existing law. Permission can be given at the present time for 21 years and no longer. The object of the Bill is to make it possible for any person who desires to give a perpetual easement to do so, but only with the consent of the Governor-in-Council. I do not know of any difficulties that can arise. In London I believe there have been examples where these perpetual easements have caused disfigurement and have retarded the progress of building operations in the locality. That is what we wish to prevent. But with the qualification that is included in the Bill that the consent of the Governor-in-Council must be obtained, I think there is ample security.

Hon. J. Duffell: This will probably necessitate an amendment of some of the city by-laws.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No. Prima facie one would think that the owner of a property could give any perpetual easement if he chose to do so if he received what he thought was sufficient recompense. The 1902 Act provided that the easement should not be for more than 21 years. What the Bill seeks to do is that the easement may be given beyond the 21 years with the consent of the Governor-in-Council. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson debate adjourned.

BILL—BROOME HILL RACECOURSE.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.57] in moving the second reading said: This is a small Bill, and its object is similar to that of a couple of measures we put through last session. The sporting bodies of Broome Hill and the general public found themselves in an unfortunate position because their reserve for a racecourse is situated two miles from the township. It is held under a 99 years lease and is used exclusively for racecourse purposes. Not only is the reserve a long way from the township, but it is very uneven and low lying. In fact, portions of it become a quagmire in winter and thus it is unsuitable for cricket and football. A general meeting of all the sporting bodies in the locality was held, and it was decided to ask for the freehold of this area, reserve 4568. The freehold is desired with power to sell, provided that the proceeds shall be devoted to the purchase of 63 acres of freehold situated half a mile from the township, which block will be improved and made suitable for all sporting purposes. The reserve will be sold for about 35s. per acre and the 63 acres closer to the town will cost £3 per acre, but as the other area is larger, there will be a small difference, a matter of a couple of hundred pounds, and that will be devoted to the improvement of the new ground. This new ground is to be vested in the Broome Hill Road Board. The Broome Hill Race Club and all the sporting bodies support the proposition. We did practically the same thing last session for Narrogin and Wickepin. It is entirely desirable to give these people the facilities they seek. I move—

That the Bill be now-read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 6.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 7th September, 1922.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION.

Mr. SPEAKER [4.32]: I have to inform hon. members that in company with the Colonial Secretary I waited on the Lieutenant Governor and Administrator and presented the Address-in-reply. His Excellency was pleased to reply as follows:—

> Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly: I thank you for your Address-in-reply to my Speech with which I opened Parliament, and for your expressions of loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign. (Signed) R. F. McMillan, Lieutenant Governor, Administrator.

QUESTION—NAURU ISLAND PHOSPHATE.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Has his attention been drawn to a paragraph which appeared in the "Auckland Weekly News" of 17th August, 1922, which reads as follows: "Phosphates from Nauru. Reduction in price. 'I am glad to be able to state that the phosphate commissioners have advised the Government that they are now in a position to further reduce the price of phosphate rock from Nauru and Ocean Islands,' said the Hon. W. Nosworthy, Minister for Agriculture, in the House on Tuesday. 'This will enable the c.i.f. price at the ports of Auckland, Wellington, Lyttleton, Dunedin, and Bluff to be reduced by 6s. 3d. per ton, the new price being £2 12s. 3d. This reduction will take effect at once, and with the incoming of cargoes of this lower priced raw material a fall in the cost of manufactured fertilisers to farmers may be looked for—a very good thing for everybody concerned and particularly for the producers who must have manures and in these hard times need to get them at as reasonable a cost as possible. It is interesting to note that the cost of raw material from Nauru and Ocean Islands has been brought down from £4 5s. in the beginning of last year to this present figure of £2 12s. 3d.' The Minister added that the Government would see that the reduction outlined was passed on to the consumer. They had got the benefit of all previous reductions because the Government kept very keen eyes on that phase of the question"? 2, If necessary and possible, will he take steps to bring about the same conditions that appertain to New Zealand?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, No. 2, Yes; it is pointed out that the price of local superphosphates has already been reduced 14s. per ton.

QUESTION—MURPHY, F., RETIREMENT.

Mr. RICHARDSON (for Mr. MacCallum Smith) asked the Colonial Secretary: Has he any objection to the personal file and papers in connection with the retirement of F. Murphy of the State Children Department being laid on the Table?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: No.

QUESTION—FREMANTLE RAILWAY BRIDGE.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Minister for Works: Is it the intention of the Government when constructing the new railway and road bridge at Fremantle to have the work carried out by local labour?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: It has not yet been decided to proceed with this work. Every consideration will be given to local conditions and as to the most economical methods of carrying out the proposition.

QUESTIONS (3)—RAILWAYS, NARROGIN-DWARDA LINE.

Advisory Board's Inspection.

Mr. JOHNSTON asked the Premier: 1, Did the Railway Advisory Board inspect the district between Narrogin and Dwarda along the surveyed and authorised route of the Narrogin-Dwarda railway before writing their report of the 15th March, 1921? 2, Was the reason that the board did not inspect that locality because they regarded the Narrogin-Dwarda railway question definitely settled by Act of Parliament? 3, Did the board so advise settlers from the Narrogin-Dwarda district who waited on them on the subject? 4, Did the board intend their report of the 15th March, 1921, to prejudice the construction of (a) the Narrogin-Dwarda railway, (b) the other railways recommended by the board in their report of 13th July, 1911, namely, the Narrogin-Armadale railway and Brookton connection? 5, If so, why did they not say so in their report of 15th March, 1921?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, No. The board inspected the Hotham Valley in response to a request for railway facilities from the settlers in that locality. 3, No. 4, The board considered only the request mentioned in No. 2. 5, Answered by No. 4.

Advisory Board's Report.

Mr. JOHNSTON asked the Premier: As he promised to lay the files respecting the Narrogin-Dwarda railway on the Table, will he so deal with the file containing the original of the Advisory Board's reports of the 15th March, 1921, and 13th July, 1911, the latter of which recommends this railway and its extension to Armadale?

The PREMIER replied: Yes.

Piawaning Northward Extension.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON asked the Premier: On what date does he purpose to commence the construction of the Piawaning Northward railway extension, already authorised?

The PREMIER replied: It is impossible to fix a date at present, as the supply of rails governs the situation.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Mullany, leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Teesdale (Roebourne) on the ground of urgent public business.

BILL—PEARLING ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Colonial Secretary and read a first time.

MOTION—OIL PROSPECTING.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [4.41]: I move—

> That in order to encourage prospecting for mineral oil, this House is of opinion that the Minister for Mines, in pursuance of the powers conferred upon him by Section 7 of "The Mining Act Amendment Act, 1920," should cancel all prospecting licenses which are not being efficiently worked, and that in future no prospecting license shall be granted for an area greater than 1,000 square miles.

The Leader of the Opposition last week moved, and the House carried, a motion for the laying of certain papers on the Table. I should like to have seen those papers. The Minister for Mines met me 10 minutes ago in the corridor and told me I could look at them. I am not prepared to look at that great pile of papers in 10 minutes. When the House carries a motion, the Minister concerned should obey the House. There has been ample time to lay those papers on the Table.

Hon. P. Collier: They should have been there on Tuesday.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: There is no excuse whatever for the delay. I am compelled to assume that the Minister did not desire that I should peruse the papers. To suggest, 10 minutes before the House sits, that I might see them, is ridiculous. However, I am not particularly worried about those papers. It is with a desire to promote prospecting for oil in Western Australia that I move the motion. I have spoken to the Minister, have tried to interview him, but I could not get him to make one single straight-forward statement as to what he was doing on this important question. It is highly important to Western Australia, but the Minister would not give me a single definite reply. If the Minister can go on bluffing——

Hon. P. Collier: And defying the House.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: And defying the House, I am compelled to ask hon. members to direct him as to what he shall do. I am not moving this motion in any antagonistic spirit towards the Minister or the Government, but this House should be supreme. I ask hon. members to support the motion, which is a direction to the Minister for Mines. I feel, if it were carried and acted upon, it would benefit the State and give justice to many of our best and latest pioneers. I have no desire to deprive anybody who is legitimately working if the rights which have been granted to him by the Government. From the lithograph hanging on the wall, it will be seen that every inch of Western Australia has been marked out as oil prospecting licenses. With the State marked out in this way it is possible to prevent the best of our prospectors, the men who are most likely to find oil, from engaging in the attempt to discover it. I am no geologist, but would give the House some idea of the difficulties of prospecting for oil. It is thought by many people that mineral oil is something that occurs, like gold or tin. That is not correct. The theory of oil is that it comes, in the first place, from animal or vegetable matter, and possibly both. Some people think its basic origin is fish. It is thought that some eruption occurred at some time which caused all these particles to be covered over. When the process of distillation took place these particles formed into oil. Then came the earth pressure and the water pressure, which have forced the oil through the strata and rocks of the country until it has eventually found a reservoir in porous stone. Oil always goes ahead of water. It is lighter than water and comes to the top of it. In talking of these coverings, we must remember that oil has been forced through the rocks and the strata until it has reached a reservoir which has an impervious barrier, which will not allow it to go any further, and there great presssure is placed upon it. We read of anticlines and synclines, of symmetric anticlines, and so on. These are surface formations in the country known by these names. When one is looking for oil one looks for something of this nature. There are many things one knows in regard to rocks without necessarily being a geologist. We have seen strata lying this way and that way, and from the stata we know the lay of the country. The syncline is the formation where the country has been flat. There is oil in country of that nature, and a folding of the country has followed through the earth being pushed up; and where it is pushed up we find the anticlines. The place to bore for oil is at the top of such an anticline. A syncline is the reverse, but still the boring occurs on the dome of the syncline. These are the things men have to prospect for. There are indications of oil such as seepages. A seepage is another word for a leakage. Some of us may have seen a mud spring. A seepage would be something like one of these, but it would contain some oil. Then we have certain shales and carboniferous limestone. These contain a trace of oil, which proves that oil was once there. Geologists know that the bitumen which has been found on the Okes-Durack's license, shows that there was once oil there to a greater or lesser extent. In America some people are under the impression that salt water in a well is an indication of oil. In Australia we have so much salt water that we can cut that out. These, then, are the indications of oil. As I have indicated, an anticline is a formation which comes to an apex, and this may be 10 miles in extent each way. We can imagine the careful calculations that are required on the part of the geologist in order to find out where the apex of such a formation is. Messrs. Blatchford, Talbot, and Rowe have been on Freney's area at Mount Wynne for the last six months, but they have not yet found the right place in which to bore for oil. The part of Freney's area on which these men are working is infinitesimal compared with the great amount of country the Minister has granted to that company. We have heard a great deal about Bremer Bay. Reasonably good prospectors

have been looking at the Bremer Bay country for some years. It is only a small patch. Our geologists say that oil is geologically possible there. Prospecting has been done, and we have read what the "Call" and other publications have had to say. To-day the Bremer Bay shares are up in price, and we have an oil man here who says there is oil there, but that boring has been done in the wrong place. This serves to show the difficulty confronting the prospector for oil. If a man is prospecting for oil he must concentrate all his labour upon a reasonably small patch of country. That is demonstrated by Bremer Bay and by the State geologists who are now working for the Freney Company. They have to concentrate on a small area. I am moving this motion because the Government have allowed people to take up areas that are large enough for 50 or 100 geologists, and to lock them up against all other pioneers or prospectors. I regret the Minister for Mines has not time to be present this afternoon. I do not think that greatly matters, because he never pays attention to his business until, I suppose, he is drawing his salary.

