make the statement I did, which was soundly based. The Leader of the Opposition, with whose statement that service station proprietors render a very important service to the public I agree, asked a question—as did the member for Fremantle, and perhaps others—as to what would be a reasonable allowance in the event of hoarding being found in any particular instance. Of course, the first thing to do is to find out by declaration and, failing that, by search and other means of compulsion, what a man holds, and to require him to declare all over a very small quantity. It would then be a question, having ascertained what he had in his possession, of discovering the nature of his occupation or the industry in which he was engaged. It is quite clear that the owner of a 7 h.p. vehicle and with no other petrol-using instrument, having a thousand gallons in his possession, would have to hand over most of it—pretty well the whole lot.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I agree with you there.

**The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** But a man having three tractors on a farm, with 2,000 acres of crop to harvest, would have to retain a considerably greater quantity to carry on his legitimate occupation. I can only say in regard to that question that it would have to be determined on the merits of each case; but it would be necessary immediately to ascertain what people had in their possession. Already steps have been taken to prepare the necessary papers and regulations that would have to be used in that connection, should the Bill become law. One could hardly expect that they would be in apple-pie order before the Bill was introduced; but they are in course of preparation at this juncture.

The Leader of the Opposition also asked whether I thought it would be possible to obtain from any vendor of petrol—particularly from the people referred to by him as the oil companies—what their position was on the 6th June last in regard to petrol and sales since that time. I have no hesitation in saying that the Bill contains a provision

which would enable that to be done, because it will be found in one clause that any person authorised in writing by the Minister may require any person to furnish any information, either orally or in writing, or to produce any accounts, books or documents, relating to transactions in, or in connection with, any stocks of liquid fuel, and may take away copies of or extracts from, any accounts, books or documents so produced.

So there is little doubt in my mind—in fact there is no doubt at all—that any information that reasonably should be demanded can be demanded under the power given in the Bill. As I said when introducing the measure, I was of opinion that petrol rationing could have been avoided before the judgment of the High Court. It had occurred to me that supplies of petrol had such a high priority in connection with the maintenance and extension of many Australian industries that it would, even if there was necessity for economising in American dollars, have been wise to increase the amount available for liquid fuel and to cut down the amount available for other less essential commodities coming to this country because, as I understand it, the whole difficulty lies in obtaining American dollars. But I suggested, and I repeat, that since the devaluation of the pound I can no longer strongly, or perhaps at all, advance that argument, because now we are obliged to cut down other commodities.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Can you think of any American commodities in that connection?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I can think of American films, and if one were to examine the position, I think it would be found that there are quite a lot of things less essential to the maintenance of our industry than petrol. That is how it occurred to me, seeing that the Leader of the Opposition has raised the point, even before the judgment of the High Court: but the devaluation of sterling, as I mentioned previously, has had a remarkable effect on that position, and I would no longer advance that view without further information on the subject.

The member for Kalgoorlie said he thought the Bill was not an honest attempt to deal with the subject. I certainly do not

know what else it is. When it was introduced, the arrangement which may—and I hope will—come into effect, as decided upon yesterday at the conference in Melbourne, was not in existence. I suppose this Bill contains some of the strongest provisions of any measure ever brought into this House. It does not cheese-pare.

Mr. Styants: So long as they are enforced it will be all right.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Precisely. The Bill has to be passed first. It contains, as the member for Hannans desired, power to use the services of local authorities and to remunerate them for those services.

Mr. Kelly: Is the measure likely to be more restrictive in Western Australia than similar measures are likely to be in the other States?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: The situation will be, I hope, that the resolutions of the interstate conference will be carried into effect and that the regulations will be uniform and of a Commonwealth character. If the regulations which governed liquid fuel under the National Security Act are studied, I think it will be found that they were more stringent, if that is possible, than the regulations to be framed under this Bill.

Mr. Graham: Do they cover hoarding as well as rationing?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I do not think the Defence Transitional Regulations did, but the earlier ones did. At the time of the transitional regulations, rationing had been in operation for many years, so it was probably assumed there would not be much hoarding. I also say it is not impossible to arrange for a rationing system other than by the issue of tickets. From the experience we have had, I know of no better way of encouraging black-marketing than by the issue of ration tickets. I do not know how much trading went on in petrol tickets, but it was considerable. I am also aware that the system is capable of all sorts of frauds to a degree which astounded me when some of the particulars were brought to my notice.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do not you think it would be worse without tickets?

**THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** The member for Guildford-Midland mentioned that matter. I have in mind that a system whereby the vehicle license would be endorsed and used as the measuring stick for the petrol allowance, would be much less likely to permit of blackmarketing, because one would not dispose of one's vehicle license which one is called upon to produce when required, and which carries on the back of it the third party insurance policy. So I am not going to admit that the issue of ration tickets is the only means whereby a reasonable approach can be made to ensure that nobody receives more than a regulated quantity of liquid fuel. There would also be a need, as there always has been, for the controlling authority to issue special permits for special occasions.

I assure the member for Maylands that if the amendment on the notice paper is not moved here, it will be asked for in another place and pressed there, because I agree it is a reasonable proposition. I do not think that the summary cancellation of licenses, without any right of stating a case to a properly organised tribunal, is correct. In any State regulation, if State regulations were obliged to operate, such a proposition would be inserted. The intention of the amendment on the notice paper is to modify the Commonwealth regulations which the State might adopt.

The member for Nelson referred to the chaotic conditions in his district and elsewhere, and gave the impression that that state of affairs had been in existence for a long time. He no doubt knows, as I do, as he also represents a considerable country constituency, that this difficult position did not begin to come under notice until about three weeks ago.

**Mr. Hoar:** I said, in the last three or four weeks.

**THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** In consequence, what had happened was not apparent until that time, or that early action was required. As soon as it became apparent, steps were taken to draw this measure irrespective of whether any Commonwealth control was to be instituted in Western Australia or not.

**Mr. Hoar:** Do you not think it could have been anticipated when the extra sales in June and July were known?

**THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** Even those sales were not revealed until well on into August, just the same as the August figure is not yet available to us. As the hon. member knows, I tried yesterday to answer the Leader of the Opposition on that subject. In consequence we do not know exactly what takes place until some little time after it has occurred. I do not propose to labour the matter. I am grateful to members for the way they have received the measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

**Mr. Perkins in the Chair;** the Minister for Industrial Development in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 12—agreed to.

Clause 13:

**Mr. GRAHAM:** In lines four and eight of Subclause (5) the word "supposed" occurs. It seems a little clumsy. The usual word is "suspected." I do not intend to move any amendment until I have heard the Minister.

**THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** I think the word is quite usual in these cases. It could be altered to "suspected" which would be just as useful. I will have the matter checked and, if desirable, an alteration in another place.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 14 to 16, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

*Third Reading.*

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

## **BILL—MARKETING OF APPLES AND PEARS (No. 2).**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 23rd September.

**HON. J. T. TONKIN** (North-East Fremantle) [5.35]: The Bill is necessary if we feel that a continuance of the marketing scheme for apples and pears is desirable. If the industry is of sufficient economic importance to the State to warrant something



being done to maintain it, then I think we have to agree that this legislation is necessary. The growers have indicated that the conditions of trade are such as to make it almost impossible—or at least extremely difficult—for them to carry on without the assistance of the marketing scheme which was in operation in the war years, and has been since. The main difficulty seems to be the inability to get sufficient cases for the apples and pears which are produced. During the war the market for the goods was not available as it was impossible to get shipping. The Commonwealth Government therefore felt that it was necessary to assist the industry by providing a scheme which would keep the growers in production and prevent them from going insolvent. Now the market is available—people are anxious to obtain apples and pears—but there is great difficulty in getting the produce to the consumers. Shipping has much improved.

The real difficulty is the inability of the industry to obtain sufficient local or imported cases. There is a further difficulty inasmuch as our railways are incapable of supplying the necessary trucks to transport the whole of the fruit harvest. The growers have been asked to indicate whether they favour a continuance of control, and I must say that I am disappointed at the vote which was taken. Of the growers eligible to vote, 35 per cent. refrained from expressing an opinion. Therefore they left the decision in the matter to the 65 per cent. who were sufficiently interested to record a vote. Of those eligible to vote, and who did so, 22 per cent. voted against the scheme, and 42 per cent. voted in favour of it. So less than half of those growers entitled to vote, and express an opinion, voted in favour of a continuance of the scheme.

That is not a very happy situation. It shows either that the growers did not give sufficient thought to what was involved in the matter or else they were completely apathetic about it and did not care what happened. It was left to those who have had the welfare of the industry at heart sufficiently to cause them to remain active in the matter to decide what action ought to be taken in the best interests of the industry. I do not believe that those persons who have been active in this matter would be active unless they were satisfied, and com-

pletely satisfied, that a continuance of the scheme was necessary for the welfare of the industry as a whole.

The question we have to ask ourselves is: Will the continuance of the industry be seriously jeopardised if there is no marketing scheme? If it will not, then there is no need for a scheme. If it is possible for the industry to stand on its own feet, and find a market for sufficient of its products to enable the growers to continue without undue hardship, then a scheme is not necessary. But, if we feel that unless something is done the industry will be in a bad way, and its continuance as a sound economic unit will be jeopardised, then there is an obligation upon us to do something to render assistance to the industry. The fact which weighs considerably with me in this matter is that the Commonwealth Government, which will have to find the money if any is required, is prepared, so I understand, to agree to a continuance of the scheme. If that Government does not agree then there will be no scheme because it has already been made plain that the State will not institute a local marketing scheme, and the continuance of the present scheme is dependent upon a decision by the Commonwealth to find the necessary money if a loss is sustained.

So far as I know, the Commonwealth has not yet given an intimation to the State whether it has agreed to the continuance of the scheme. But, we have had the assurance of the Minister that the Hon. Nelson Lemon, a Commonwealth Minister, has stated that he believes the Government will be favourable to its continuance. He agrees, and he believes that the Commonwealth Government will also agree. However, until the Commonwealth Government does make an announcement we do not know whether the scheme will be continued or not. If the Commonwealth agrees, then I do not think it is for us to disagree because we are not called upon, as a State, to defray the expenses of this scheme. We might have to regard the matter from the point of view of the consumers of fruit and say whether we believe the scheme is in the interests of consumers, but surely that does not enter into the question until we first satisfy ourselves that the interests of the growers are being properly conserved.

I feel, as the growers who have voted in favour of the scheme must have felt, that it is in the interests of the industry that this marketing scheme should continue for a further period—that being the period necessary to deal with the 1950 crop. The Bill before us is practically the same as the one passed to provide for the marketing of this year's crop. Because that is so it is not necessary to give much consideration to the actual terms of the measure. Once we are satisfied with the general principle and the need for the scheme, then little remains for us to do but to secure its speedy passage. From time to time during the whole period of acquisition we have heard adverse criticism because of considerable quantities of fruit being left ungathered and because the quality of fruit available to consumers was not what consumers desired to have. At times I suppose there were grounds for such criticism. I know that I have felt, at times when I have seen fruit that was of an inferior quality in the shops, that far better fruit must surely have been available.

Nevertheless I do feel that by and large the board has done a good job and rendered excellent service to the industry. I am certain that without the marketing scheme which has been in operation during the war years and subsequently, the fruitgrowing industry would by now have been practically extinct. It could not have carried on under the conditions which obtained during the war years and some scheme was necessary in order to provide a means by which the industry could continue. There has been little argument generally, up till now, about the necessity for the scheme and, although we have been looking forward to the time when different industries would be able to function without the assistance of marketing schemes of this nature, I feel that we have not yet quite reached the stage where we can look to this industry to stand completely on its own feet.