The Premier: That is not fair.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: It is fair. The Minister should be here. The only time he ever attends to his business is when he is signing up for his cheque.

The Premier: You have no right to say that.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Why is he not here? There are indications of oil in Western Australia. These may be found at the bottom of a ravine, on a hillside, on the top of a mountain, or under the tides. Those great rushing tides where the water recedes for miles may reveal indications of oil in the sands that are laid bare. Those who are holding up this country are preventing others from prospecting for oil. We find that Mr. Freney, who by the way was a commercial traveller, holds about 100,000 square miles. If we read Mr. Eastman's report on his exploration trip to Napier-Broome Bay, we will get an idea of the country held by Mr. Freney. The same gentleman also holds country away flown south of the Fitzroy River, where he is carrying on his operations. I do not desire for one moment to interfere with him there, but Mr. Freney is not competent to prospect in that northern country which he holds. We only want to read the reports to know that this cannot be done. We find right through that all the mineral discoveries have been made, not by gelogists, nor by commercial travellers or lawyers, but by those men who are in the bush. Ballarat was found by a stockman, and Broken Hill was found by a stock hand.

Hon. P. Collier: Coolgardie was found by a prospector.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Yes, but I am pointing out that these finds have been made mostly by station hands, well sinkers, and men of that class. In the case of oil, one find at Kimberley was made by a man named Price, a well sinker and fencer, and another by Okes, a stockman. We find in the north that there are thousands of these people, and the point I wish to make is that they are cut out. In Freney's case we find that Freney sees Price and others and then applies for a license to prospect. Freney holds another 17,000 square miles of country, and any man coming along and finding indications of oil must go to Freney. Take the case of O'Connor. He found what he thought to be indications of oil and as there was not a man of Freney's within 200 or 300 miles of that locality, he applied for the forfeiture of it. The Minister said there was no justification for the forfeiture. Freney tendered evidence that he had a man working for him and that man who said in evidence that he was working for Freney is a well known beach comber. I am not aware whether hon. member know what a beach-comber is. He is a man who owns a boat and picks up beche-de-mer and at low spring tide goes out on the reefs and picks up pearl shell. He is also called a dry-sheller. Freney brought this man along to give evidence to the effect that he was working for him, and the Minister accepted that evidence as proof that Freney had actually worked the country. Within a month of that time, Freney sold that particular area for £3,000 cash and 25,000 shares in a 100,000 share proposition. Freney takes the cash and a quarter tribute in connection with anything that can be found. Is it proper that we should give this man the right to make tribute on people like those I have described?

Hon. P. Collier: It is not only not right, it is scandalous. They are all farming the country in that way.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That beach-comber—I am now speaking with knowledge—never worked for Freney at all. He got a quid or two to give evidence, and the Minister, who has not the time to listen to us in this House, accepts the evidence as proof of sufficient work having been done. Another case was referred to in the papers just before the newspaper strike occurred. A person found an indication of oil in the country held by Freney. Freney pays about £10 a year for this country, and it was published that he would not give the man who found those indications any concession at all. This man could go there and bore if he liked, but there was no concession for him unless he produced a certain number of gallons of oil. Freney and Okes-Durack are a combine, and I will show the House what they hold by paying practically nothing, and that they take tribute from any prospector who goes through that country. I have already said that the potential prospector, the man who is likely to find minerals or oil, is the man who is in the country now, and not the geologist nor the commercial traveller. I wish to refer to another area, one that affects me, because it is in my electorate—20H. In this 20H there are 79,000 square miles. It includes all the inhabited part of my electorate and most of the inhabited part of the electorate of

Roebourne. The area is almost as big as the State of Victoria and it is held by that fine old pioneer and prospector, Mr. Le Mesurier, of St. George's-terrace, Perth. In that country there are 1,000 potential prospectors, but nobody can touch anything in regard to oil without paying tribute to Le Mesurier. I repeat, it is a pity the Minister for Mines is not here. So far as I can learn from travelling through that district—I was there quite recently—I do not know whether Le Mesurier himself is paying the wages, but I understand one man is employed and it is alleged—I do not know whether the allegation is correct—that this man is a geologist. His name is Kneebone. He is the only individual employed to deal with this 79,000 square miles of country. The 1,000 prospectors who are in that area are absolutely barred from touching anything in the way of oil.

Mr. Richardson: One man has the lot.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Le Mesurier and Neaves hold the lot for £5 a year. I am aware of four different parties who are prepared to spend their money and time looking for oil in that territory. But Le Mesurier comes along and claims tribute. I am speaking seriously, and I want hon. members to support me.

Mr. Richardson: What is Le Mesurier doing?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Everyone in the street is talking about it.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I would like hon. members to say to the Minister for Mines that he must give the people who are in those districts the right to look for oil if they want that right. The prospectors who are in the north are the pioneers of this country and they are the best people we have in Western Australia, and if they should discover indications of oil, the reward should go to them and not to Le Mesurier, who pays only £5 a year for an area of country which is as big as Victoria. I have tried to get a decision from the Minister for Mines, and I have asked him to tell me what he would deem to be efficient work, but he will not give me any kind of answer. Under the Act the Minister is supreme.

Hon. P. Collier: That is a mistake which we made.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The mistake we made was in the Minister.

Hon. P. Collier: That is right.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Section 7 of the Mining Act Amendment Act which we passed in 1920 reads—

> The licensee shall within 30 days, or such further time as the Minister may in his discretion allow, after the grant of the license, commence and thereafter continue to search for mineral oil upon the land held under license. (2) If at any time during the currency of a license complaint is made to the Minister, or he has cause to believe that a licensee has not complied with Subsection (1) of this section, or has not made or is not making reasonable endeavours to search for mineral oil upon the land, he may direct a warden or resident magistrate to call upon the licensee to show cause why his license should not be cancelled. (3) The warden or resident magistrate shall thereupon give at least 14 days' notice to the licensee to show cause why his license should not be cancelled, and, having heard the case in open court, shall forward the evidence to the Minister, who if satisfied that it is just to do so may cancel the license.

I would point out to members representing mining constituencies, the difference between this provision and that contained in the Mining Act. Under the latter measure, the warden hears the evidence and makes a recommendation. In this instance, however, the warden hears the evidence and forwards it to the Minister and the Minister is absolutely supreme. Then, of course, in some cases the Minister will not give any indication of his decision. We know, however, that he has turned down such a case as that of Freney's northern proposition. I claim it is the duty of this House to instruct the Minister that he must give attention to genuine applications.

Hon. P. Collier: The same thing has happened to the Australian Petroleum Oil Company.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I ask the House to instruct the Minister that these people shall not be allowed to hold up country against the interests of other people of the State.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

MOTION—TRAFFIC REGULATION No. 22.

To disallow.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [5.18]: I move—

> That Regulation 22 of the Traffic Regulations, Additions, and Amendments under the Traffic Act, 1919, as amended by amending Act of 1922, and laid upon the Table of this House on the 15th day of August, 1922, be disallowed.

It will be within the recollection of hon. members that when the Traffic Act Amendment Act was under discussion last session, a good deal of controversy took place in this Chamber with reference to the distinguishing or identifying marks, or number plates that have to be used by motor cars licensed to carry passengers. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) moved an amendment to the clause dealing with this matter reading as follows:—

> That at the end of paragraph (b) the following words be inserted: "Provided that all vehicles licensed for the carriage of passengers shall have prescribed the same distinguishing colours and characters."

The House carried that amendment and I intend to ask the House to stand by that decision. For no reason that I can understand,

there has been an alteration. It is true that that amendment was, to use a vulgarism, "knocked out" in another place. That was done in consequence of what is alleged to have been misrepresentation made to the delegate from the Taxi Owners' Association who came to the Legislative Council and was interviewed by Mr. Ewing. Mr. Ewing led that delegate to believe that if the amendment were carried in the Upper House, it would place too much power in the hands of the Minister for Works.

The Minister for Works: That would be impossible.

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not know about that. Mr. Cornell, M.L.C., who was interested in the matter on behalf of the taxi owners, had advised them to send a returned soldier to the Legislative Council, believing in the virtue of the returned soldier's badge to get, more or less, what was wanted. Consequently, a returned soldier was sent up, but he was unfamiliar with the procedure of the Legislative Council or the process involved in making a Bill become an Act of Parliament. He was, therefore, induced by Mr. Ewing not to insist upon that amendment. The amendment was rejected without argument or debate in that Chamber. It was dropped as though no one wanted it. Such a course was strictly against the wishes of the Taxi Owners' Association. They have been trying ever since to insist upon the rights expressed at the time of the debate in this Chamber by the Minister for Works himself.

The Minister for Works: I thought I made my views very clear.

Hon. T. WALKER: I thought so, too, and I will quote the Minister's words as they appear in "Hansard." I wish to give him credit for his views.

The Minister for Works: I must have had some reason for expressing myself like that.

Hon. T. WALKER: Of course, there must be a cause for every action.

Hon. P. Collier: Whether justifiable or not.

Hon. T. WALKER: That is so.

Hon. P. Collier: The cause might arise from idiosyncrasies.

Hon. T. WALKER: It might. However, the Minister said—

> I am not seeking any extraordinary power. All I wish to do is to reconcile the difference which exists to-day, and which from my point of view is due to snobbery.

Those are the exact words the Minister used. He said it was "due to snobbery."

Hon. P. Collier: That was in his democratic days.

The Minister for Works: I believe someone called me to order.

Hon. T. WALKER: In any case, the words were quite right. The Minister continued—

> There are certain people who like to assume an affluence of position higher than they have attained, and they think that if they are having a wedding or a funeral and have a car at their door, it looks better if it has the private mark and may lead some unthinking people to believe that they own a car.

The Minister for Works: That is what I call snobbishness.