The position would be somewhat different if an adequate supply of packing cases was available, or if transport was better than it is. But, with those handicaps to the industry, it is unfair at this stage to expect it to stand completely on its own. Because I hold that view I propose to support the Bill in the knowledge that it is more than likely the further enactment of a measure of this kind will not be required beyond this year. I think the growers themselves

are anxious to reach the time when they can go ahead without a marketing scheme. The vote recorded in connection with the matter reflects the general attitude towards a control scheme of this nature, inasmuch as many producers feel that they would like to have more freedom, but they cannot quite make up their minds about it. It is our experience that very often a number of people feel the existing conditions irksome and are therefore not disposed to register any opinion about them. At the same time, however, they are unable to suggest a line of action which would bring about some improvement.

I consider that is the reason why 35 per cent. of those eligible to vote refrained from doing so. They were a bit tired of the scheme and had reached a mental state where they just did not care. But, had they been given some time and considered the question, and the implications which would follow from there being no scheme, then I think they might have been spurred into action. However, my view is that a continuance of the marketing scheme is necessary and that the welfare of the industry would be definitely jeopardised if the scheme were not continued. Therefore, I propose to support the Bill.

**MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland) [5.40]:** I look at this measure from a consumer's point of view. I feel that the average consumer, and particularly the housewife, will be alarmed to hear the statement by the Minister that it is possible this will be the last year when apples will be controlled by the Apple and Pear Board. I am sure that the growers of apples would be well advised to give serious consideration to continuing legislation of this nature, both in their own interests and in the interests of the State generally. Since the scheme has been in operation a comprehensive itinerary has been carried out in the metropolitan area. The apple carts have stopped at various points and hundreds of people have gathered round to purchase their requirements. I venture the opinion that a measure of this kind is more important to the housewife than is the measure concerning liquid fuel control which was before the House a few minutes ago. The average housewife seems to be able to obtain some benefits from this apple and pear marketing legislation because

it enables her young family, and even some of the older members of the family, to have a regular supply of fruit which would otherwise be denied them because of the cost.

Fruit purchased from the retail shops is very expensive. Generally speaking the price of apples sold in 40-lb. lots works out at about 1½d. per lb. To buy the same fruit in the shops usually costs the housewife 8d., 9d. or 10d. a lb. Therefore, this apple and pear marketing legislation has an important effect upon the economy of the average home. I believe that the administration of the industry can be improved and that a better market can be provided. I do not think the most has been made of the present position either by the apple growers or by those in control of the administration. With proper consideration the sales of these commodities could be extended considerably and that would be of advantage to all concerned.

I will give members an idea of how the average housewife is concerned about purchasing apples from the apple and pear delivery carts. Last year the Apple and Pear Board decided to stop delivering to a small suburb in my electorate—namely West Midland. As soon as this occurred a hue and cry was raised and I was approached as member for the district. I was asked to take action and endeavour to get the apple and pear cart to resume its normal deliveries. When the sales department of the board decided that the stop at West Midland was not warranted, I was communicated with by these people. It was 11 a.m. when I rang the sales manager and told him that the residents were complaining, and he informed me that he would deliver apples at that spot in the afternoon. I got in touch with a number of the people by telephone and at the appointed time upwards of 30 residents were at the spot with their bags, despite the fact that they had received no further intimation than the telephonic communication I had made.

In Midland Junction alone, quite apart from West Midland, the sales amount to upwards of six tons at the one spot each month. Here again I think the board is somewhat at fault. Those persons who attend the apple sales have to find their own means of conveying the apples to their homes. They have to provide their own bags and on

apple days they are there with their prams, go-carts, hand carts, motorcars, lorries and so forth. The worst feature is that the women invariably have to take the apples home in sugar bags, and on more than one occasion I have seen a woman with two 40-lb. bags of apples trudging home with the fruit to ensure to the family an adequate supply until the next apple day. The average housewife desires the apple marketing system to continue.

I have seen upwards of 40 of them on market day waiting for the truck, be it hail, rain or sunshine. In the circumstances, obviously it must be of some consequence to them to enjoy these facilities. I understand that in connection with the apple deliveries there is an acute shortage of cases. I make the suggestion to the Minister that the present system of marketing in the metropolitan area could be improved with advantage if the apples were forwarded in bulk, and hessian sacks or paper bags were provided for the customer. That would certainly serve to release more cases for the overseas markets. I am sorry the Minister did not give us a report on the financial results of the board's operations for last year, except to say that he considered there would be a surplus. I was pleased to hear that, and I am convinced that the surplus would be considerably greater if the growers and consumers could get together to establish some better method of distribution and sale.

Apples form an important part of the State's economy seeing that about £250,000 is involved. I certainly would not like to see the market diminish. The apple and pear growers would be well advised to encourage the purchase of their commodities on a much greater scale. The local market is of more immediate value to them than the overseas market. That is particularly so in view of the obvious financial difficulties confronting Europe and particularly countries like Sweden and Norway where we were able to dispose of so much fruit in the past. For quite a time the people of those countries will be financially embarrassed, and it would certainly pay the growers here to get rid of more of their fruit on the local market with higher prices than to continue with the overseas market. If that were done, there would not be such a demand for cases as is apparent at present.

I quite agree that it is desirable to retain the markets oversea and to extend our sales there in future. But under present-day conditions the local market is of great advantage to the growers who would be well advised to foster it. Another aspect of the system of controlling apples and pears is the enormous quantity of fruit that goes to waste. I have heard of cwts. of fruit that fall from the tree never to be picked up but merely ploughed in. I have been told by railway men that, when running through the Darling Ranges in the apple season, they have asked a grower for half a case or a sugarbag full of fruit and they have been told that they cannot get any because the fruit belongs to the Apple and Pear Board and growers are not allowed to sell any. There are orphanages and other charitable institutions where-in there are thousands of inmates, and surely some co-ordinated effort could be made whereby fruit could be sent to them.

Mr. Hoar: A lot of that is done now.

Mr. BRADY: I am glad to hear that. Then again, if the price of fruit were to drop there would be a much greater consumption not only in the metropolitan area but elsewhere. I do not think the country people are getting the best out of the system of distribution in vogue at present. If the board were to embark upon a publicity campaign and establish agents in country centres, a lot more fruit would be sold. I am sure some system could be evolved whereby the people in the outback areas and on the Goldfields could be encouraged to purchase greater supplies. Certainly the housewives in the metropolitan area could be given greater consideration, which would lead to much greater sales of fruit. Alternatively, the board could appoint agents in suburban centres whereby the local butcher, baker or grocer could deliver fruit to the homes and avoid the necessity for women having to carry supplies to their families.

In the Press from time to time citrus growers insert advertisements seeking to encourage people to buy more oranges or lemons. I have seen nothing of that description, apart from a little publicity at country shows and at the Royal Show, with regard to apples and pears. I think it would be of inestimable value to the industry if something of the sort were done. I should say it was much preferable to buy a few pounds of fruit for a few pence than to spend 10d.

or 1s. 6d. per lb. on meat. The industry is of such importance to the State's economy that the Government would be well advised to do everything possible to encourage it. Fruit is a cheaper item of diet for the people than many others. It is most beneficial from a health point of view and I have in mind the old saying: "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." I think that is generally appreciated by everyone, young or old.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What do they say about onions?

Mr. BRADY: That may be left until we are dealing with the Onion Board. We cannot stress too much the value of fruit as a part of the people's diet. Then again, I would like to see the board encourage the sale of pears. When the lorries go about the metropolitan area apples only are sold. The people would appreciate the opportunity to buy pears just as they can buy apples under the present system.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There are two pairs here that we would be willing to sell cheaply!

Mr. BRADY: Yes, I think the Labour Party would be quite willing to sell them, though, possibly, on occasions they might prove of assistance. I am glad that the Minister has submitted this legislation to the House and I hope that before the end of 1950 the Government and its supporters will see to it that some co-ordinated system is evolved so that the people of the metropolitan district, industrial centres, mining and rural areas, will have the benefit of cheap fruit.

MR. HOAR (Nelson) [5.52]: I would like to add my few words in support of the continuance of the marketing scheme for a further 12 months. I do not look upon it as a method of begging on the part of the growers from the Commonwealth Government. I believe that if that Government had been certain that its own constitutional powers were beyond challenge, neither the Bill under discussion nor that dealt with last year would have been presented to the State Parliament. I am positive that the Commonwealth Government appreciated that during the difficult period in the early years following upon the war, it was necessary to give substantial support to the industry to carry it on until it was considered stable enough to operate without this assistance.

Mr. Marshall: Why cannot the industry stand on its own feet now?

Mr. HOAR: That question is affected a great deal by the condition of the timber industry. We know quite well that the operations of the board last year showed a profit. We do not know how much it was, but we recognise that it cost the Commonwealth Government nothing and therefore the taxpayers would not be called upon to shoulder any expense. There is every indication that a similar result will follow on this year's operations. If we were to ask the industry, because of the timber deficiency within the State, to import 500,000 cases and to finance that undertaking before the crop is ripe, we would demand a great deal from it. That is the position it is in today.

Mr. Marshall: Don't bark at me. I asked you a civil question!

Mr. HOAR: And I am giving a civil reply.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It was asked uncivilly.

Mr. Reynolds: Not in a civil way at all.

Mr. Marshall: The hon. member is snapping away like a pekinese pup!

Mr. HOAR: I suppose this is what is called the Marshall aid! While on the subject of cases, if the fruitgrowers themselves want to break away from this scheme which is assisted by both the State and Commonwealth Governments, it behoves the State Government to do everything in its power to speed up the production of fruit cases. That is a subject in which I am particularly interested and which I have dealt with on numerous occasions, both on the Forests Estimates and when speaking on anything in connection with the fruitgrowing industry. What concerns me today is not that the Government is not aware of this position, because I know it has plans in hand to augment to a considerable extent the production of fruit cases in Western Australia. In fact, it has plans for a new fruit case mill at Pemberton based on the cutting of timber by blades rather than by saws, thereby saving an enormous amount of timber as a result of the non-production of sawdust.

What I am troubled about is that these plans are not proceeding quickly enough. In my opinion, unless a solution to the fruit case position can be found within the next 12 months, the fruitgrowers themselves may

again have to appeal to the State Parliament to seek assistance from the Commonwealth Government because of their financial position and the necessity to import so many cases. I think myself that this is the greatest drawback today to the fruitgrowers standing on their own feet, as the member for Murchison mentioned a few moments ago.

I believe the marketing arrangements in most other respects are favourable to the fruitgrower. I do not doubt that the majority of them would prefer to stand on their own feet if they felt it was safe for them to make the attempt; but knowing the difficulty with which they are faced because of the importation of such large quantities of fruit cases, they feel justified in appealing to this Parliament and to the Commonwealth Government to act as a financial agent in guaranteeing payment for those cases, the cost of which will be recouped from the sale of apples at a later date.

I would urge upon the Minister to do all in his power to speed up the establishment of the new mill at Pemberton. It has not yet even been started. The cutting of karri timber by the knife method has been demonstrated, I believe successfully. It only remains for the Government to get busy with the job of constructing this new mill in order to ensure the fruitgrowers economic stability so far as cases are concerned. Once that is done, the State will be in a position to supply all the cases required, not only in the apple and pear industry but in all other industries needing cases. Unless that is done, and with some speed, the fruitgrowers next year will be, if not in the same position as they are today, at least very close to it. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

MR. YATES (Canning) [6.3]: I have a few words to say on this Bill, which I am pleased to support. When introducing the measure the Minister mentioned the number of cases required for the marketing of apples and pears. He said that 1,500,000 would be needed to case the production this year. The cost of locally-made cases is roughly 1s. 8d. each; but it is a different story when it comes to making purchases oversea in order to augment the supply to ensure that the industry will have enough cases to market its product. I believe the oversea charge is approximately 100 per cent. more than the charge for the local case. That leaves me

wondering whether something cannot be done by the Apple and Pear Board, or by the growers themselves, to form a combine to manufacture the cases required for the industry. Unquestionably, the future of the apple and pear industry in this State is assured. It has been amply demonstrated that the industry is progressing under the control of the Commonwealth through the various measures that have been introduced from time to time.

The growers themselves favour this measure and that fact is sufficient proof that they are happy under the control of the board. It has also been pointed out that during the season a certain minimum instalment is paid to the growers for their crop which enables them to carry on until such time as the whole crop has been marketed. From the balance of the return is deducted the cost of marketing and the remainder is paid to the growers. The growers are quite satisfied with this arrangement, as has been evidenced by the various resolutions passed at their annual conferences. Therefore, the majority of them are in favour of this form of marketing.

There are, however, one or two matters that could be discussed and probably altered that might assist the public, and in turn the growers, to obtain a greater security for the marketing of these products. I was recently talking to a businessman from the Goldfields who has been dealing in fruit for the past 40 years. He said that certain types of apples were sent to his district that would not be sold in the metropolitan area, which led him to the opinion that the poorer quality fruit also went to other country centres. Whether that was owing to the fruit being affected by a certain type of disease which would not permit of its being sold in the metropolitan area, I do not know; but the apple in question is not sold in the metropolitan area. It is of inferior quality to those sold in Perth. I did not take down the particulars at the time and consequently may be a little astray in my facts, but I shall be glad if the Minister would assure me that the same quality fruit is being sent to the country districts as is sold in Perth.

Mr. McCulloch: Poor fruit at a high price!

Mr. YATES: I agree with the hon. member. The price charged in country districts is higher than that charged in Perth. Country people are at least entitled to have fruit of the same quality as that which can be obtained in Perth. The Minister told the House that one-third of the total crop is sold within the State, the balance being marketed overseas. It is most important for the welfare of the grower that the overseas market be maintained. We also appreciate and realise that the best possible fruit must be sent overseas in order to retain that market, but I would like portion at least of the best fruit to be kept in the State for our own consumption. Publicity should be given to the fact that at various times of the year some of this high quality fruit which is exported can be purchased in our own shops. Mention has been made on numerous occasions in this House of the poor quality apples displayed in shop windows in Perth and the high price charged for them.

If one cares to drive down the South-West and visit the orchards, one can see beautiful fruit being cased at picking time; but it is rarely that one sees that type of fruit in the shops in Perth. The industry has a great future and every encouragement should be given to the growers at all times to expand it. A factory has been established in my electorate that is producing some of the finest jams, pickles and sauces. These compare favourably with the best of these products in the Eastern States. I know another company which is contemplating establishing a branch in this State, so that it may share in purchasing from our growers sufficient fruit and other products to enable it to erect a factory for a similar purpose.

I am convinced that under the able direction and advice of the experts of the Agricultural Department our growers will not only continue to improve their products but will eventually eradicate the diseases that have had such a detrimental effect on the industry. We cannot spend too much money on research in order to assist the growers. It is up to the Government to see that the best possible advice is given to those engaged in this industry and thus help the export trade to continue even more successfully than in the past. The member for Guildford-Midland told the House of the various methods of making deliveries in the metropolitan area. I think the fruit sold

by the Apple and Pear Board from time to time in the various suburbs is surplus fruit, because those sales are made only at certain times of the year. I may be wrong, but all of a sudden we see carts or vans driven round the metropolitan area from which apples are sold to the public at a reasonable price. The purchasers, however, must go to the vans and take with them their own bags or receptacles for the fruit.

It would not pay to sell the fruit from home to home, as the cost of labour would be prohibitive. This scheme of suburban sales initiated by the board has paid dividends, but I consider it could be greatly improved. While some suburbs in the metropolitan area have been served from time to times, others have not. I suggest that the scheme should be co-ordinated so that the whole of the metropolitan area is evenly served and so that all the people may benefit by the sale of cheap apples, without having to go too far to procure them. I have nothing more to say on the Bill, which I have pleasure in supporting.

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

**THE MINISTER FOR FORESTS** (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth—in reply) [7.30]: I am indebted to members for their observations on this Bill. I agree, with the member for North-East Fremantle, that it is a pity more of those entitled to vote on this question did not express their views, and I accept his analysis of the reasons why the vote was not of large proportions. I have been told by the member for Albany, in whose district so many apples are produced, that in fact the proportion of growers that voted for the scheme would represent about 80 per cent. of the State's production in this direction.

Mr. Hill: That is probably right.

**The MINISTER FOR FORESTS:** In other words, it is the responsible people, who have their capital and future sunk in the industry, who have expressed the desire that the marketing legislation should be continued for a further year. The observations of the member for North-East Fremantle and the member for Nelson in regard to fruit cases are fundamental—as they said—to the difficulty with which the industry is at present confronted. The State Saw Mills produce about two-thirds of the fruit cases used

in this industry at the present day. The case mill at Pemberton will aim at a production of 1,000,000 cases per year. A slicing machine has been acquired and tested; a band saw is on order, but delivery may not take place for perhaps another 18 months, although every effort will be made to expedite it. Preliminary work is about to commence on the site of the case mill in the next two or three days.

I assure the member for North-East Fremantle and the member for Nelson that the Government is fully seized of the urgent importance of stepping up the operation of that mill in order to make more adequate provision for the fruit case requirements of the industry. I will be glad to bring the remarks of the member for Guildford-Midland and the member for Canning, in relation to the retail sale of apples through the board, before the notice of the board, as they contain a number of constructive suggestions. One of the main difficulties about the case mill at Pemberton has been the shortage of labour. That is one of the chief difficulties encountered there. I am indebted to Mr. H. E. Soothill, who has been vice-chairman of the Apple and Pear Board, for some information about matters raised by members in the course of this debate.

The prices of apples at Kalgoorlie, mentioned by the member for Kalgoorlie, have been as reasonable as the board could provide. The fixed price laid down by the board is the same at Kalgoorlie as at Perth. The extra cost of freight to Kalgoorlie is absorbed by the board from its ordinary revenues. I have here a list of the authorised prices at Kalgoorlie, which I shall be glad to hand to the hon. member for his information. He also suggested that we should not subsidise oversea trade as against local consumption, and I have with me figures that I think will assure him that that is not occurring. For the current year, 1949, the estimated average net wholesale price per case of apples for local consumption is shown at 11s. 5d., and the comparable price for export apples is 16s. 11½d.

Mr. Styants: Is that oversea price net?

**The MINISTER FOR FORESTS:** It is an f.o.b. price and the figures are as nearly comparable as possible. As an indication of prices I have been informed by Mr. Soot-

bill that on the 19th of this month in New South Wales, where there is no marketing scheme, apples were sold at 46s. per case wholesale, which is 1s. 2d. per lb. at wholesale rates. Our figures compare favourably with those. For this year, there will be no call on the revenues of the Commonwealth because the proceeds of the marketing scheme will meet the advances, and it is estimated that the revenues will leave a surplus for the producers. The same experience is expected for the apple pack of 1950, which is the subject of the Bill now before the House. In reply to the Leader of the Opposition, who made some observations on a matter of considerable importance, I wish to state that the industry has shown an encouraging upward trend.

In 1948, the apples packed in this State amounted to 981,000 cases. In 1949, the current year, the figure has risen to 1,390,000 and for next year the estimated pack of apples is 1,550,000 cases, which is the highest since the record year of 1938. The greatest problem will be to acquire markets for our expanding production, and that is why the overseas markets are of such immense importance to the stability of the industry. I am advised that it has always been the case that some apples are not marketed but are left on the ground. This may appear to be a waste, but from an economic point of view it is not. Either the apples are of the wrong quality or the difficulties of labour and cost involved in their marketing prevent their being an economic proposition.

For this year's apple pack, something like 250,000,000 apples and pears will be separately picked and then separately packed, which means that number of separate operations. Thirty-four million nails will be required for the current pack of apples and pears and will be driven into 17,000,000 case boards in order to contain this year's pack. Those figures will indicate to members the amount of labour involved in the marketing of the product of this industry.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Bert Soothill must have had a lot of time in which to count those nails.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I think his figure would be correct, within a dozen or so, with his usual accuracy.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: And his usual industry.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yes, his usual industry. As the member for Nelson said, this is not a subsidisation scheme, but means only that in view of the difficulties involved—particularly in relation to fruit cases—the financial ability and the organisation that can be afforded by the joint efforts of the Commonwealth and the State are being used to enable the crop to be marketed to the best advantage. It is not a call on the taxpayers, but simply makes available to the industry for the 1950 pack the machinery resources that can be afforded through governmental action.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### BILLS (6)—RETURNED.

- 1, Fisheries Act Amendment.  
With an amendment.
- 2, Companies Act Amendment (No. 2).  
With amendments.
- 3, Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Act Amendment (No. 2).
- 4, Reserves (No. 2).
- 5, Road Closure (No. 2).
- 6, Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment (No. 2).

Without amendment.

### STANDING ORDERS SUSPENSION.

The PREMIER: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Loan Bill and the Pig Industry Compensation Act Amendment Bill to be read a third time at this sitting.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: It is just as well we do not indulge in the obstructionist tactics that the Premier so often accuses us of adopting. In this instance, Mr. Speaker, I will not ask for your ruling because you would have to rule the motion out of order. It is interesting at this stage of this session that the Premier should move such a motion



which requires an absolute majority which he will not have if we choose to divide the House. It is an extremely interesting position and, not knowing what is in the Premier's mind—

The Premier: Are you in a mischievous mood?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE:—I think it must suggest that the Loan Bill will leave this Chamber tonight.

The Premier: I am hoping it will.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If that is the Premier's intention I do not want to dampen either his hope or his ardour at this stage. As long as it is your ruling, Mr. Speaker, I have no objection to the motion.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

### AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

#### Section "A," 1949.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of Section "A" of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1949. It will be laid on the Table of the House.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is a funny one, is it not?

### BILL—PIG INDUSTRY COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### MOTION—STATE FORESTS.

#### To Revoke Dedication.

**THE MINISTER FOR FORESTS** (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth [7.48]): I move—

That the proposal for the partial revocation of State Forests Nos. 16, 35, 39, 50, 51 and 53 laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly by command of His Excellency the Governor on Tuesday, 27th September, 1949, be carried out.

This is the customary revocation as is required under the Forests Act for the approval of Parliament to the excision of State Forests from certain areas. There are six areas concerned with a total of 357 acres

involved and this small excision is from State forest which contains approximately 3.4 million acres. Two of the six areas are by way of exchange. The proposals for these excisions, as recommended by the Conservator of Forests, are shown in certain plans which have been laid on the Table of the House for the information of members.

The first is situated about 10 miles west of Harvey and involves approximately 3 acres of non-forest country applied for by the adjoining landholder who, because of a swamp, is unable to fence portion of the eastern boundary of his property and this small additional area will enable him to enclose his property with the requisite boundary fencing.

Area No. 2 is about 18 miles south of Nannup. There, approximately 70 acres of State forests are to be exchanged for 70 acres contained in Nelson Locations 121 and 5598 as an extension to Dickson Forest Settlement.