Hon. T. WALKER: Exactly. Continuing, the Minister said—

> The taxi cars have a certain plate and the garage cars carry a plate similar to that used on private cars. The taxi people objected to the word "hire" being displayed on their plates and went to the Supreme Court and got a verdict, and so we expunged the word "hire." Their next grievance, and they were influentially supported——

Mr. Mann: They were entitled to be supported, too.

> The Minister for Works: Their next grievance was that private garages, having a clientele who could ring up, had an advantage over the man on the rank, because the private garage cars had a label similar to the private cars. We tried to remedy that, and we got the garages up against us. Now we want to do something to reconcile these differences and prevent trouble. Therefore, I say that both should carry the same class of label.

That is all I need quote from the Minister because the rest of his speech does not vary from that contention that they should "carry the same class of label." The old Act provided that there should be a certain class of license and Clause 6 of that Act, which would have been amended but which was eventually not altered, provided for a passenger vehicle license as required for a vehicle if carrying passengers for hire. There was one class of license for those vehicles which ply for hire and only one, whether the motor be housed in a garage or occupied a place on a stand in a public street.

The Minister for Works: You know the Supreme Court forced us to alter the labels.

Hon. T. WALKER: No. All the Supreme Court did was to compel the taking down of the sign, "for hire." I am speaking of the licenses, not the plates. Only one license is provided for the vehicle plying for hire, no matter where it is housed. All are on the same level. In the administration of the Traffic Act and the amending legislation, it has been sought to legislate in favour of a class, in favour of the garage man. When we have regulations laid upon the Table of the House and they are not objected to, those regulations have the force of law and have to be read as part of the Act.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We are getting too many regulations.

Hon. T. WALKER: The department have framed regulations under the Act, notwithstanding what the Minister said, and I am asking the House to veto the regulation in question, No. 22, which reads as follows:—

> Paragraph 6 is amended by deleting from subparagraph (b), the following words: "Vehicles plying for hire to also

have the word 'hire' painted above identification letters and numbers in 2in. letters'' and inserting in lieu thereof——

This is the alteration that is proposed and to which I take exception—

''Providing that when motor vehicles are kept in any garage approved by the licensing authority, and are not plying for hire on any public stand or on any road or public place, the licensing authority may at their discretion issue identification plates as issued for private motor vehicles as specified in sub-paragraph (a).''

It is to these words that I object. I object to getting over the expressed will of this House by way of regulation.

The Minister for Works: It is not intended in that way.

Hon. T. WALKER: I do not know what was intended, but it is there.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is the law.

Hon. T. WALKER: That is the proposal which is before the House. If a man is compelled, by virtue of his position or choice, to stand for hire, waiting until he is rung up or waiting until he is hired by someone in the street, there can be but one identification plate, whereas the man who is rich enough to have his cars wait under shelter for hire might be given an identification plate on all fours with the identification plate carried by a private car. That was absolutely condemned by the Minister for Works, by the Colonial Secretary of the day, by the member for Perth and others.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Hon. P. Collier: And by this House.

Hon. T. WALKER: Yes. In spite of that resolution, we have this regulation.

Mr. Pickering: It was called snobbery.

Hon. T. WALKER: The Minister for Works called it snobbery.

Mr. J. Thomson: Who was responsible, the Minister?

The Minister for Works: Not for the snobbery.

Hon. P. Collier: For what you described as snobbery.

Hon. T. WALKER: The Minister did not really frame the regulation, but he accepts responsibility for it. It is due to his magnanimity rather than his authorship. His officer has framed it, and he has allowed it to come to Parliament. A great injustice will be done in consequence to the owners of cars upon the stands.

Mr. Pickering: Has there been any solicitation for the alteration suggested?

Hon. T. WALKER: There have been a lot of meetings, talks and correspondence with the department, but the fact remains that the taxi-owners are singled out. They are obliged to carry a specific class of sign. They cannot pose as private car owners. The Metropolitan Taxi Owners' Association have communicated this to the Minister—

The association's claim is as follows:—

The department compelled the owners of the motor cars complained of to take out exactly the same set of licenses as the members of this association take out, namely (1) a vehicle license, (2) a motor driver's license, (3) a passenger vehicle license, (4) a conductor's license (authority to collect fares). But it issues to them the identification tablet prescribed for motor vehicles used for private purposes.

That is the complaint.

An identification tablet or number plate is the visible representation on the car of the number and class of license in the owner's pocket.

The tablet of a garage car as good as proclaims that the car is licensed by a private owner, whereas it is for hire just as much as the car of the man who stands in St. George's terrace. Why should a man who is able to stand his car a little off the street in a well advertised building connected by telephone and wait there for hire, be permitted to assume the plutocratic aggrandisement of a private owner, or, rather, to transfer that to his customers? This regulation gives him an advantage. It is against every sound principle of democratic government to give one section of the community an advantage over another section. The law should everlastingly seek to give the same opportunities, rights and privileges to all in a given calling and on a given plane. There should be no favouritism; there could be no worse blemish to the law than favouritism. Yet apparently it has been shown to the owners of cars sheltered in garages. I am asking that this distinction be removed and that we adhere to our previous resolution. The House should not go back upon its decision. No one knows better than the Minister for Works the danger of such a step. We cannot be see-sawing all the time, or going from one side to the other at the slightest breath. We must have some solid and fixed rule on which to work, and nothing could be sounder than the principle of strict equality in the administration of the law. The law must not be a respect of persons; yet it will be if we allow the regulation to stand.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [5.39]: I certainly cannot complain of the speech of the hon. member who has placed this motion before the House, nor do I seek to make any excuse for the action we have taken. I propose to give the House the reasons why the action has been taken, and it will be for the House to say whether those reasons are justified or not. To the words I used in the previous debate, I still adhere. I still hold the same view. A person who attempts to pass off as his own some fancy distinction not his own is guilty of snobbery. I was taken to task by the hon. member who, I believe, is connected in business with the member for Coolgardie, because he did not consider it snobbery that a man with a hire car at his door should wish his neighbours to believe otherwise. The only disgrace there could be

in having a hire car would be in not paying for it. Otherwise what would it matter?

Mr. Lambert: That would be a misfortune, would it not?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This question has created a lot of trouble ever since the Traffic Act came into operation. In going carefully into the matter with the different officers, including the police, to decide upon the type of label to be used, it was thought that for the purpose of keeping a closer grip on the traffic, there should be different coloured labels. For one class we prescribed a black ground with white letters, and for another class a white ground with black letters. This was the desire of the police, so that in the event of any accident occurring and the number of the car not being ascertainable, the eye could detect the character of the label at a very much greater distance than the number could be discerned. Consequently, this would cut down to probably one half the number of cars in which it would be necessary to search for the delinquent.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There could not be much objection to that.

Hon. T. Walker: There could not be an objection to discriminating between private and hire cars.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We also desired that the word "hire" should appear upon the plates of any vehicle which was to be hired. It made no difference whether it was a vegetable cart, a jinker, or a motor car, if it was plying for hire it would be rather an advantage to let people know it was available for their use. For some reason or other, some people would not have that. A case was taken to the Supreme Court and we were ordered to remove the word "hire." We had the word cut off. The next thing that happened was that the people on the taxi ranks complained that those having garages enjoyed an advantage, in that the garage cars carried a label which might cause them to be mistaken for privately-owned cars. That was my view too, and I still hold that view. It might seem paradoxical but I shall explain it. Both these classes should use the same label.

Hon. T. Walker: As they have the same license.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not worry about that; that is a reason for a lawyer to consider. Both classes of owner are trying to earn a living by a similar course of action, and I see no reason why there should be a distinction. On the 9th November of last year certain persons waited upon me in the interests of the garages. They pointed out various things about the difference of labels, and said that if a uniform tablet were insisted upon, they were afraid it would interfere with their trade very considerably. I told them I would make inquiries regarding the practice in the other States and give the matter further consideration. We made inquiries in the Eastern States, and I have here the results of our inquiries. I hope the House will not think I am overburdening the question, but I am anxious that this should be on record, for whatever the result of the debate may be I am not sanguine of its proving final. Both parties concerned in the matter are too pertinacious. The Chief Commissioner of Police in Melbourne said that his department issue small number plates, 4 inches by 3 inches, to be placed in front of a motor car, saying that the vehicle is licensed to carry so many persons. Thus the Victorian plate shows not only that the motor is for hire, but how many it may carry.

Mr. Mann: But that plate is removed when the car leaves the rank.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is making a statement which, so far as I know, is not correct. In Tasmania the car for hire is required to carry a plate at the rear, showing the proprietor's name and the number of passengers the vehicle is licensed to carry. South Australia makes no distinction. Neither is distinction made in Queensland, except as regards what are called "licensed omnibuses." In New South Wales motors for hire use the ordinary motor number plates, but they will shortly carry special plates to distinguish them from the private cars. That shows that in Australia the general opinion is that the car for hire should carry that which will tell the people it is for hire, but that there shall be no distinction between cars for hire from garages and cars for hire from the rank. In view of my present utterances, it may seem paradoxical that we should have put up the regulation which we now have. The explanation is that another place appointed a select committee to inquire into various matters connected with the Traffic Bill, which committee made certain recommendations. Those recommendations another place, I am pleased to be able to say, in its absolute wisdom rejected, turning down the committee's report. During the investigation, however, it was clearly understood from the committee, both by myself and by Mr. Sanderson of the Public Works Department, that the taxi-car owners and the garage owners had in some way or other indicated—we did not get it in writing—that they were agreed the then existing practice was to continue.

Hon. T. Walker: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: But that is what we understood. Let me read a minute which I placed on the file on the 16th January of this year, after the debate in Parliament—

> Under Secretary. The amended Traffic Act is now passed. The taxi-drivers and the garages are in one holy bond, and desire present conditions to obtain; and I agreed. So, next time complaints come along from either one or the other, we shall know how to attach value or otherwise to same.

Mr. Sanderson, the officer of the Public Works Department, and myself both understood this, and we have both acted on that understanding. It was an understanding

we got from the select committee of another place. We understood that the two contending bodies were agreed.

Hon. T. Walker: I informed you differently long ago.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes; but may I be allowed to say what I wish to say? I desire to explain why an action has been taken which is not on all fours with my utterances of November last. Circumstances sometimes come along necessitating an alteration of what has been decided upon. Had it not been for what I have already explained, we certainly would not have let the matter remain as it is. The very fact of our sending over to the other side to find out what was being done there, with a view to being enabled to decide whether we were on the right track or not, is an indication of what both the officers of the department and myself had in view.