Area No. 3 is about half a mile east of Collins siding. Approximately 108 acres of cut over country have been applied for by a nearby settler. The area forms portion of a forest lease and is partly improved, and there appears no reason why this settlement should not be allowed to acquire this particular area of which he already has an authorised lease.

Area No. 4 is about two miles north of Mundaring Weir. Approximately 500 acres of poor forest country adjoining the road and railway have been applied for as a suburban lot, and no value for forestry purposes can be attached to this land which would justify a refusal to allow it to be made available for disposition as a suburban lot.

Area No. 5 is about 12 miles north-west of Narrogin. Approximately 55 acres in three sections are to be exchanged for portion of Williams Location 12572 comprising about 40 acres. The reason for the exchange is that the area to be acquired by the department is good mallee planting country, and its acquisition would also considerably improve State forest boundaries.

The last area is situated about three miles west of Yornaning. Approximately 80 acres have been applied for by an adjoining landholder to provide access and link two parts

of his property. It appears to be a matter of reasonable assistance to the landholder to allow him to have this piece of land, but it also has the advantage that it will result in an improvement of the forest country in that area. Those are the particulars of the areas which, in the aggregate, total 357 acres.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I think, 392.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I am told 357; at any rate it is under 400 acres. In two cases there is an exchange and the Conservator has informed me that the excisions can be made without prejudice to our State forests.

Question put and passed.

On motion by the Minister for Forests, resolved: That the resolution be transmitted to the Legislative Council and its concurrence desired therein.

#### **BILL—LOAN (No. 2). £11,720,000.**

##### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 20th September.

**HON. F. J. S. WISE** (Gascoyne) [7.55]: This Bill is one which sometimes passes with little comment and sometimes is an opportunity for members to say all the things they have omitted to say in the course of a session. It is also the endorsement of the Legislature for the spending of Loan money within the several clauses of and schedules to the Bill. It gives members an opportunity to speak on any subject and any department controlled by any Minister who may have had the handling and spending of Loan money.

The Premier: Is this a threat?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I think it is necessary, now that we have the Auditor General's statement on public accounts which we did not have when the Budget was introduced, and which was the usual complaint of members opposite when they were on this side of the House—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Especially the Deputy Premier.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: —for me to speak at considerable length to enable some of my colleagues to examine those accounts. Speaking in an extremely serious vein, I am certain that it is almost bringing such a matter to a point of ridicule to have tabled the document at all in this House. It was a gen-

eral complaint of members opposite that unless they had the statement of public accounts they could neither effectively analyse the Budget, nor get any idea of the trend of the Auditor General's complaint in scrutinising the spending of public moneys.

I think that in this almost indecent rush to cover on the part of the Government it has avoided much criticism which rightly should have been levelled at it, and indeed it has avoided many other responsibilities—not only the responsibilities associated with the reporting to Parliament by Ministers but the handling by it of legislation which has been promised by it, and which was featured over two years ago as being of vital necessity to the public life of Western Australia. There will be no attempt whatever to honour any promises relating to the Legislative Council franchise. There will be no attempt whatever to deal with such matters as the Vermin Act and the required amendments or to deal with certain matters that should be the outcome of Royal Commissions and Select Committees appointed months ago. I refer particularly to the Select Committee on the fishing industry. I am wondering whether the lateness in the presentation of that report is deliberate because of suggested legislation being unwelcomed by the Government. All those things reflect no credit on the Government in its handling of the affairs of state either in or out of Parliament.

It is quite understandable that Ministers have an anxiety to get into recess and the anxiety increases from day to day. The criticism indulged in by supporters of the Government on such questions as housing, even though a time limit had been imposed, gave it an indication of the critical attitude those members would have adopted had they been given an opportunity to discuss public problems. But neither side had that opportunity; no attempt was made by the Premier beyond quoting the number of hours available to members. Deliberate was the attempt and purposeful was his desire to ensure that members had no chance to deal with such departments as those controlled by the Attorney General.

One of the most important things affecting the lives of the community is the scandal attending the administration of price-fixing. There is an absolute burden and imposition on the people, and, instead of giving effect to a motion carried in this House,

the Premier says he intends that the two members anxious to contest Federal seats shall have their position unchallenged. In effect he says, "We have determined that this session shall be moulded to suit them. We have arranged our affairs from the beginning so that the Government can successfully go into recess, and, if by-elections are held—I doubt whether they will be—"carry on with a minority." That is the attitude adopted by the Government and it is a miserable attitude.

It is very interesting to recall that the Minister for Housing has decided to retire. One must say that his retirement will cause a tremendous gap in the ranks of the Government. It will take away perhaps the most substantial prop the Government has; it will take away the keenest adviser the Premier has in his Cabinet; it will deprive the Government of such experience and mature judgment that the Premier's anxiety not to face Parliament without him is readily understandable.

All the anticipations as to who might replace him bring in their train a lot of problems to the Government. Here we have experience, ability and lengthy service such as in the case of the member for Geraldton.

The Premier: Now you are getting into a really mischievous mood.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We have an absolutely disappointed member in the person of the member for Beverley, who left one Party because he did not get ministerial office, and is likely to leave his present Party because he is not going to get it.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Who will get it?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The member for Irwin-Moore almost feels his ministerial wings sprouting. The filling of this vacancy in the Cabinet will not be carried out—as the Liberal Party prescribes for everyone else—by secret ballot. The position will not be filled by ballot at all. The secret ballot is all right for the other fellow, but is not of much use for the Government because the wrong person might emerge.

Let us take the case of the Honorary Minister! When on this side of the House, she was one of the first four in the Liberal Party upon whom we could always rely for a speech on questions of public interest. No matter who was affected or what the

subject of public moment might be, she said what she thought. But now we have no speeches from the Honorary Minister. She has not made a speech this year. I wonder why this silence. In answer to an interjection, the Premier stated that the Honorary Minister was doing a great job. I think he has since changed his mind.

The Premier: Not a bit of it.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Well, we shall see. The Honorary Minister, on joining the Cabinet, was almost relegated to the back-ground until she was able to arrange for a little seat by herself in the corner.

The Premier: She is not by herself.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: She has been given an opportunity by the sinecure of an office she holds—no department representing a Vote on the Estimates. If I were in the mood, I could draw on my imagination just to conjecture what might happen when the position of the Minister for Housing or any other gap in the Ministry has to be filled. I can quite understand the Minister for Works looking miserable, because there can be no selection from his Party. I can understand the member for Geraldton, in spite of his long experience and faithful service, being overlooked, and of the younger brigade of able men in the Country Party not having a chance, irrespective of ability.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: Where are they?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We shall see just how earnest the Premier is with regard to the Honorary Minister. If the Premier would take advice from me—

The Premier: Let us hear you.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I do not want to be rude and mention those who have no chance whatever. I would not do that on any account.

The Premier: You are in good form tonight.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If I drew on my imagination, I could frame a list of no-hopers, and it would be a very long list.

The Premier: Do not say that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I could also concentrate on the possibilities which would exclude some of the popular tips for the filling of the vacancy. It will be a very interesting development. We shall see just

how earnest the Government was in its insistence on having a woman in the Cabinet.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It would not put a woman on the Milk Board.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We shall see whether the silence of the Honorary Minister is one of chastened hopes and intense disappointment, because it must be said to her credit that when she was not in the Cabinet she cared not which side of the House she castigated when in the mood to do so:

A very interesting position has arisen owing to the silence of members on the Government side. Almost all but one—the Mukinbudin marvel—was silent until the “gag” was applied, except on private members’ days when he was a sort of amateur trial and no-one ventured to indulge in any suggestion of criticism or reform of the Government. So we have the anxiety of the Premier to ensure the member for Mt. Marshall and the member for Middle Swan still being members of some Parliament.

The Government, in a very undignified way, has decided, judging by the Premier’s motion, that this shall be, if not the last day of sitting, the penultimate one. Thus we have reached a stage when the Premier, without any feeling that the public is being shamefully treated, decides that there shall be no sitting of the House after this in order to preserve the skins of the two would-be Federal members, and the duration of the life of his Government. He also says in effect that, as there will be an election between this sitting and the next, there is quite a possibility or even more than a possibility, that this Parliament will not meet for nearly nine months. Is that fair treatment of the public? I am sure that even the member for Sussex is blushing because of that.

This is a matter that the Premier, by design, has arranged. I shall take every opportunity of ensuring that the public gets a full realisation of the position. The Premier spoke about the lengthy speeches on one or two occasions, which he himself desired to have because he would not agree to an adjournment. An adjournment was sought several times, but he wanted to listen to members on this side of the House and insisted that they continue, irrespective of the disabilities imposed upon the members

of the staff of Parliament. This disgraceful running for cover was cleverly depicted by the cartoonist in the “Sunday Times” last week-end. It was a very clever cartoon divorced from any political viciousness or bitterness. I am sure that the Premier must have felt very pleased with the agility ascribed to him in the picture.

I do not wish to delay the House by speaking in a vein that is not serious. I had a lot to say in criticism of the Government both on the Revenue and on the Loan Estimates. The amount of money provided for in the Loan programme cannot be spent. The Government is competing with private industry and enterprise for materials so urgently needed in the reconstruction of the country, challenging housing and other programmes in the market for materials and for labour. The need for Government spending with due regard—as I have before stressed very strongly—for the ability of loan undertakings to be on a basis of returning at least some income for interest repayments, is one that has passed unnoticed by this Government.

As I said before when discussing the Loan Estimates, this Bill represents the endorsement by Parliament of amounts to be spent from Loan moneys and the Estimates of departments without revision by Government. I would say to this opulent Treasurer—who has had money for nothing, money without asking for it, and the spending of public money when the spiral of costs is at its height and when the scarcity of labour is at such a high point in our history—that the Government desires to embarrass the progress of this State by stultifying the efforts of people engaged in industry who will require both the labour and materials that the Government is so anxious to absorb.

Naturally I will support the Loan Bill. I would support it if it were for double the amount on the understanding that the money was to be spent on reproductive loan undertakings; that it was to be spent in developing this heritage of Western Australia with its natural resources. As I have often said in this Chamber, one objective of all Western Australians should be, not necessarily from Loan but if possible from grants from the Eastern States of Australia, to tap the resources of the country, and wealth

should be taxed wherever it is to be found, to develop the latent national resources of our great State.

In endorsing this Loan Bill, I would say to the Premier that if he is to have an opportunity to introduce the next Loan Bill into this Parliament, I hope he will review the Budget tables, which show, without any words of expression being necessary, the serious burden and impost likely to be placed on this community unless reproductive loan works are fostered. I support the Bill.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington—in reply) [8.18]: I think that at least during part of the time he was speaking the Leader of the Opposition was in a facetious mood. But when he was not in that mood he made a few statements to which I feel I must reply.

Mr. Graham: We would like your observations on some of his earlier statements.

**The PREMIER:** The hon. gentleman referred to the promises of the Government.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: They made a few, did they not?

**The PREMIER:** Yes; and that is not uncommon to any leader of a Party when making an appeal to the people. I would remind members—

Mr. Fox: Some have the intepction of carrying out their promises!

**The PREMIER:** Yes. All Governments go to the country with the intention of carrying out their promises. I do not think the people are disappointed because this Government has not been able, up to date, to carry out all the promises it made. But I do think we have gone well along the road, and I am quite content to let the people judge how far the Government has succeeded in that direction.

Mr. Marshall: You are not prepared to go to the people. Why make a statement like that?

**The PREMIER:** We will go to the people. There is no dodging that issue. Perhaps we will not go to them as soon as the hon. member would like us to go. I do not mind the interruptions of the hon. member. In fact, because of my personal regard for him, I am glad to know that his health is evidently improving.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Premier will not go to the people one day earlier than he has to.