Hon. P. Collier: It is an indication of your usual thoroughness.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know that; but I try to avoid trouble. The present position is that any private person owning a motor car gets a plate with white figures on a black ground. The garages also have that plate. The taxi-drivers on the ranks, however, have a white plate with black figures. Had we not understood what I have already explained, we could not have done otherwise than insist on both classes of persons who hire out motors having the same plate. In view of the expressions of opinion by Parliament, we could not have acted otherwise, as a matter of simple justice. However, having been led to understand——

Hon. T. Walker: Led to misunderstand.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Having been led to understand that the two parties had agreed to let the matter remain as it was, we had to act accordingly. I do not know that there is any further explanation I can give, but while I am addressing the House on the subject I may say that so far as I am able to judge, the officers of the Police Department and the local government officers of the Public Works Department have carried out the instructions which were given to them when this traffic business first became part of my responsibilities.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I can show you by-laws which are quite contrary to the decisions of this House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the hon. member shows me by-laws which are wrong, I will do my best to have the mistakes remedied. It is impossible for any Minister to know every detail of a measure like the Traffic Act. If he is supposed to do that, he should not have anything else to do. Similarly, as to the trading concerns no Minister can know every detail. He can only indicate a policy, and hope that it is carried out. Sometimes he discovers that it is not being carried out. However, I am satisfied that the officers of the Police and Public Works Departments had no idea but to try to make the conditions such that people could live under them decently, and without interference with their means of getting a living. When cases of harshness have been brought under my notice, and inquiry has proved the occurrence of harshness, the matter has been put right at once; and not grudgingly, but with a desire to give fairness and justice. I have now told the House exactly how matters stand, and it is for the House to say what it wishes done. If the House desires the regulations to be disallowed, then the necessary action will immediately be taken by the Public Works Department. But if hon. members think that this is going to settle the question, I think they are mistaken.

Hon. P. Collier: Why?

Hon. T. Walker: This will settle it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know it will not, because one side or the other will never be satisfied. If we make the plates uniform, the garages will be dissatisfied. The member for Kanowna (Hon. T. Walker) knows the law; but if he told me that it was impossible for these people to take the matter into court, I should, while respecting his sincerity, doubt his knowledge. Both sides to the dispute are as pertinacious as I am. I hope the belief of the House in this matter will prove well-founded.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.58]: I hope the House will disallow the regulation. There are two men plying a similar vehicle for hire, and both of them are under exactly similar conditions except that one uses the road or street, and the other the garage. The men using the road, more particularly for the convenience of strangers, are handicapped considerably in that they have a different kind of plate from that issued to the men who use the garage. No doubt there is a certain amount of snobbishness in the matter, as the Minister for Works says. Some people object to taking a motor off the rank, because the identification plate differs from that used by a garage motor. This matter was discussed very fully 12 months ago, with the result that the Minister agreed to a certain amendment made in the Bill at that time. I have no doubt that there is a misunderstanding in regard to the information which the Minister received from the select committee of another place; but there has never been any misunderstanding on the part of the Taxi-drivers' Association. The association were informed that there would be one identification plate for all the vehicles plying for hire. But the association were also informed that if the provision in question were in the Bill, it would give the Minister too much power. In fact, the select committee of the Legislative Council feared that the Minister would get too much power. I have before me the exact clause which was put in last year, and I cannot for the life of me see why anybody should be afraid that it would give too much power to the Minister. As I said just now, certain traffic regulations have been made, contrary to the wish of Par-

liament. During the passage of the Traffic Bill, Parliament repealed sub-paragraph (i) of the regulations under the Municipal Corporations Act, prohibiting processions in the streets. Parliament took that power away from the municipalities. It was agreed to by both Houses of Parliament. Yet, when the regulations came out, we found that they prescribed that not without the written consent of the local authority should any persons hold a procession.

Hon. T. Walker: That is ultra vires.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I rather think that under the Traffic Act the Minister has power to put back what Parliament had struck out. When we passed the Traffic Bill we left all questions of traffic on the footpaths to the municipalities. It is provided for in the traffic regulations, the Minister having power over the local authority. If Perth had a by-law to keep to the right, and the Government proclaimed a by-law to keep to the left, there would be some difficulty, because both parties have power to make by-laws. In my opinion the departmental officers who draft regulations should ascertain the views of Parliament. Then they would not run the risk of having their regulations disallowed. The position is that we are making too many laws by regulation, and so interfering with the intentions of Parliament. We are passing by regulation laws which would never be approved by Parliament.

Hon. P. Collier: The officials are legislating.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The regulations imposed on the community are much more stringent than Parliament would agree to. Last year this House agreed that the identification plates on garage motor cars and motor cars on the stand should be the same. I admit that, in striking out a provision from the Bill, a mistake may have been made in respect of taxi cars. We provided that while a taxi car was on the stand it should exhibit a plate bearing the legend "For hire," the plate to be removed as soon as the car was hired. That clause also was struck out. The Minister has differentiated as between the two cars. I do not think that should be allowed. If we mark the privately owned cars differently from the cars for hire, what more can be required? Why should the garage owner be under different conditions as against the man who has to stand on the rank? This by-law interferes with the living of the men on the rank, and should be disallowed.

[Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. MANN (Perth) [6.5]: I had occasion to interview the Minister on behalf of the taxi drivers last year to bring to his notice the disabilities under which those men alleged they were suffering. At the time the Minister apparently was sympathetic. Still, those men received no redress until the matter came before the House, when it was settled, apparently to their satisfaction. In another place a select committee was appointed to inquire into the question. The taxi drivers sent along to give evidence a returned soldier who had not previously been in touch with the question. That man alleges that the manner in which the questions were put to him caused him to make replies different from what he and his associates intended. In last year's debate it was suggested that the Victorian system ought to be adopted. Although the Minister waxed warm at the suggestion, I still think it was a wise one. The Victorian Act stipulates that every motor car shall be registered by the Chief Commissioner, who shall keep a register and assign an identifying number to every car so registered, irrespective of whether it is a private car or not. But the Victorian regulations compel the hire car to put up the "For hire" plate while on the stand. As soon as the car is engaged, that plate drops out of sight. Whether the feeling responsible for it be called snobbishness or by some other name, there is a great disadvantage in having to use an identification mark showing that the car is a hired car. Many people desire to have a car which is not necessarily known to be a hired car. To get such a car, they pass over the man on the rank and go to the garage. So severely is this sort of thing affecting the men on the rank that they are striving to get redress. I suggest that the Victorian system should be adopted. Let the cars all have the same coloured plate, the cars on the rank to exhibit the legend "For hire" while they are awaiting engagement.

The Minister for Works: Do you object to private cars having different plates from hired cars?

Mr. MANN: No, but I object to any disadvantage being imposed on those men who are endeavouring to earn a living on the ranks. One gets just as good a deal from them as from a garage. However, those men are not able to cater for the trade which requires a privately marked car. I suggest that we adopt the Victorian system.

Hon. T. Walker: You cannot do that now.

Mr. MANN: Well, I will support the motion.

Capt. CARTER (Leederville) [6.10]: I hope the motion will be carried. It is in the interests of those men, many of them returned soldiers, who have invested their little all in cars, but who cannot afford a garage. The present system of coloured plates, differentiating between private cars and cars for hire, should be adhered to. All cars for hire should carry plates of the one colour. There is snobbishness in the business undoubtedly, but I think it lies largely with those who are attempting to cater for the exclusive trade. We are here to legislate, not for an exclusive set of people, but for the majority; and the majority desire just the reverse of what is provided in the regula-

tion. A certain gentleman of the blow-in type arrived in Perth recently and made quite a splash. His name was freely mentioned in published social notes, and he was lionised by many people. Supposed to be immensely wealthy, he boasted three Hudson super-sixes. Presently, however, it was discovered that the cars belonged to a garage in Hay-street. Very likely he was materially assisted by the pretended ownership of gorgeous motor cars to pull off some of his nefarious schemes.

The Colonial Secretary: He was a garage owner at Subiaco.

Capt. CARTER: No, you have not the right man.

Hon. T. Walker: Evidently there are two such cases!

Capt. CARTER: These taxi owners who have put their little all into their business should be given every encouragement. They are under heavy disabilities at present because people who consider themselves exclusive can ring up and get from the garage a car which nobody will know has been hired. How frequently do we hear of a woman riding in a garage car and pretending that the car is the property of her husband.

Hon. P. Collier: Should we not be prepared to assist those people who are struggling to get into society in that way?

Capt. CARTER: I have not considered the matter in that light. To a man, the taxi drivers have declared that this sort of thing is seriously affecting their business and giving their competitors an unfair advantage.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. SIMONS (East Perth) [7.30]: I hope the House will carry the motion. Last session when we were discussing the operation of the Traffic Act, it was clearly understood that differentiation would be wiped out. Instead of that we find that the taxi-owners are branded with a special plate which proclaims the fact that their cars are used for hire purposes only. That was never the intention of the House. In November of last year when the differentiation was brought before the Premier, he replied by letter—

> I have to inform you that it is hoped to have the matter set in order at the end of the licensing year.

That is practically an assurance from the Government that a matter which was out of order at the time would be set in order at the end of the year. When the end of the licensing year arrived and the time for renewals came, it was found that the old objection had not only not been rectified, but was continued during the current year.

The Minister for Works: I explained that fully to the House. We were informed it was an arrangement between the two parties concerned that they wanted the old basis to continue.

Hon. T. Walker: You were misinformed.

Mr. SIMONS: The Government were misinformed.

The Minister for Works: It might be so, but that is the fact.

Mr. SIMONS: The gentleman who gave that assurance had no authority to speak on behalf of the Taxi Owners' Association.

The Minister for Works: It was the committee who held an inquiry.

Mr. SIMONS: Then they were misinformed. No authorised person could have given an assurance at that time. I have been closely in touch with the members of the Taxi Owners' Association for a year, and I know that there was never a feeling in their ranks which would admit of any differentiation whatever. In London where probably 500 times our volume of traffic is handled, there is no differentiation at all between the taxis plying for hire on the ranks and those starting their journey from the garages. The Minister for Works looks to the Old Country for guidance in connection with many of his Acts, and he could well look to London for guidance in the matter of traffic regulations.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna—in reply) [7.35]: I do not think it is necessary to reply to any of the remarks made, but I would like to put the Minister right in reference to the understanding. There was no understanding whatever on the part of the Taxi Owners' Association that this matter should be allowed to go forward as stated in the regulations. There was some invitation to the taxi owners to attend a meeting of the committee on which Mr. Cornell and Mr. Ewing were sitting, and it was put to the secretary, Mr. Keegan, by Mr. Cornell that if a returned soldier were sent, he might have more influence with the select committee. A returned soldier, Mr. Bushell, was sent, but he did not fully understand all the ins and outs of the question and he was assured by Mr. Ewing that if the taxi owners insisted on carrying the amendment passed by this House at the instance of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin), it would place too much power in the hands of the Minister, and that the Minister might abuse it.

Hon. P. Collier: They did not know the Minister.

Hon. T. WALKER: Taking Mr. Ewing's assurance that things would not be altered and that it would make no difference as to the identification plates if the amendment were dropped, the returned soldier allowed it to drop. That was taken as an understanding. The Taxi Owners' Association had no chance of getting a further say; they could not correct him. That is the explanation of the misunderstanding. It is clearly a misunderstanding and a misfortune. I know that the Minister has not changed his mind. Therefore I take it that members are practically unanimous on the question.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—COST OF LIVING.

To inquire by Royal Commission.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [7.40]: I move—

> That in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be appointed for the purpose of ascertaining what sum of money is necessary to allow a reasonable minimum standard of living, having due regard for the obligation entailed in the maintenance of an average family.

This motion relates to the perennial question of the cost of living which has been and is to-day a subject of infinite controversy. It is one that affects a very large section of the community, in fact an overwhelming majority of the men and women of this State whose wages are fixed by tribunals. It is a question which has agitated the industrial life of the Commonwealth most actively during the past 10 or 15 years, and I suppose that around the question of the cost of living hovers the other so-called question of industrial unrest. Therefore, it is one of those questions to which Parliament ought to devote its time and attention. The question of the cost of living has entered into the legislation of this country more particularly during the past 20 years. The wages of the workers of Australia have been fixed almost entirely during the past decade or two by arbitration courts, wages boards or other tribunals operating under legislative enactment. In the early part of the century, the question of investigating the cost of living with a view to assisting those courts and bodies to fix a basic wage became a live one. The matter assumed more definte proportions in 1907 in what is known throughout the Commonwealth as the Harvester judgment. Under the Tariff Act of 1906 it was decreed that manufacturers in Australia would be entitled to a certain measure of protection, provided they paid the men engaged in the industry a reasonable wage. It was known at the time as the new protection, and it was in pursuance of that Act that the question arose in 1907 as to whether the Act should apply to Hugh McKay, the manufacturer of harvesters and other agricultural implements. So the question came before Mr. Justice Higgins to decide whether or not Hugh McKay was paying a reasonable wage to the employees engaged in that industry. Mr. Justice Higgins made certain investigations, and as a result found that a wage of 7s. per day or £2 2s. per week of 48 hours was a reasonable wage at that particular time. Since then it has been considered as the basic wage.

Resolved: That motions be continued.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The wage fixed by Mr. Justice Higgins at that time has been taken as the standard of the basic wage by practically all wage fixing tribunals ever since, with a variation for the purchasing power of the sovereign as disclosed by the quarterly returns issued by the Commonwealth Statistician. True, arbitration courts, either State or Commonwealth, have not been absolutely bound to accept the basis laid down by the judge in the Harvester judgment, but they have almost without exception declined entirely to depart from it. In other words they have accepted that as the basis for awards both in the State and Commonwealth Arbitration Courts, and these have been based ever since upon the basic wage laid down on that occasion. It is necessary to consider the circumstances that existed at the time that award was made, and the circumstances surrounding the making of the award. It was the first inquiry of its kind that had been made in Australia. Necessarily, those who were associated with the inquiry were men who had had no previous experience. They were not skilled in the manner in which they are skilled to-day in the presentation of a case before the Arbitration Court. The men who appeared before the Court were lawyers. Without reflecting upon the profession in any way I think I may say that the lawyers who had had no previous experience of court work of this description would perhaps not have done so well as would the industrialist, the man who had had previous experience of union work. The investigation referred to men who were employed on the lowest rate of wages. It was a question at the time of whether 6s. a day was a reasonable minimum living wage to be paid to men engaged in that industry. The court was called upon to fix what it considered to be a fair wage for men who were on the lowest rung of the industrial ladder. The court had to find the lowest amount that a working man in those circumstances could be expected to subsist upon. The case was not elaborately got up. The only witnesses called were, I think, nine housewives, to give evidence regarding the cost of living, one butcher, and one house agent. A case would not be presented to-day in the manner in which that case was presented. No independent inquiry, except in so far as arbitration courts have inquired into the cost of living, has been held since, untrammelled by the judgment of Mr. Justice Higgins, until the appointment of the Basic Wage Commission by the Commonwealth Government, and that body made its investigations in 1919. Inasmuch as the findings of that Commission have not been adopted by those in authority it seems to me that the time has arrived when we, in this State, should make an independent investigation with reference to the cost of living, having regard to the circumstances and the standards which ought to prevail at present. The question of what is a reasonable standard of living for wage earners will vary from time to time. That which may have been considered a fair and reasonable standard 15 years ago, when the Harvester judgment was delivered, may not be considered by the general community as a fair and reasonable standard of living to-day. In respect to the standard of living and comfort that the worker ought to be able to enjoy our opinions change with the

changing years, just as they do upon all other subjects. It is most unfair that the workers of the present day should be practically tied down to a wage based upon a point of view that obtained some 15 years ago. The matter has been dealt with exhaustively by the Basic Wage Commission. That body comments upon the findings of Mr. Justice Higgins, and also upon the methods employed in that famous judgment. On page 8 of the Commission's report under the heading of "Previous History of the Subject," the Commission, after referring to the year 1906 when Mr. Justice O'Connor, who was then President of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, dealt with wage fixing, goes on to say—

> In the following year His Honour Mr. Justice Higgins, in what is known as the "Harvester Case" laid down as a living wage the sum of 7s. a day, and stated with regard to the standard of "fair and reasonable conditions of remuneration" under the Excise Tariff Act 1906 that he "could think of no other standard more appropriate than the normal needs of the average employee regarded as a human being living in a civilised community," and further alluded to the necessity for "a condition of frugal comfort estimated by current human standards." The wage so defined came to be known later on as the "basic wage," and in the intervening years this wage had been raised from time to time by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court according to the following process:—The amount of 7s. per day consisted of a rent of 7s. per week, an average expenditure amongst nine households of £1 5s. 5d. per week for food and groceries, and the balance 9s. 7d. was to cover clothing and miscellaneous requirements. Since 1912 it has been the practice of the Commonwealth Statistician to ascertain by such inquiries as were deemed suitable the fluctuations in the cost of rent, food and groceries all taken together. No such fluctuations were assessed in the case of clothing or of miscellaneous requirements. These inquiries of the Commonwealth Statistician were not designed for the purpose of fixing the basic wage or any wage, but they were utilised by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court (being the only means readily available for such a purpose) to make variations in the basic wage corresponding with variations in the cost of living. It was thus taken for granted, first, that the proportion of clothing and miscellaneous requirements to the total of the basic wage as fixed in the Harvester Case (about 23 per cent.) was the normal ratio for workers' households, and second, that the sections of expenditure in question, namely, clothing and miscellaneous requirements, fluctuated always pari passu with the cost of rent, food and groceries taken together, as ascertained by the Commonwealth Statistician.

It will thus be seen that the Commonwealth Statistician did not undertake the work of collecting statistics as to the cost of living in the various towns of Australia for the specific use of the Arbitration Court, or for that purpose at all. It may be that had it been intended to set up a department of Commonwealth Statisticians for the purpose of ascertaining the cost of living to be used in connection with fixing the basic wage, other and perhaps more careful methods would have been followed in order to more exactly ascertain the cost of commodities in the various towns over which it operated.

> The outstanding fact of that history is that neither the Commonwealth Arbitration Court nor any other Arbitration tribunal in the Commonwealth has ever conducted an inquiry into the cost of living untrammelled by dependence to a greater or less extent upon the decision in the Harvester Case.

That is the judgment of the Royal Commission. There has been no inquiry, although we know that in cases before the Commonwealth Arbitration Court and the various State Arbitration Courts an infinite amount of time and money have been expended to produce evidence as to the cost of living with the object of influencing the court in its decisions as to the wage that will be awarded. We know that the courts have in every case based their awards upon the judgment of 1907, merely taking into account the statisticians' figures as to the variation in the purchasing power of the sovereign.

Mr. Davies: Mr. Knibbs endeavoured to hold an inquiry with the assistance of the Trades Hall, but failed to come to a conclusion.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The courts have not pursued an independent course, and decided upon the evidence placed before them in the cases that have been dealt with by them. They have always fallen back upon the Harvester Judgment, and merely calculated on the basis of the statistician's figures as to the variation in the purchasing power of the sovereign. I want to deal with the Harvester judgment, because it has had such an extraordinary effect upon the millions of workers in Australia during the past 15 years since it was delivered. I wish to show that the Harvester judgment, allowing for the purchasing power of the sovereign 15 years ago, is not adequate to the needs and circumstances of the present time. If I can show that, then I shall have made out a case for independent inquiry in this State. Under the heading of "Analysis of the Harvester decision" the report says—

> It now becomes necessary to point out that while the Harvester case laid down the doctrine that a basic wage should be at least adequate to cover the cost of living according to reasonable standards, the decision in the case was given without that cost of living having been ascertained by evidence except to a partial extent. At

page 2 of the decision His Honour says:—"The Act left me free to inform my mind as best I could, and I was at full liberty to limit the evidence, or even to act without evidence." The whole of the material before His Honour in the pioneer days of the new system is set out in the following passage from page 5 to page 7 of the decision:—"I come now to consider the remuneration of the employees mentioned in this application. I propose to take unskilled labourers first. The standard wage—the wage paid to most of the labourers by the applicant—is 6s. per day of eight hours, with no extra allowance for overtime; but there is one man receiving only 5s. 6d. There is no constancy of employment, as the employer has to put a considerable number of men off in the intervals between the seasons. The seed-drill and plough season, I am told, is in the earlier part of the year, about April; but the busiest time is the harvester season, about August to November. But even if the employment were constant and uninterrupted, is a wage of 36s. per week fair and reasonable in view of the cost of living in Victoria? I have tried to ascertain the cost of living—the amount which has to be paid for food, shelter, clothing, for an average labourer with normal wants, and under normal conditions. Some very interesting evidence has been given by working men's wives and others; and the evidence has been absolutely undisputed. I allowed Mr. Schutt, the applicant's counsel, an opportunity to call evidence upon this subject even after his case had been closed; but, notwithstanding the fortnight or more allowed him for investigation, he admitted that he could produce no specific evidence in contradiction. He also admitted that the evidence given by a land agent, Mr. Aumont, as to rents, and by a butcher as to meat, could not be contradicted. There is no doubt that there has been, during the last year or two, a progressive rise in rents, and in the price of meat, and in the price of many of the modest requirements of the worker's household. The usual rent paid by a labourer as distinguished from an artisan, appears to be 7s.; and, taking the rent at 7s., the necessary average weekly expenditure for a labourer's home of about five persons would seem to be about £1 12s. 5d. The lists of expenditure submitted to me vary not only in amounts, but in basis of computation. But I have confined the figures to rent, groceries, bread, meat, milk, fuel, vegetables, and fruit; and the average of the list of nine housekeeping women is £1 12s. 5d. This expenditure does not cover—There are many items which Mr. Justice Higgins, in his judgment, did not take into account at all, but which are absolutely essential in the home of a worker, as in the home of every person.