**The PREMIER:** An Opposition worth its salt will go to the people at any time.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: A frightened Government will not go to the people until it has to.

**The PREMIER:** The Government is not frightened.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: A Government not worth its salt will avoid going to the people as long as possible.

**The PREMIER:** The Leader of the Opposition has complained about the lack of time given to him and his supporters to get what information they desired.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is not what I said.

**The PREMIER:** I thought the hon. member did. I thought he was complaining again. I have been delving into statistics and could prove the number of hours taken on the Budget and spent in other directions.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You would be better employed doing other things.

**The PREMIER:** I found on delving further into figures that over 700 questions have been asked this session.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: One cannot get replies by letter from Ministers.

**The PREMIER:** I do not think the Opposition has fared badly.

Mr. Rodoreda: How many answers were given?

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: How many correct and truthful ones? Quite a lot were not.

**The PREMIER:** I think members have had answers to their questions. If they were not satisfied with one answer—

Mr. Graham: They got another!

**The PREMIER:**—they could ask another question and get another answer. Evidently they kept on asking until they were satisfied.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: In some cases the second answer was a contradiction of the first.

**The PREMIER:** No!

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: Yes! I can prove it.

The PREMIER: The Opposition has had a pretty good go with questions. I think that the Opposition set out this session to break records in certain directions.

Mr. Rodoreda: Like the Government!

The PREMIER: Yes. This Government has broken a few records—very good records.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Especially with regard to Standing Orders!

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition made reference to housing. I fully agree with the remarks he made about my colleague, the Minister for Housing. Perhaps later this evening, or tomorrow, I may have something further to say about that.

Mr. Graham: Make it this evening!

The PREMIER: I do not think the hon. gentleman can complain seriously of his lack of opportunity to discuss the housing position. A great deal of time has been taken up with this question—an important question I admit—during this session. On the Estimates, full opportunity was given for the discussion of housing. Apart from that, we had discussions earlier during the session; and, of course, numerous questions have been asked on that subject.

Mr. Styants: We have not had plenty of opportunities to discuss railway matters on the Railway Estimates.

The PREMIER: The strongest language used by the Leader of the Opposition was his reference to the "price-fixing scandal." I believe that in regard to price-fixing the States have done a good job.

Mr. Hegney: For whom?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The public do not think so.

The PREMIER: I am not alone in that opinion because Mr. Finnan, the Price-Fixing Minister in the Labour Government of New South Wales, has expressed the same views.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He does not live over here. He is not a housewife over here.

The PREMIER: I am certain that the people of Western Australia are not any worse off than the people of New South Wales.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Why should they be?

The PREMIER: The hon. member interjected that Mr. Finnan did not live over here.

Mr. Styants: Why did you take the price-fixing officials away from Kalgoorlie?

The PREMIER: If difficulties are arising at Kalgoorlie—

Mr. Styants: Arising! They have been going on ever since the officials were taken away.

The PREMIER: If difficulties have arisen at Kalgoorlie or there are anomalies, the Government will see what can be done to rectify them. I have heard members complain about what is happening at Kalgoorlie, and if we can get some time to attend to administrative duties, I promise members we will look into the position there.

Mr. Kelly: Prevention would have been better than cure.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You will be busy if you attend to administrative duties.

The PREMIER: As the Leader of the Opposition knows, they are an important part of ministerial life. In regard to prices, there is a tendency for increases to take place not only in this Commonwealth but throughout the world. Economic conditions are such that many of them are unavoidable.

Mr. Marshall: You are learning fast; there is no doubt about that.

The PREMIER: I am telling the hon. member something which is a fact. Price-fixing is difficult to handle. It does not matter where one goes, he is faced with rising costs. The British Labour Government is facing this problem and we see almost daily references in the cables to the trouble it is experiencing.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot have a 40-hour week without increased costs.

The PREMIER: There have been many factors which have played a part in increasing costs, factors over which this Government has not any control and factors, too, over which the Commonwealth Government would not have any control.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We are glad you have altered your mind since that day you had your finger up!

The PREMIER: No, I have not.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You said at that time—

The PREMIER: I told the people they would be very unwise to agree to the permanent transfer of powers to the Commonwealth in regard to price-fixing. Had the Commonwealth Government asked for powers for a specific period, I believe the people would have agreed.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Are not those factors the same as those which caused prices to "rise with Wise"?

The PREMIER: Oh! I repeat—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: How about answering the question?

The PREMIER: The rise in prices is not the fault of this Government because we have not control. What control have we over imported goods?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You are funny!

The PREMIER: I repeat that, taking an over-all view of price-fixing, this State and the States generally have done a good job.

Mr. Marshall: What good job has the Honorary Minister done?

The PREMIER: Reference has been made to the Honorary Minister. She has done a good job.

Mr. Marshall: Too right!

The PREMIER: I am glad the hon. member has admitted it. It has taken him a long time.

Mr. Fox: Are you going to reward her?

Hon. A. H. Panton: Up goes that finger! Look out!

The PREMIER: If the hon. member waits for a few hours, he will see. The Leader of the Opposition has pointed to different members who, if given Cabinet rank, would have the necessary ability. I admit that I am surrounded with ability.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: We do not mistake affability for ability, you know.

The PREMIER: I have no doubt that whoever comes into the Ministry will have the ability to carry out the important duties devolving upon him.

Mr. Hegney: Do you have to make the selection yourself?

The PREMIER: I do not know anyone more capable.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: No secret ballot!

Mr. Marshall: He is not susceptible to feminine charm, that is one thing!

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition said that the public had been shamefully treated.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is right.

The PREMIER: I do not think the public is losing a minute's sleep about it.

Hon. A. H. Panton: No, we are losing most of it.

The PREMIER: The hon. member is right. The public is being fairly treated by this Government. The Leader of the Opposition said he would tell members of the public about us when he goes on the hustings. I shall tell my story, too.

Mr. Marshall: They are awake to you now.

The PREMIER: Time will tell which of us they will believe.

Mr. Oliver: Why not make it your swan song?

The PREMIER: No, no swan song. The question that no doubt the Leader of the Opposition will see that receiving wide publicity is that contained in his concluding remarks when he referred to the loan programme and the need to encourage private industry and other organisations outside the Government to spend at a time like this, and thereby save the Government from spending. He also said it was not the time for the Government to be competing with outside interests with regard to materials, labour, etc. Now, I agree that, wherever possible, industry should be asked or encouraged to expand at a time like this, and so save Governments. But I ask the hon. gentleman this: In what direction does he suggest the Government should cut out or cut down expenditure?

Mr. Fox: Wipe out the Legislative Council, for one.

The PREMIER: Oh!

Hon. A. H. Panton: That makes you groan.

The PREMIER: Would he suggest that we should reduce expenditure on water supplies? The other night the Deputy Leader of the Opposition advocated a further expenditure of public moneys on water conservation, and I think he was right.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We shall be on a flat rate in future.

The PREMIER: Would the Leader of the Opposition suggest we should cut down expenditure in the rehabilitation of our railways? Or on electricity which is taking an enormous amount of money? Or on public works generally, schools, hospitals and the like? Or on industrial development, harbour works, and so on?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: How much of the £12,000,000 do you think you will be able to spend?

The PREMIER: The Leader of the Opposition is asking me an exceedingly difficult question.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I know that.

The PREMIER: The works provided for in the loan programme are all essential and should be carried out as quickly as possible. It is the wish of the Government to get on with them. A considerable amount of money is already earmarked.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: To pay some of my bills in connection with the South Fremantle power station.

The PREMIER: Some of the overseas bills are considerable and we have to provide the money on these Estimates. There is a careful regard for the spending of public money, and only those works considered to be essential are being carried out. I wonder what the loan programme would be if the Government agreed to all the suggestions made by members of Parliament? The twelve and a quarter million pounds would not be nearly sufficient.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Do you remember some of the things you suggested when you sat over here?

The PREMIER: Yes, and all soundly based, but not always accepted. I do not know that I need say any more. I assure the House that in regard to the expenditure of public money, every care and scrutiny will be exercised.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Hill in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to raise money for certain purposes:

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: The Premier in reply to my leader castigated this side of the House for asking questions. He concluded his remarks by saying that all expenditure would receive every care and scrutiny.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! This clause deals only with the power to raise money for certain purposes.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: I think I shall be able to connect my remarks with the clause. I asked so many questions because I was seeking information on the Department of Native Affairs. To get the correct information I had to ask one question on three occasions.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Department of Native Affairs comes under Revenue, not under Loan. This clause deals with the power to raise money for certain purposes.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: There is money here to be expended on hospitals etc., for natives. On three occasions I attempted to get certain information, but each time I was given a misleading or untruthful answer. I make it clear that I do not blame the Minister for the answers because he gives information which is supplied to him. I ask the Premier, in view of the three questions I asked and the answers I received, whether he is prepared to put into operation his promises of scrutiny and of careful attention to finance by appointing a local magistrate, or some other person in authority, to make inquiries into these questions.

On the 17th August I asked a question with respect to taxi hire by departmental officers. The answer was that it was £144. I repeated a similar question on the 1st September, well over a fortnight later, and the answer was £122. Yesterday I asked whether it was a fact that over £500 had been expended, and the answer was, No. I am in a position to know that that statement is not correct; that more than £500 has been paid. Whether these answers are just a trick, or whether they are given because the officers of the department do not know their business, or whether they are a deliberate attempt to mislead the Chamber, I do not know, but I would like the Premier to find out. We should be able to expect a truthful answer to questions asked in this Chamber.



The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is getting away from the clause.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: I submit to your ruling, Mr. Chairman, but I ask the Premier whether he is prepared to appoint a magistrate or some other responsible person, locally, to inquire into these questions.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I draw attention to Item 29 in the First Schedule—"Native Hospitals, Depots and Settlements." I suggest the hon. member leave his remarks until that item is before us.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: I submit to your ruling, Mr. Chairman.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: There is no need to appoint any outside person to inquire. The question raised by the member for Kimberley will necessitate my making my own inquiries to satisfy myself. I feel convinced that a reflection has been cast upon permanent senior officers of the department that the hon. member did not really mean to cast. The figures are supplied by the accountant of the department to the Commissioner, who sends them on to me. They are related to different periods and might well have varied in their amounts. They refer to visits of different officers. The officers responsible for the answers to the questions—the accountant in particular—have been honourably employed for years in the service of the department and I am confident that the information they supplied was, to the best of their knowledge, entirely correct. However, I assure the hon. member that I shall personally inquire into the matter.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier made some reference to promises when he was speaking. One in which I was vitally interested occurred to me, and I draw the Premier's attention to it because he has forgotten all about it. He promised encouragement to secondary industry, and the appointment of State trade commissioners. Where are they?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: They are not appointed.

The Premier: I still think the suggestion to appoint State trade commissioners is a good one.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But the Premier promised to appoint them. This Government has had a full term of office.

The Premier: The difficulty has been to supply the goods.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier apparently is finding some difficulties.

The Premier: Anything we can produce is taken without any difficulty.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is remarkable that the previous Government, living under war conditions and the aftermath of war, was expected to do so much, whereas this Government, which should have known of the conditions obtaining, promised so much.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Reckless promises!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier urges as an excuse that there are difficulties. Surely the Premier knew there would be difficulties, but he said he intended to appoint trade commissioners. It would be a very good thing if the Premier did something more than think about it. I want to remind the Premier that that was one of the many promises he has completely forgotten.

The Premier: No, not forgotten.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: They were made for the purpose of getting votes at the time, but the Premier had no intention of putting those promises into operation. I have a list of those promises in front of me.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There are 147 of them.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: And I thought I should remind the Premier of at least one of them to give him something to think about.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 to 6—agreed to.

First Schedule:

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I would like some information from the member for Albany or the Premier as to the differences in the plans for Albany harbour compared with the previous arrangement. I am referring to Item 7.

The PREMIER: The total estimated cost for the Albany harbour works is £1,190,000. There is also provision for a boat slip at Albany which will cost £15,500. The total expenditure to the 30th June, 1949, was £6,302 on harbour improvements, and £1,308 on the Albany boat slip. The Estimates for 1949-50 are £74,000 on

harbour improvements and £4,192 on the Albany boat slip. As members know, this is part of the scheme for the provision of a harbour at Albany which will prove adequate to cater for the produce coming from its back country. Also, it is part of the decentralisation plan which we all hope to see put into effect.

Mr. Hoar: What does the member for Bunbury think about that?

Mr. KELLY: I want some information on Item 12, water supply for towns generally. This is a vital question for the people in the outback areas. Can the Premier give us any details as to when the flat rate will be implemented?

The PREMIER: Members were so confused last night when they voted on the motion concerning a flat rate that I am sure they did not know what they really wanted. The motion was carried only last night and the hon. member must understand that the Government has not yet had time to consider it.

Mr. GRAHAM: Item 14 deals with sewerage and drainage, Perth and Fremantle. Some months ago, I made representations to the Minister for Works about the sewerage of a portion of East Perth, situated less than one mile from the Perth Town Hall. This area is not supplied with this modern facility and I would like to know from the Premier, in view of the undertaking given to me at the time by the Minister for Works, whether that particular job is included in the amount in Item 14.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This work, like a number of other similar works in the metropolitan area, is necessarily delayed more than normally would be the case. This is because of the lack of piping. If it were possible to receive all the piping we require, there would be no complaints about delays. I can assure the hon. member that as soon as we have the piping this job will be attended to. I condition that remark by stating that there may be other jobs which are more urgent than that. But, as far as I can see, there will be no undue delay. If the hon. member wants any further details I will arrange to get them for him.

The PREMIER: Sums of £21,000 and £17,800 are provided on the Estimates for sewerage in the Perth areas. Just exactly

in what part of the city the work will be undertaken I do not know, but those amounts are provided for sewerage in Perth.

Mr. GRAHAM: I sought information because I have a letter over the signature of the Minister promising that that work would be included in this year's Loan Estimates. It may happen that it is included in one or other of the two sums mentioned by the Premier.

The Minister for Works: It is not separately listed here, but I imagine it would be included in one or other of those amounts.

Mr. HEGNEY: I would like to ask the Premier, or the Minister for Works, to give me some information about Item 18, water supply in agricultural and North-West districts. I want to know the present position about the water supply scheme for Port Hedland. I have made repeated representations about the Turner River scheme, and some time ago the Minister for Works was good enough to reply to a question of mine about the possible date of completion. As far as I know, it still has a long way to go, and only one mile of piping has been laid. I would like to know the approximate date of completion. I am aware that there is difficulty in obtaining pipes, and the Port Hedland people must apparently suffer because they are so far away from the nerve centre of government. Can the Premier or the Minister for Works give me an assurance as to when it will be completed, so that I may give the information to the people of Port Hedland?

The PREMIER: The estimated total cost of this scheme is £50,000. The expenditure to the 30th June, 1949, for preliminary work, was £232. The estimate for 1949-50 is the balance, which is £49,768. The Minister for Works may be able to give the hon. member more information about the actual work.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The principal information has just been supplied by the Premier. I would remind the member for Pilbara that the situation at Port Hedland, whilst undoubtedly deserving of the earliest possible attention, is in precisely the same state now that it has been in for the last 40 or 50 years. We

have realised that to turn a deaf ear to the pleadings of the people up there would have been tantamount to saying goodbye to the North-West, because Port Hedland is undoubtedly the capital of that section of the State. A sum of £50,000 has been set aside for this work, and that is a good deal more than would normally be provided for a town the size of Port Hedland.

Mr. Hegney: I only wanted to know what progress had been made.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There can be no progress until we have the pipes. It is regarded as an urgent job, and when the pipes are available it will be carried out.

Mr. KELLY: Can the Premier give me some information about Item 19, development in mining, now that the devaluation has brought about a bigger price for gold in this State? Is it the intention of the Government to use any of this £40,000 in keeping its promise about the sulphide ore treatment plant that was to have been installed in one of the goldfields areas?

The PREMIER: I cannot supply that information at present, but I would suggest that the hon. member get in touch with me and I will obtain the information.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: With regard to the provision of £30,000 for the development of agriculture, I can hardly think that this will cover a matter respecting which I am inquisitive. I noticed in the Press recently that the Government intends establishing bulk-handling facilities at Albany. There does not appear to be any special provision for the purpose, and I would like to know if it is the intention of the Government to go ahead with the proposition this year or is provision to be made for it in the future? Does the Government intend to use public funds for the installation and then hand it over to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. or does the Government intend to run the concern itself?

The PREMIER: I have not any information dealing with the matter.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Does that mean that you are not going to put it up this year?

The PREMIER: I am afraid I have no information about the matter at all.

Mr. FOX: I notice that £50,000 is being set aside for pine planting, purchase of land and forest regeneration. Is it intended

to extend the pine plantation at Bibra Lake? I suggest that the land there is too valuable for utilisation along those lines, and there is ample space a few miles further south.

The PREMIER: The Forests Department is looking for land for pine plantation purposes, and that is a progressive part of its policy. I shall bring the hon. member's suggestion before the Conservator of Forests so that he will know what the feelings are in the district concerned. I do not think it is likely that the department would continue pine planting in a district where any serious objection was raised against it.

Mr. RODOREDA: Can the Minister for Native Affairs give me some information about the item in the schedule setting out that £10,000 was being allocated for native hospitals, depots and settlements? Has he any information to indicate whether any of the money will be available for the erection of suitable quarters where sick half-castes or natives may be nursed at Roebourne? In 1944 or 1945 a proposal was advanced to establish a hospital there and it was intended to shift buildings from La Grange Bay and re-erect them at Roebourne. There are a number of natives in that area and at present the department is put to considerable expense in sending any who are sick to the Lock hospital at Port Hedland. There is difficulty at all times in arranging transport. I trust some steps will be taken to give effect to the proposal that has been in abeyance for so long. I have a letter from the matron saying that she and the nursing staff are willing to nurse sick natives, but there is no building where they can be housed. At present they are cared for on the narrow verandah of the Roebourne hospital at great inconvenience to the matron and staff.

The MINISTER FOR NATIVE AFFAIRS: This matter has not been brought under my notice so far with regard to hospital accommodation for natives at Roebourne. The hospital at Port Hedland is looked upon as the centre for the treatment of natives from that district. Recently a certificated nurse has been sent to LaGrange Bay for the purpose of treating natives in respect of illnesses that are not of a serious character. The mobile workshop is operating in the northern areas for the purpose of building accommodation for natives on

reserves, partly to meet the needs of convalescents and those who go to townships for hospital treatment. I shall bring the hon. member's suggestion under the notice of the Commissioner of Public Health and the Commissioner of Native Affairs.

**Mr. RODOREDA:** Further to what the Minister has said, the Department of Native Affairs knows all about the subject to which I referred and had plans prepared to go ahead with it, but the threatened Japanese invasion held matters up. I do not necessarily mean the provision of a native hospital but have in mind some place where the natives could be housed temporarily. There are quite a few indigent natives in the vicinity. If a flying doctor plane were available for the removal of sick natives to the Lock hospital not much expense would be involved, but under present circumstances it is very difficult. In view of the attitude of the matron and the staff at Roebourne, we should strain our resources to breaking point to provide the facilities they require.

**The MINISTER FOR NATIVE AFFAIRS:** The mobile workshop is at present operating at Derby and I shall discuss with the Commissioner of Native Affairs the possibility of using it in order to provide some accommodation at Roebourne.

**Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY:** It is a fact that the Department of Native Affairs had in mind the erection of some buildings in the vicinity of the hospital at Roebourne to house temporarily natives who were indisposed. The war interfered with the scheme. The transfer of natives from Roebourne to Port Hedland was most expensive and the department had to call tenders from persons possessing motor vehicles to convey the natives to the hospital at Derby. It was recognised that some temporary accommodation should be provided because natives from the surrounding stations often had to be held at the Roebourne hospital for a week or so until they could be taken to the native hospital at Port Hedland. On occasions half-caste women who were urgently in need of hospital treatment were accommodated at the Roebourne hospital. It is not a matter of a permanent hospital but of temporary accommodation. I would also remind the Premier that in my electorate hospitals are often some hundred miles or more apart. In view of portion of the reply I received from the Minister for Native Affairs, who

said that the truck belonging to the department at Derby was unsuitable for patrols, is he aware that recently Mr. Pullen, after travelling for some days in that truck, was taken ill? In view of that fact, will the Premier see that in future the departmental officers are provided with saloon cars so as to avoid the possibility of illness?

**The PREMIER:** I shall draw attention to the suggestion made by the hon. member. I understand the objective of the department is to provide its officers with vehicles that will enable them to get about as comfortably as possible.

**Mr. REYNOLDS:** The schedule contains provision for £100,000 in connection with the State Saw Mills. How and where is this money to be spent?

**The PREMIER:** The Shannon River mill will cost a total of £200,000. The total expenditure to the 30th June last was £95,405 and the estimated expenditure for 1949-50 is £60,000.

**Mr. REYNOLDS:** I should like to know what the item "Welshpool Industries, £50,000" is for and how it will be expended.

**The PREMIER:** I can give the hon. member all the particulars in regard to these industries. The foundry for Chamberlain's Industries is estimated to cost £175,000. The expenditure to the 30th June of this year is £135,466; the estimated expenditure for 1949-50 is £20,000. The total estimated cost for the purchase of machine tools is £139,000 and the estimate for new works for 1949-50 is £139,000. The total estimated cost for the purchase of equipment is £5,000, and the estimate for 1949-50 is £5,000. For the installation of a 1,000 kilowatt generator plant the estimate is £3,000. That is the proposed expenditure for 1949-50.

**Mr. NEEDHAM:** As to item, "State Housing Commission—Capital, £750,000," I would like the Premier or the Minister for Housing to give the Committee some information in regard to brick production. I had intended to try to obtain this information when the Revenue Estimates were being discussed, but the guillotine fell and that precluded the Minister from giving it on that occasion. I understand that it is proposed to build an additional State brickworks. The Minister also recommended that an officer of the State Brickworks should be sent overseas to obtain

the fullest information possible in regard to modern systems of brick production, but we have not yet had his report. In view of the shortage of bricks, which is retarding the house-building programme, will the Minister give the Committee information on these two points?

**THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING:** A short report reached me a day or so ago from Mr. Elston, the manager of the State Brickworks, who has visited England, but I have not had the opportunity to digest it. During his visit he examined brickworks and made contact with brick machinery makers and experts both on the Continent and in the United Kingdom. Following his visit, orders were placed by him, and confirmed by the Government, for £50,000 worth of English machinery, to be delivered at the earliest possible moment. The engineers of the Public Works Department and of the architectural branch are at present examining the site for the purpose of recommending what steps should be taken for the erection of the building and the installation to receive the machinery. The view of the State Housing Commission, which appointed a special Materials Sub-Committee, was that it would be quicker to enlarge and assist the existing brickworks than to commence a new brickworks. Accordingly, substantial sums and assistance by way of machinery and plant, together with technical advice, were made available by the Government to a number of brickworks to enable them to expand their production. One brick works, which a few months ago was producing 25,000 bricks a week, is now producing 230,000 bricks a week. Its former fall in production was due to internal dissension among the partners. Another brickworks, which was producing 80,000 bricks a week is now producing 120,000 bricks a week. We hope that the volume of production will continue and show a further satisfactory expansion. The production in 1945 was 66 per cent. of the pre-war production; it has risen at the present time to 111 per cent. of that production.