This expenditure does not cover light (some of the lists omitted light), clothes, boots, furniture, utensils (being casual, not weekly expenditure), rates, life insurance, savings, accident or benefit societies, loss of employment, union pay, books and newspapers, tram and train fares, sewing machine, mangle, school requisites, amusements and holidays, intoxicating liquors, tobacco, sickness and death, domestic help, or any expenditure for unusual contingencies, religion, or charity.

That gives an idea of the fearful injustice which the wage-earners of the Commonwealth have suffered since this judgment was delivered. In fixing the basic wage of two guineas, not one of those items was taken into consideration at all. It can be readily understood how the workers have had to cut down the food standard allowed to them by the judge, in order to purchase for themselves the many items set out in that list, for which items no provision whatever was made by the judge at the time. He goes on to say—

> If the wages are 36s. per week, the amount left to pay for all these things is only 3s. 7d.; and the area is rather large for 3s. 7d. to cover—even in the case of total abstainers and non-smokers—the case of most of the men in question. One witness, the wife of one who was formerly a vatman in candle works, says that in the days when her husband was working at the vat at 36s. per week, she was unable to provide meat for him on about three days in the week. This inability to procure sustaining food—whatever kind may be selected—is certainly not conducive to the maintenance of the worker in industrial efficiency. Then, on looking at the rates ruling elsewhere, I find that the public bodies which do not aim at profit, but which are responsible to electors or others for economy, very generally pay 7s. The Metropolitan Board has 7s. for a minimum; the Melbourne City Council also. Of 17 municipal councils in Victoria, 13 pay 7s. as a minimum, and only two pay a man as low as 6s. 6d. The Woodworkers' Wages Board, 24th July, 1907, fixed 7s. In the agreement made in Adelaide between employers and employees, in this very industry the minimum is 7s. 6d. On the other hand, the rate in the Victorian railway workshops is 6s. 6d. But the Victorian Commissioners do, I presume, aim at a profit; and as we were told in the evidence, the officials keep their fingers on the pulse of external labour conditions, and endeavour to pay not more than the external trade minimum. My hesitation has been chiefly between 7s. and 7s. 6d.; but I put the minimum at 7s., as I do not think that I could refuse to declare an employer's remuneration to be fair and reasonable if I find him paying 7s. Under the circumstances, I cannot declare that the applicant's conditions of remuneration are fair and reasonable as to his labourers.

Then the Royal Commission's report proceeds—

The material thus available to His Honour was not challenged by the employer-applicant. It will now be pointed out how the specific finding of 7s. was reached, and how far the cost of living was ascertained and entered into that specific finding. It is clear that there was no concrete evidence that 7s. per day would in 1907 meet the cost of living, and that the only evidence as to that concrete figure being a reasonable remuneration was that public bodies "not aiming at profits but responsible for economy" were paying this wage, which was also that awarded by the Woodworkers' Board. Further, this rate of 7s. lies between the rate of 6s. 6d. in the Victorian Railway Workshops and an agreement made in Adelaide in the Harvester industry. So far as the cost of living was ascertained by evidence and entered into the wage then determined, it was limited to the amount of £1 12s. 5d., the average of the budgets of nine housewives for rent, food, and groceries combined. With regard to rent, the 7s. per week was apparently determined on the evidence of one land agent, Mr. Aumont, together, probably, with that of the housewives called, and it cannot be gathered from the judgment how many rooms a house at such rental contained, or in what other respects such a house afforded reasonable comfort for "a labourer's home of about five persons" for whom (vide page 6 of the judgment) the living wage was to be provided. With regard to food and groceries there was presumably evidence from the nine housewives examined that the amount of £1 5s. 5d. (left after deducting 7s. for rent from the average £1 12s. 5d. for rent with food and groceries) did afford a sufficient supply of food. But when the now recognised sections of the cost of living—clothing and miscellaneous requirements—came to be provided for, no evidence as to cost of living was taken in the Harvester case. It was evidently thought that if the wage fixed were 6s. per day—the amount then being paid by the applicant—the residuum of 3s. 7d. left after providing £1 12s. 5d. out of a weekly rate of 36s. would be sufficient for clothing and miscellaneous requirements, but the effect of the decision in favour of 7s. a day was that for clothing and miscellaneous requirements the residuum was 9s. 7d. instead of 3s. 7d. No evidence was given to determine whether or not 9s. 7d. would meet the cost of living in respect of the sections—clothing and miscellaneous requirements—but it may be inferred that the fact that employers who were public bodies paid 7s. a day was taken to suggest to His Honour's mind that that amount was enough to cover the total cost of living, and that, therefore, 9s. 7d. was sufficient for the unascertained items next enumerated. This amount of 9s. 7d. was deemed to cover light, clothes, boots, furniture, utensils (being casual, not weekly expenditure), rates, life assurance, savings, accident or benefit societies, loss of employment, union pay, books and newspapers, tram and train fares, fares, sewing machine, mangle, school requisites, amusements and holidays, intoxicating liquors, tobacco, sickness and death, domestic health, or any expenditure for unusual contingencies, religion, or charity.

It would need to be a very thrifty housewife who could carry on with an expenditure of 9s. 7d. per week to cover all the items indicated in that list.

Mr. Munsie: For five people, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, a man and his wife and three children.

Mrs. Cowan. They would not be able to get much liquor out of it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. Prohibition would be compulsory for a man so circumstanced. The report continues—

> The judgment in the Harvester case did not expressly state that the rent of 7s. per week was for houses in Sunshine (then a small suburb), about 8 miles from Melbourne, but this appears to have been the case from a statement of Mr. Justice Powers in the Public Service Clerical Association v. the Public Service Commissioner (1918) as follows:—"The original living wage of 7s. a day was fixed in 1907, on, I understand, nine household budgets of persons residing at Sunshine." In all subsequent adjustments of the basic wage, however, both in the Commonwealth sphere and by State arbitration tribunals, it has been assumed, because the Harvester judgment was delivered in Melbourne, that the rent of 7s. per week adopted in that judgment was the rent for a worker's house in Melbourne, not in Sunshine. But the Commonwealth Statistician's figures (published five years after the Harvester case) show that the rent of a four-roomed house in Melbourne in the year 1907 was 8s. 11d., nearly 2s. per week more than was laid down in the Harvester case.

So that if we go no further than the question of house rent, we find that the judge erred in the amount he allowed for rent in 1907, because the Commonwealth Statistician's own figures prove that the average rent at that time in Melbourne was not 7s. per week, but 8s. 11d. Now I shall show that not only Mr. Justice Higgins, but other judges who have presided in that court, have desired a further inquiry into the actual cost of living. I quote from statements made by some of the judges subsequent to that decision being given—

> The suggestion that the Harvester case, the foundation itself of all the decisions, should be re-opened, came from the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, as will appear from the following quotations:—In the storemen and packers' case (1916), Mr. Justice Powers said: "I certainly think that an inquiry should be made as soon as we get back to normal times to ascertain as nearly as possible what a fair living wage for a Commonwealth award should be,

based on the ordinary regimen of a working man and his family and on the cost of all the items taken into consideration; not on food and groceries only, supposed rightly or wrongly to be 40 per cent. of the expenditure. Rent, it is true, is included, but that, it is admitted, has been stationary for some time past. The estimated increase in cost of at least 40 per cent. of the supposed expenditure at the present time is based on the rise and fall of food and groceries, assuming that the regimen is the same in 1916 as in 1911. The Statistician informs me that it would be possible in normal times to ascertain what it does in fact cost an average working man and his wife and family of two or three to live in reasonable comfort in the Commonwealth, and if that inquiry was made it would be conducted on a different basis, although possibly unless the 1911 regimen is altered materially before the inquiry the results may prove the correctness of the mass units adopted in 1911, taking into consideration the decreased purchasing power of a sovereign." This suggestion was repeated in March of the following year by the president of the court, Mr. Justice Higgins (glass manufacturers' case, 1917): "Nor does any respondent in this case bring any evidence to show independently of the finding of 1907 and of the Statistician's estimate of the change, what is the cost of living at the present time. . . . An inquiry on this subject is eminently desirable, now that the finding of 1907 has stood for nearly 10 years, but I cannot force parties to an arbitration to undertake the labour of such an inquiry. I hope, however, that some party will exercise his undoubted right to challenge the figures as to the existing cost of living. The matter is one of extreme importance to the industries of the Commonwealth."

There is a very clear and emphatic expression of opinion from the same judge who was responsible for the Harvester judgment. In 1917, or 10 years later, he said that a fresh inquiry was essential. He wanted an inquiry, but, as he pointed out, he had no power to enforce any of the parties concerned to go to that expense. The Deputy President again referred to the President's recommendation in the Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's case when he said—

> I may say that I have previously recommended the appointment of a Commission to inquire into the question of a Federal living wage. . . . The President of this court in the glass manufacturers' case in March, 1917 . . . suggested a similar inquiry.

There is an expression of opinion by the Deputy President, Mr. Justice Powers, in which he, as did Mr. Justice Higgins, expressed his desire that a further inquiry should be held. Then the report proceeds—

> The invitation, extended to re-open the Harvester case was accepted by the Federated Carters' and Drivers' Union in their case, begun in April, 1917. During the hearing, the representative of the union submitted, in a written address, statements and arguments why the court should no longer derive its basic wage from the Harvester basic wage. The Deputy President of that court refused to re-open the matter upon the ground, amongst others, that it would involve his departing from the practice of the court since its inception, and His Honour suggested that the representative of the union should offer himself as a witness "when the Commission or board is appointed to make the much-needed inquiry into the cost of living."