Schedule put and passed.

Second Schedule:

**MR. NALDER:** Would the Minister tell the Committee whether any decision has yet been made regarding the calling of tenders for the Lake Grace hospital? This matter has been deferred for quite a considerable time.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I have not the precise information. The last occasion on which I was interested in this hospital was about a fortnight ago and I then told the hon. member that no acceptable tender had been received.

**Mr. Nalder:** Have tenders been called?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Yes. I shall be pleased to make the necessary inquiries and let the hon. member have the information tomorrow.

Schedule put and passed.

Third Schedule, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

### *Third Reading*

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [9.24]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

**MR. BOVELL** (Sussex) [9.25]: I do not wish to delay the passage of the Bill, but I wish to refer to Loan moneys that have been spent since Responsible Government in 1890. As members are aware, owing to the redistribution of seats, the Sussex electorate will disappear.

**MR. SPEAKER** This is new matter. We are now dealing with the third reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### **BILLS (2)—RETURNED.**

- 1, War Service Land Settlement (Notification of Transactions).
- 2, Pig Industry Compensation Act Amendment.  
Without amendment.

### **BILL—WHEAT INDUSTRY STABILISATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

Received from the Council and read a first time.

### **BILL—MARKETING OF EGGS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

#### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [9.27] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is introduced to provide for all producer representatives

on the Egg Marketing Board to be elected by the producers themselves. A deputation from the Poultry Farmers' Association waited on my colleague, the Honorary Minister for Agriculture, and requested that their body should be allowed to elect the majority of the producer's representatives on the board. The board consists of six members. Two members are nominated by the Minister to represent the consumers; one nominated by the Minister to represent the producers; two are elected by the producers themselves, and the remaining member is an independent person who acts as chairman.

The Association proposed that there should be four producers' representatives, two consumers' representatives and a chairman. However, the Government did not agree to this proposal to increase the number on the board, but offered to forgo the right of the Minister to nominate one of the producers' representatives. The producers would then be able to elect their three representatives instead of only two. The producers themselves have asked for this right, to which the Government has agreed. The Bill provides that the change-over shall take place when the term of office of the producer-representative nominated by the Minister expires on the 2nd April, 1952. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. J. T. TONKIN** (North-East Fremantle) [9.30]: I hope this Bill will not be agreed to because, if it is, it might do serious damage to the Egg Board in this State and to the industry. When the legislation was originally framed and provision was made in it for three producer-representatives, very careful thought was given to the question of whether the whole of the three producer-representatives should be elected or whether the Minister should have opportunity of ensuring that at least one of them would be a man with sufficient backbone and courage to stand up for what he believed to be right, despite any pressure that might be placed upon him by interested parties.

In Victoria there was a board that was producer-controlled and it got the Egg Board there into such a sorry mess that the Government of that State had to take action and appoint a person to extricate the board from the position into which it found itself. The reason for its failure was that the producers on the board could not withstand the

pressure from those who elected them and they acted not in the best interests of the board and the country, but in line with the pressure brought to bear on them.

It is rather significant that in South Australia a Liberal Government resolutely refused the request to give the producers a majority of representation on the Egg Board of that State. That board is one of the most successful in the Commonwealth and is appointed by the Government and not elected at all. One of the real dangers that I see from this amendment is that, if agreed to, it would result in the Egg Board of this State being controlled by the Armadale branch of the Poultry Farmers' Association. There are at present on the board two producer-representatives who have been elected and it is significant that both of them are members of the Armadale branch of the association.

It is easy to see how that has come about. The Armadale branch, being the strongest, is in a position to give the greatest support to persons who nominate from that district and, although a considerable number of eggs are produced in other parts of the State—apart from the metropolitan area—it will be impossible for those other districts ever to have an elected representative on the board. The position will be that the producer-representatives on the board will always be members of the strongest branch, as the present set up shows clearly, the two producer-representatives today being members of the Armadale branch, which is the strongest branch. We know what pressure can be brought to bear by interested parties on their representatives. Just imagine the situation in which the producer-representatives will find themselves if the policy of the board makes it clear that an increased amount of money should be paid into the stabilisation fund, owing to the difficulties that are bound to arise, and that increased amount will mean that an additional levy will have to be imposed on the producers! What chance would there be of having such a levy imposed?

The egg producers, like other taxpayers, are looking for a reduction in taxation and not an increase. They would not be pleased with representatives who advocated an increase in the stabilisation fees and, because all the representatives would be dependent upon the support of members of their branch, they would be disinclined to take the right

action. They would prefer to take the risk. In other words, they would curry favour all the time with members of their own branch. As an example of that I will quote what happened quite recently with regard to a proposal for the establishment of an egg grading floor at Geraldton.

It was obvious, after some inquiry, that the establishment of a grading floor at Geraldton would be of decided benefit to the producers in that area and to consumers. When that proposal came up for discussion by the Egg Board the producer-representatives—who were elected—were opposed to the establishment of that floor, but the nominated producer, the man who is not dependent upon the support of any particular branch, but who is on the board because he has been nominated by the Minister, saw virtue in the proposal and advocated it. Owing to his action in supporting the proposal he was severely criticised by the other producer-representatives and their supporters, the producers in their particular area.

Had all the producer-representatives been elected representatives, the decision to establish a floor at Geraldton would never have been made, but, because the nominated producer-representative was not afraid to take the right action and supported the proposal, it was made the subject of further inquiry and a visit was paid to Geraldton by the secretary of the board and the nominated representative. As a result of a meeting of interested persons called at Geraldton, it was made abundantly clear that the establishment of an egg grading floor at that centre was most desirable, and action will be taken in the near future to establish it.

Although, in principle, it is quite right to say that we should allow the persons who produce a commodity to have the greatest say in what shall be done with their product, it does not always work out that way in practice, because persons who are elected to such positions are sometimes elected not because they have any special administrative ability, but because they have about them a peculiar friendliness, are good mixers and have the knack of gaining support. The persons who make the most noise and often advocate the most impossible things sometimes get the support of those whom they seek to represent and, when they get into responsible positions, cause serious trouble by their irresponsible actions.

The example of Victoria stands out in stark relief. The producers had a majority of representation on that board and it was in fact a producer-controlled board. It is the worst board in the Commonwealth and it got into such a financial mess that the Victorian Government had to appoint somebody to take the control out of the hands of that board, in the interests of the producers generally. I repeat that in South Australia, where there is a Liberal Government and a number of attempts have been made by producers to get a producer-controlled board, the Government has resolutely refused to make any alteration to the board, which is a nominated board and not an elected one.

The producers ought to be satisfied if they have at least half of the representation drawn from their ranks, because the important thing is to ensure that the producers' angle is properly represented, and that is attained if at least half the representation consists of persons who have been successful in the industry. Of the three producer-representatives on the board in this State today, one is a man who has spent a lifetime in the industry. He has made a complete success of it and has made sufficient money from poultry farming to give him complete independence. He has been in the industry from the inception and he is the nominated producer-representative. Because he at times takes a line that is contrary to that desired by interested producers, they criticise him, but he is a man of strong character, who is prepared to stand up for the course that he believes to be right. Up to the present he has had severity of tenure and so he has not had to bow to the demands of interested parties.

That is all to the good in a board that is controlling £75,000 worth of assets. He is a man who can bring to bear the producers' angle, but he does not have to act in the way that interested parties endeavour to force him to act. Such a man will not do anything contrary to the interests of the producers, because he himself is still a producer and he has a thorough knowledge of the industry. He will refuse to be pushed along because certain interested parties want to increase the price of eggs or reduce the amount to be paid into the stabilisation fund. Producers are only human, just as are the consumers, and, if they can get more for their product than they are getting, they will try to secure that higher return.

It is understandable that, if we have a majority of producer-representation on the board, that majority will be out to do the best it can for the section it represents, regardless of the effect of such action upon the consumers or upon the community generally and so we will not have the same resistance against importunities for increased prices as we will have if one of the producers is a man who is able to retain his position on the board so long as the Minister is satisfied with the work he is doing. When the Minister appoints a member to the board he does not do so because he wants to render a disservice to the producers or the consumers. It is because he wishes to appoint a man of stability, knowledge and experience, who will improve the efficiency of the board to which he is being appointed. How else can anyone guarantee that at least one of the producer-representatives will be a man sufficiently qualified to play an important part as an administrator?

We know what can happen at elections. We are aware that frequently changes can take place during the life of the Egg board of Western Australia and that there have been changes in the producer-representation. It is easy for a man who is out, and is prepared to make promises as to what he will do to improve the conditions of producers to put out a man who has resisted demands being made upon him by producers. How long would a representative last on the Egg Board if he were continuing to vote for the retention of a stabilisation levy and continuing to vote against an increased price if the producers were clamouring for just the opposite? Why, at the very first election the man would lose his position on the board and would be replaced by someone who promised that the first action he would take when appointed would be to reduce the stabilisation levy and have the price increased!

I think we ought to prevent that from happening in the interests of the producers themselves because, if the board ultimately fails and if its work is seriously interfered with, it will be the industry generally that will fail. The egg marketing legislation has given stability to the poultry-farmer. It has guaranteed a regularity of return for those engaged in the industry. It has provided, for those who have sought this method of livelihood, a guarantee that their product

will be acquired from them at a fair and reasonable price. But the pressure is always on to get more; that is perfectly natural. It must be expected to be so. There ought to be somebody there who can resist the pressure quite fairly and squarely to ensure that the consumers are not exploited. There must be maintained a reasonable balance, otherwise prices will get completely out of hand.

So long as the producers' viewpoint has adequate expression I think that is as much as they have a right to expect. This board of six, as constituted at present, has two consumer-representatives, a chairman nominated by the Minister, a producer nominated by the Minister, and two producers elected by the producers themselves. So that three out of six are genuine producers who will bring to all the discussions the genuine producers' angle, but the important thing is at present that one of those three is not bound to yield to outside pressure if he thinks that the course which is being advocated is not the right one to take in the interests of the industry. But the two who are elected cannot take the same strong stand because they know quite well that, if they do anything that will upset those who elected them, they will be off the board at the following election. So the natural tendency is for such representatives always to yield to the pressure which is being imposed on them.

But what makes this proposition worse is that it will result in all producer-representatives coming from one area. They will all be members of the Armadale poultry-farmers, because that is the strongest branch and the two producer-representatives on the board who have been elected both come from that branch. As they have the strongest branch they will vote for their own members. It is only necessary for three members to be nominated from that branch and they are certain of election. So the upshot of this legislation is that henceforth the Egg Marketing Board of Western Australia will be controlled by producers who are members of the Armadale branch. In other words it will be controlled by the members of the Armadale branch of the Poultry-Farmers' Union and, whatever the policy is, they will determine it.

Mr. Shearn: Can you say how long the South Australian board has been in operation?



Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, the same length of time as has the Western Australian board, because previously the Commonwealth, during the war period, had control of egg marketing and there was a deputy controller in each State. When the Commonwealth regulations ceased to have force and effect, each State had to take separate action to set up a board which took the place of the Commonwealth controller. Just as we set up a board in Western Australia, the same action was taken in Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria. We can only go by the results that we have obtained and we have done excellently in Western Australia. With our set-up we have acquired substantial assets and we have a strong stabilisation fund able to meet any emergency.