There is the definite attitude taken up by the Deputy President of the Arbitration Court. Although the union went to a considerable amount of trouble and expense as well, in order to produce evidence which, it was hoped, would influence the President of the court to depart from the basis laid down in the Harvester case and to fix a new basis in the award independent of that standard, here we find the Deputy President absolutely refusing to do so! The report continues—

> Amongst other utterances of the President and Deputy President in the same sense was that of the Deputy President, Mr. Justice Powers, who, in 1918, spoke as follows:—
>
> At the close of the evidence the representative of the Acting Public Service Commissioner, the representative of the Employers' Federations of Victoria and New South Wales, and the representatives of the seven unions now before the court joined in urging that the Federal Government should appoint a Commission or some body to take evidence with a view to fixing a Federal living wage for a man, his wife, and family of three on a scientific and humane basis, or to authorise the Commonwealth Statistician to do so. The President of this court and I have on more than one occasion recommended that course to the Federal Government, because we know that men, although they obey awards, feel that they are not getting more than a wage on which they can exist, and because we were not satisfied that, in adopting the Statistician's tables of 1913, tables and percentages which admittedly were not obtained for the purpose of fixing a living wage, we were doing justice to those who applied to the court. The request of the Employers' Federations, of the employees, and of the Public Service Commissioner, and the facts which will be submitted to Parliament with the award of the case, will, I hope, show that the necessity for such an inquiry or Commission is urgent in the interests of the public—the Government—the employers, and the employees.

The Commission comment on this as follows:—

> It will thus be seen that the present inquiry was inaugurated in response to repeated requests by the President and Deputy President of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

So we find as a result of these repeated requests by the President of the court and the Deputy President, the Federal Government at last decided in 1919 to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the question of the basic wage. The Commission was duly appointed in 1919, the first meeting being held in December of that year. The Commission, as is known generally, visited every capital city in Australia. The Commission examined 796 witnesses and presented its report in November 1920, after an inquiry lasting for nearly 12 months, during which time, I think it is safe to say, a more thorough, complete and exhaustive inquiry was made into the question of the cost of living than has taken place in any other country in the world. The Chairman of the Royal Commission refused to accept that position unless he was given a definite promise by the Prime Minister that his findings would be given effect to. We all know what resulted. While the Commonwealth Government have declined to recognise the findings of that Commission, those findings stand today unchallenged. There has not been one line of that report and not one figure advanced by the Royal Commission that its opponents have been able to challenge. There can be no question, when we have regard to the talent ranged on the side of the employers, the money at their disposal and all the methods of investigation open to them to analyse the figures and arguments in a report of this description, that no opportunity would be missed if there happened to be a weak spot in the report upon which they could put their fingers. The fact remains that the report stands absolutely unchallenged regarding the whole of its findings and investigations, since it was made available in 1920. Although this is so, no effect has been given to the findings. The Commission set out in a summary the questions it was appointed to investigate. The Commission said—

> The main task of the Commission has been to ascertain definitely the cost of living according to reasonable standards of comfort for the typical family. The review of this matter, contained on pages 8 to 13, shows that this inquiry was suggested by the President and Deputy President of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court to put an end to doubt as to the adequacy of the basic wage, that court not having been able to conduct a completed inquiry of this kind. The history of the court's previous inquiries and decisions shows:—(a) That all decisions in the court have hinged upon the finding in the Harvester case, 1907. (b) That this finding was (no doubt, necessarily) the result of evidence upon the question of rent and food, but not of evidence in the case of clothing and miscellaneous requirements. In the sections of rent and food, the evidence was very circumscribed. (c) Subsequent decisions have assumed the sufficiency of the Harvester wage, and have purported to bring it up to date by applying to it the declarations of the Commonwealth Statistician based on the fluctuations in price of rent and food combined. (d) In the case of rent, subsequent decisions have wrongly assumed that the rent found in the Harvester case was the rent at the time in Melbourne, whereas it was that in Sunshine.

Thus we see that the Commission after 12 months' investigation, bring forward the following findings—

> The actual cost of living at the present time, according to reasonable standards of comfort, including all matters comprised in the ordinary expenditure of a household, for a man with a wife and three children under fourteen years of age, is in—
>
> Melbourne, £5 16s. 6d.; Sydney, £5 17s.; Brisbane, £5 6s. 2d.; Newcastle, £5 15s. 6d.; Adelaide, £5 16s. 1d.; Perth, £5 13s. 11d.; Hobart, £5 16s. 11d.

The Commission show how that amount of £5 13s. 11d. for Perth is made up. I propose to quote those figures so that hon. members will have an opportunity of judging from their own experience of the cost of living and housekeeping, whether any one of those items appear to be excessive.

Mr. Mann: Are those figures you have quoted being given effect to in the Eastern States?

Mr. McCallum: They have not been given effect to yet.

Mr. Munsie: Except by Judge McCawley in Queensland.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The findings of the Commission have never been given effect to, although I think the investigation cost something over £10,000, and although the Prime Minister gave a pledge to the people of Australia from the public platform at the time, that the findings would be accepted and honoured. We find they have been repudiated.

Mr. Marshall: He gave Piddington that pledge before he would take the position as Chairman.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is so.

Mr. Wilson: That was before the election.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This is how the Commission made up the figure for Perth, and I want to repeat that I hope members will consider whether each of them is not well within the mark. The items are as follows:—

> Rent, 19s.; clothing, for a man, 7s. 9d., for a woman, 10s. 2d.——

I always thought it cost more to clothe a woman!

Mrs. Cowan interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps this is responsible for so many men wandering around the country and not married yet. The other details include the following—

> Clothing for a boy aged 10½ years, 4s. 3d.——

Member: Is that per week?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, these are weekly figures.

Mr. Marshall: For a start, the rent is very low for Perth.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course it is. However, the other figures are—

Clothing, for a boy, 3½ years, 1s. 10d.; girl, 7 years, 3s. 9d.

These are the figures which the Commission decided upon as making up the wage of £5 13s. 11d. for Perth. Other details are shown as follows:—

Food, £2 14s. 11½d.——

That is for a household of five persons—

fuel and light, 5s.; groceries (not food), 1s. 6d.; renewal of household utensils, drapery and crockery, 2s. 7½d.; union and lodge dues, 1s. 9d.; medicine and dentist, 9d.; domestic assistance, 1s. 6d.

Mr. Latham: You will have to push that on to the taxation people.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know how many of the fine ladies living around Mt. Lawley where I reside, would get on if they had to put up with only 1s. 6d. per week for domestic assistance, nor yet how some of those living in substantial residences in that beautiful suburb of West Perth would get on with that allowance.

Mrs. Cowan: They would have to do without it.

Mr. McCallum: They would have to do the work themselves.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course it does not fall to the lot of the unfortunate wife of a wage-earner to be able to obtain any kind of assistance at all. I know that very grave complaints have been made by some of our women folk that they are unable to obtain domestic help; in fact, I believe that in our immigration scheme we are going to endeavour to meet them in that regard. At all events not many of the immigrants will go into the homes of the wage-earners, not even if the wage earners were getting the £5 13s. 11d. But, inasmuch as the workers are getting about £1 15s. a week less than the amount prescribed here, even that sum set aside for domestic assistance will have to disappear altogether.

The Colonial Secretary: Some homes are happier without it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Of course! That is why the well-to-do are giving up their palatial homes and going into the happier homes to be found in East Perth, the simple happy homes of the workers. I suppose that is why rents have increased so much for the workers; it is the competition of the well-to-do trying to secure simple homes in working-class suburbs, anxious to participate in the happiness so general in the homes of those who live and maintain families on £4 per week. The next item is newspaper, stationery and stamps, 1s. 3d. They would not require to be greedy for newspapers if they could supply their wants in that direction for 1s. 3d. Now that we are living in a time of a general falling in cost of commodities, I hope our newspaper proprietors will fall into line and take a little of the medicine they are so fond of prescribing for the workers. They say, "The cost of living has fallen. Why not submit to a reduction in wages?" I do not advertise in newspapers, and so I do not know whether the prices of newspaper advertisements have come down; but I do know that the price of the newspapers themselves has not come down.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: The price of the "Worker" has increased.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The "Worker" does not preach the doctrine of reduced wages. It does not proclaim in every issue that the cost of living has fallen to such an extent that there should also be a general tumble-down in the rate of wages. Some of our newspapers do that. They never fail to seize on any scrap of news showing that the price of any commodity has been reduced and publish it in a prominent position, with an air of saying, "Behold how the price of everything is coming down!" If there be any one newspaper in this State justified in maintaining its present rate, it is the "Worker," because not too much is being charged for that paper or for its advertising space, and moreover that paper does not believe that any worker is getting too much.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: There has been a 200 per cent. increase in the price of the "Worker."

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member has increased the price of his paper 33 per cent., and, in addition, he has taken away from us the news columns and increased his advertisement space by 300 per cent.! So, although we do not pay much more in price for it, we have to submit to a reduction in the news supplied.

The Colonial Secretary: But look at the quality!

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know what papers the hon. member reads. He is the Northcliffe of the local Press, and I hope he will be generous and place me on his free list.

The Colonial Secertary: You must promise to read my papers if I do.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I will do so with the greatest pleasure. I always endeavour to keep myself informed as to what appears in the conservative journals, for it assists me to appreciate their point of view. The amount allowed for smoking is 2s., and for the barber 3d. per week.

Mr. Richardson: Half a shave!

Hon. P. COLLIER: I shave myself. I have not much use for the barber, but I could not be accommodated for 3d. per week. Fares 3s. 4d., and school requisites 3d. per week.

Mr. Heron: It would not buy pencils!

Hon. P. COLLIER: That makes up the total of £5 13s. 11d. which was considered to be a fair wage for Perth. This is the finding of an impartial commission. The evidence and facts on which it is based have never been challenged, except in the general way of saying that the rate cannot be paid. What does that mean? If £5 13s. 11d. was a fair living wage in 1920, it means that the whole of the workers who were on the minimum

wage in this State were being underfed and had not sufficient of the ordinary reasonable requirements of life; because at the time the Royal Commission found £5 13s. 11d. to be a fair wage, the basic wage in this State was £4 per week. Until May, 1920, it was only £3 16s. per week in this State! In September of 1920, in the railway employees' case, it was raised to £4 and made retrospective to May of that year. Had the findings of the Basic Wage Commission been adopted by the Federal Parliament or the wage fixing tribunals, there would have been no need to move in the matter to-day; but having regard to the fact that this is the only independent inquiry that has been held into the cost of living in the Commonwealth since the 1907 decision, and seeing that this has not been adopted by any wage-fixing tribunal, surely it is not asking too much that we should of our own volition, independently even of the decisions of the Federal Arbitration Court, set about finding a reasonable basic wage for ourselves. The President of our State Arbitration Court has said more than once that he finds a difficulty in fixing the basic wage; and, following the precedents of his predecessors, he has declined to fix a wage independent of the Harvester judgment. Seeing that so much depends on the basic wage, which so intimately affects the cost of living, and recognising the importance of the whole question, surely it is not asking too much that this Parliament should appoint a Royal Commission to make an independent inquiry! During the past six months we have had Royal Commissions inquiring into subjects of infinitely lesser importance. I believe the proposed Commission cannot fail to do good. Even if the wage-earning section of the community were to suffer a reduction of wages, at least they would be more satisfied to do so following upon an independent inquiry, than they would be to submit to a reduction based upon a decision of 15 years ago. The whole point of view has very greatly changed in recent years. It is not sufficient for the needs of any generation that it should be entirely governed by the outlook of those who have gone before. Surely the workers are not to be asked to submit for an indefinite period to a decision arrived at in 1907! Therefore I hope the Government will see their way to accept this motion. We have frequently heard it stated this session that Bills brought down were of a non-party character. I think I can say that for this motion.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Do you suggest a paid Commission?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes.