There has never been any suggestion of weakness in the policy of the board—and I have read the report on the matter—but I do know that the producer-controlled board in Victoria was a complete failure, and caused such concern to the Government there that it had to take action to appoint a person to assume control in order to put the board on its feet.

The Minister for Lands: You mean New South Wales.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, it was Victoria.

The Minister for Lands: I thought it was New South Wales.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Whereas in South Australia where it could be expected and it would be certain the same pressure would be on from producers, the Liberal Government has steadfastly refused to change the set-up of the board which comprises nominated members. So I am surprised that the Government here should introduce this measure because, after all, there is a responsibility upon us to look at the industry generally and to take such action as we feel is right in the interests of the State. It would be quite the popular thing for me, more especially with an election coming on, and with everything to gain and nothing to lose, to say, "Yes, I will throw my weight in with the producers, and I will give my wholehearted support to this request that all the producers should be elected." But

I would be recreant to my trust if I did that because I know from my experience elsewhere and from what has transpired in this State, that such action would be quite wrong.

While the Minister is in a position to select a genuine producer he can guarantee that he has a man there who has sufficient courage and knowledge to stand with the chairman and take the right course of action. During my term as Minister I never had occasion to consult any member of a board who had been appointed by me, and I dare say the Minister at present has never had occasion to call his nominated member before him and to suggest a line of policy. I do not know, but I venture to say that that is the position; that the Minister has never been dissatisfied with the producer-nominated member and has never had to suggest to him the line of policy which he ought to follow. I know the policy which the nominated producer member has taken has been taken of his own volition, because he believed that such course of action was the correct one and he has the strength to take such action. He has the knowledge that he does not owe his appointment to the popular favour outside, but that so long as he does his job according to his lights the Minister will be satisfied to retain him as his representative.

I say to the Minister that that is a far happier position to be in than to have a board where the members are such as they might be obliged to yield to popular clamour and take action which would be most detrimental to the board in general. It is only storing up a heap of trouble to take this action, and the Government ought to be strong enough to resist this request because in the circumstances it is not a proper one in the interests of producers generally. This board has given great satisfaction. It is true that the producers have been dissatisfied from time to time because they have not had a higher price for their goods and they have been dissatisfied, too, from time to time because they have had to pay money into the stabilisation fund. But the board is there to do what it can in the best interests of the industry and I think it has done an excellent job, and its present sound financial position reflects that.

If eggs are dumped in this State from other States and the price is threatened as a result, what is the safeguard for the producers in Western Australia? It is the stabilisation fund which is built up by the contributions of the producers themselves, and that will be their guarantee that they cannot suffer severely if the production of eggs increases in other States and dumping takes place. They never lose the money that will be paid into a stabilisation fund; it is there for their complete benefit. So I trust that the Government will not press on with this amendment because it is not in the interests of producers; it is not in the interests of the State. It is only being introduced, as the Minister has said here and as has been said in another place, because producers asked for it. That is the only reason given.

The producers have asked for it because they feel that the producer-representative who is on the board as the Minister's nominee is not coming sufficiently their way and, if he is changed and substituted by a man whom they can elect, then they will get a higher price for their eggs and pay less into the stabilisation fund. I know what I am saying will not be popular with them and if I want to take the easy course I need not say that, but I repeat I would be recreant to my trust if I did not point out the danger which lies in the course the Government proposes to take. It will be remembered that an extremely drastic alteration was made to the Milk Board in Western Australia. That was a board which had on it producer-representation. The Government introduced legislation to set up an entirely new board and to take the producers off it, and what was the answer the Minister gave when he was questioned upon it? The answer was that the new board would be more efficient.

Mr. Ackland: Are not the functions of the two boards different

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No; the functions are to acquire the product and attend to its marketing. Those are the functions of all the commodity boards in this State—to provide for the proper marketing of the product, whether it be onions, potatoes, eggs, or milk—so that there shall be some statutory authority charged with the responsibility of properly organising the distribution of the product and ensuring a fair return for the

producer. Just as the Milk Board gave stability to the producers of whole-milk, just as the Onion Board has done the same for onion-growers and the Potato Board for potato-growers, so the Egg Board has done for the poultry farmers.

Had the Egg Board fallen down badly on its job and taken a line of action detrimental to producers, I could understand the desire to make an alteration, but the board has demonstrated its superiority over most other Egg Boards in the Commonwealth. It has definitely established its superiority over the grower-controlled board of Victoria. Consequently, I feel that the action proposed is not the right one to take, and I hope that the Government will not persist in it. If it does, I am certain it will rue the day, because the position will be that the producers outside will call the tune to which the board will be obliged to dance, and in a very short time we shall have the Egg Board being controlled by the Armadale branch of the Poultry Farmers' Association. That would be a most undesirable state of affairs in any industry. What would be said if one branch of wheat or grape growers in a particular area was in a position to determine the policy for everybody?

If the Government remains adamant in its intention to proceed with the Bill, I suggest that provision should be made at least for zones to guard against all the representatives coming from one place and to ensure that men shall not put their heads together and see that their friends are elected to carry out a certain policy. This could be guarded against by setting up zones and providing that one representative shall come from each zone. It is too late to give consideration to that, and I think it would be far better if the Government did not proceed with the Bill but allowed the matter to receive further consideration.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and division taken with the following result:—

Ayes .. .. .	22
Noes .. .. .	21
Majority for .. .	1

## AYES.

Mr. Coverley  
Mr. Fox  
Mr. Graham  
Mr. Hawke  
Mr. Hegney  
Mr. Hoar  
Mr. Kelly  
Mr. Marshall  
Mr. May  
Mr. McCulloch  
Mr. Needham

Mr. Nulsen  
Mr. Oliver  
Mr. Pantou  
Mr. Read  
Mr. Shearn  
Mr. Sleeman  
Mr. Styants  
Mr. Tonkin  
Mr. Triest  
Mr. Wise  
Mr. Rodoreda  
(Teller.)

## NOSS.

Mr. Ackland  
Mr. Bovell  
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver  
Mr. Cornell  
Mr. Doney  
Mr. Grayden  
Mr. Hall  
Mr. Hill  
Sir N. Keenan.  
Mr. McDonald  
Mr. McLarty

Mr. Murray  
Mr. Nalder  
Mr. Nimmo  
Mr. Perkins  
Mr. Reynolds  
Mr. Thora  
Mr. Watts  
Mr. Wild  
Mr. Yates  
Mr. Brand  
(Teller.)

Motion thus passed.

### BILL—FOOTWEAR REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with an amendment.

### BILL—FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT.

#### *Council's Amendment.*

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

#### *In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Housing (for the Minister for Fisheries) in charge of the Bill.

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

Clause 10—Insert after the word "principal" in line 24, page 4, the following:—

Provided that where an agent or servant succeeds in recovering from his employer the amount of fine and costs in which he has been mulct, no conviction shall be recorded against him.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: If an agent or servant can show that he was not aware of committing an offence, he may recover the amount of the fine and costs from the principal. There are two difficulties that the Council seems to have overlooked. The whole provision deals with a conviction, and that is the foundation upon which the agent or employee has the right of action, and I do not know of any means by which a conviction could be expunged. Further, the amendment means that if he recovers the money, the conviction is to be expunged, but if he cannot recover it, the conviction must remain.

That seems to me quite illogical because if there is to be the removal of a conviction from the records, that removal should not depend on whether an employer can be made to pay or not. All such servants or agents should have equal treatment. One man, able to recover his costs and fines from his employer, should not be in a more favourable position than a man who without fault on his part is not able to do so.

Mr. Kelly: What would constitute a reason for his not being able to recover the money?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It might be that the employer could not pay, being a man of no substance, or had levanted, or something of that kind.

Mr. Kelly: Highly improbable, I should think.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It might not be. The amendment, although well designed; to my mind is not logical, and I do not see why it should be inserted. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of Mr. Kelly, Mr. Brand and the Minister for Housing drew up reasons for not agreeing to the Council's amendment.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

### BILL—MARKETING OF APPLES AND PEARS (No. 2).

Returned from the Council without amendment.

### RESOLUTION—STATE FORESTS.

#### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had concurred in the Assembly's resolution.

### BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

#### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of two amendments made by the Council now considered.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Housing (for the Attorney General) in charge of the Bill.

No. 1—Clause 24, p. 6: Insert after the word "section" in line eight, the words—

"and sections three hundred and forty-eight to three hundred and sixty inclusive"

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I am indebted to the member for Kanowna and to the member for North-East Fremantle for having examined these amendments during a time when I was otherwise engaged and giving me their opinion on them. The clause which is sought to be amended deals with the keeping of a local register of shareholders by foreign companies. It provides that where there are no shareholders of such a company in Western Australia a register need not be kept, but if there are shareholders in Western Australia a register should be kept. This amendment rectifies a drafting error. Reference should have been made to other sections which are applicable, whereas reference was made to only one of those sections. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

No. 2—Clause 24, page 6: Add after the word "banking" in line 14, the words—

"and in respect of such a company the following provisions shall apply:—

(i) the local register shall be established within two calendar months from the date of commencement of the Companies Act Amendment Act, 1949.

(ii) for the purposes of this section and sections three hundred and forty-eight to three hundred and sixty inclusive of this Act the manager in this State of such company shall be deemed to be the agent of the company and the principal place of business of such company in this State shall be deemed to be the registered office."

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The second amendment of the Council—and I hope the members to whom I have referred will assist me if I omit to deal with any material aspect of the matter—has in contemplation that the obligation to keep such local register shall apply to corporations which were incorporated outside the State and which carry on inside the State the business of life insurance or banking. The amendment passed by this Chamber was designed to make it clear that foreign

corporations which carry on those two classes of business should be obliged to keep a local register when they have shareholders residing in this State.

The amendment of the Legislative Council is ancillary or supplementary to that made by the Bill proposed here. It proposes that such a company shall be allowed two calendar months in which to establish the register. I understand some companies previously considered that they were not bound by these provisions. As they will now be subject to them, the Legislative Council suggests giving them two months in which to establish a local register. Further, the amendment of the Legislative Council provides a machinery provision to the effect that the manager of any such corporation shall be deemed to be the agent of the company, and the principal place of business of the company in this State shall be deemed to be the registered place within the meaning of the Act. I am advised that the amendments do not affect the intention of the Bill, but are supplementary to it and are designed to clarify it, and so are acceptable. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

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

## **BILL—FOOTWEAR REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Council's Amendment.*

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

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

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

Clause 1:

(a) Insert before the word "This" in line one of the clause the figure "1" in brackets, thus (1)

(b) Add a subclause to stand as subclause (2) as follows:—

"(2) This Act shall come into operation on a date to be fixed by proclamation".

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no need to object to the amendment.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Do not stonewall at this hour.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Instead of the Bill having to be sent to the Governor for assent, it will be brought in by proclamation. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

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

### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

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

That the House at its rising adjourn till 3.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 10.34 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

Friday, 30th September, 1949.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

### QUESTIONS.

#### HOUSING.

(a) *As to Denaro Concrete Block Company.*

Hon. H. K. WATSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What members of the Housing Commission are directors of, or shareholders in, Denaro Concrete Block Manufacturing Co. (W.A.) Ltd.?

(2) How many building permits have been granted by the Housing Commission in which the Commission has, without the request of the applicant, made it a condition that the permit is granted subject to the building being constructed of Denaro bricks?