The Minister for Works: Any limitation as to duration?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No. We are not likely to strike a Forestry Commission every year. Surely our luck will not be so bad that we shall have to resort to the placing of a time limitation on any Commission.

Mr. Mann: Is not that a bit worn?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is. I have no intention of introducing it. It was the interjection of the Minister for Works.

Mr. Johnston: A previous commission on forestry lasted 14 months.

Hon. P. COLLIER: After all, the cost of a Royal Commission is a mere drop in the ocean. Standing by itself, £1,000 or £2,000 may seem a fairly large sum, but what is a thousand or two which a Commission of this kind may cost, in relation to the important issues it will be called upon to deal with?

Mr. Richardson: The price of industrial peace.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, it is wrapped up in the cost of living. By the standard of living I suppose 75 to 80 per cent. of the people of this community are affected. I know of no direction in which we could more justly spend money to conduct a thorough, independent and up to date inquiry than by carrying this motion and giving effect to it.

On motion by Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

MOTION—COMPENSATION, OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [8.46]: I move—

> That in the opinion of this House the Government should introduce legislation during the present session for the purpose of providing compensation for workers affected by occupational ailments and diseases.

As this motion covers a question with which I dealt rather fully last evening when speaking on the second reading of the Miners' Phthisis Bill, I do not purpose to go over the same ground or speak at any great length. It is unnecessary to remind the House of the extent to which miners' complaint exists in this State. Although my motion deals with occupational diseases, it has regard mainly to miners' complaint. I do not know that occupational diseases exist to any extent in any other calling. I take it for granted that the House admits the existence of miners' phthisis and that it is an occupational disease, one contracted in consequence of a person's employment. Dr. Cumpston's investigations in 1910 showed that 33 per cent. of machine men were affected with miners' complaint, and that 27 per cent. of the men who were working in dry crushing plants, where they were subject to the effects of dust, were likewise affected. If that was the condition of things in 1910 we know that, as a consequence of the mines being worked at much greater depth to-day, a larger percentage of men must be affected. Dr. Cumpston in his capacity as a Royal Commissioner made very exhaustive inquiries on the goldfields, and particularly in the Kalgoorlie and Boulder districts.

Capt. Carter: By miners' phthisis, does he mean tuberculosis?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, that is a different thing, but a very considerable proportion of those suffering from tuberculosis are so affected because they first contracted miners' phthisis. It is tuberculosis superimposed upon silicosis. The silicotic lung is much more liable to contract tuberculosis than the lung not in that condition. An examination might disclose a certain percentage of men affected with tuberculosis, but those men would not have contracted tuberculosis but for the fact that previously they were suffering from miners' complaint or silicosis.

Mr. Mann: Do you intend to confine your motion to miners?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No.

Mr. Mann: Would you include the divers?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It will not be necessary to indicate any particular occupation. The motion covers anyone affected by an occupational disease.

Mr. McCallum: Such as painters becoming leaded?

Hon. P. COLLIER: They would come under the definition. Stone-cutting might be another.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: Stereotyping, too?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Perhaps so. My motion covers every man who is forced to give up his employment or who suffers by reason of having been engaged in a particular industry. Such a man should be entitled to compensation. That is the position generally accepted in most countries of the world. Perhaps nowhere in the British Empire has more effective or complete effort been made to provide for compensation for those affected by miners' complaint than in South Africa. Medical examinations are conducted to which all men have to submit. If a man is affected he is taken out of the mines. Compensation was provided for such cases as far back as 1911. In 1919 a further Act was passed which was an improvement on the one it superseded. In South Africa to-day the medical authorities recognise three stages of the disease which, for the purpose of handy reference, I shall classify as first, second and third. The first stage embraces cases slightly affected, the second stage cases more advanced in the disease, and the third stage cases still further advanced. Compensation is based on the amount a miner earns over an average of 156 days when last working in the mines. A man whose average wage per month is £20 and who is in the first stage, receives a lump sum of £240, rising to a lump sum of £497 for a miner whose average wage is £70 per month. A man in the second stage of the disease whose average earnings are £20 a month, receives a lump sum of £360, and a man earning £70 per month receives a lump sum of £746. A man in the third stage of the disease does not receive a lump sum by way of compensation, but a weekly or monthly payment. A man earning £20 per month receives £10 per month and he is excluded from again working in the mines, a man and his wife, £12 a month; man, wife and one child £13; man, wife and two children, £14; man, wife and three children £15. A man whose average earnings were £70 per month and who had a wife and three children dependent upon him would receive in compensation £21 5s. a month, and that would continue for life. Should the man die compensation is paid during the life of the widow and in respect of the children until they reach the age of 16. It is paid also to relatives, brothers, sisters, step-brothers, step-sisters, father, mother, grandfather, and grandmother, so that its application is very wide, the only condition being that the relatives were dependent on the person concerned. In addition, men affected with tuberculosis apart from miners' complaint are entitled to compensation. The medical board are empowered to pay up to £25 for medical attention and funeral expenses in the event of death. Further, provision is made for those affected to follow other occupations. What is known as the Miners' Phthisis Board has power, among other things, as follows:—

> (a) To acquire land to be devoted to small agricultural holdings and to establish on such holdings miners who are beneficiaries under this Act or the prior law, as well as other suitable persons. (b) To assist by means of loans beneficiaries who are already established in business or any farming operations. (c) To provide for the training in trades or industries of beneficiaries. (d) To conduct a bureau for the purpose of obtaining employment for beneficiaries or the dependants of beneficiaries. (e) To assist financially by means of loans or otherwise in establishing or carrying on industrial undertakings or collieries which undertake to employ or are employing at the board's request beneficiaries or the dependants of beneficiaries. (f) To assist financially in defraying the expenses incidental to the transport of beneficiaries to places where employment for them has been obtained. (g) the establishment of co-operative workshops; (h) to invest moneys received from miners in land and improvements with a view to settling miners on such land.

In addition to paying the amount of compensation I have stated, the Miners' Phthisis Board has wide powers to make provision for those who are still able to follow some occupation under the headings I have just read. In Western Australia the question is one purely of finance. There is no person in this State who will for a moment dispute the right of men affected by miners' phthisis or any other occupational disease to compensation. The men must be taken out of the mines in their own interests and in the interests of the community. It is an economic loss to allow a large number of our able-bodied citizens to continue in an occupation

when by so doing they will shorten their lives. It is not a good thing for the State. It is better that they should be taken out of the industry and placed in some other industry where their lives will be prolonged, and where they will be a benefit to the State, to say nothing of their welfare as individuals. It surely ought not to be beyond the power of this State to find the money necessary to provide a reasonable measure of compensation for these men. A considerable number would be able to follow other occupations, and if not remain wholly employed in them might be able to assist themselves and not require the full amount of compensation that may be awarded. If we are going to declare to the world that we are so bankrupt as to be unable to find sufficient money either by taxation or from State funds, or from the employers themselves, for such a compensation fund, it will be a very bad advertisement for Western Australia. In South Africa the whole of the compensation is provided by the employers, while the expense of administering the fund is borne by the Government. The Royal Commission that was appointed in South Africa last year commenced its investigations upon the question of who should be responsible for the payment of compensation. The views expressed by the Commission on this point are so sound that they are worthy of quotation here—

> The legislature rightly proceeds upon the assumption that injury to a citizen by accident or disease is an economic injury to the State, and that such injury should as far as reasonable be repaired. Conceivably the legislature may hold that the full economic loss to the State should be made good in every instance. But apart from other considerations, it is, of course, impossible in any true sense to measure human life or health in terms of pounds, shillings and pence. Nowhere has any legislature gone as far as that, and in the opinion of your Commission it is neither necessary nor advisable to go so far. At the same time it is right to emphasise that the only limit to the burden which the legislature may legitimately impose in the protection of its citizens is that dictated by what is reasonable under the circumstances. Capacity to bear the burden is an important factor in this connection. Our legislation on the subject of miners' phthisis provides for payment in money (so called compensation) land settlements, workshops, teaching of trades to beneficiaries, the establishment of sanatoria all of which legitimately fall within the scope of the legislation.
>
> This brings us to the important question, as to who should bear the burden of the legislation for accident and industrial disease. In the opinion of your Commission to this there can be but one answer; the person who draws the profits of the business must bear the burdens incidental to the business. This follows irresistibly from the principles of the Common Law enunciated above. When once it was recognised that the plea of negligence in the choice of the servant had broken down, this conclusion became inevitable. For under the Common Law the burden was placed upon the shoulders of the employer, not because of any negligence on his part in the choice of his servants or otherwise (the offender who was guilty of negligence escaped in practice), but because it was to him that the eventual benefits accrued. In the opinion of your Commission a State is acting with fairness and within its rights if it refuses to allow an industry to cripple any of its citizens without making whatever reparation is deemed reasonably necessary in the best interests of the community, and speaking generally, if an industry cannot be carried on under these conditions it is better that it should not be allowed to carry on at all. We agree with the view that the liability for accident and industrial disease may fairly be looked upon as a portion of the cost of production and should be a first charge upon the industry. A business conducted upon any other principle is to that extent not self-supporting.

That is a definite expression of opinion by the Commission, which has had ten or 12 years experience of the operations of the Act, and the payment of compensation in that country. The report goes on to say—

> To sum up: (1) As, apart from humanitarian grounds, the death or disablement of a workman entails an economic loss to the State, whose highest object is to maintain and improve national efficiency (of which national health forms one of the most important factors), the first duty of the State is to prevent damage to its workmen by accident or industrial disease. (2) Where, in spite of all precautions, such damage occurs, the employer in whose affairs the damage was sustained, may legitimately be called upon to answer for it. To exact a contribution from the workman for this purpose cannot be defended. An industry which is not capable of bearing a reasonable burden of this kind is better, generally speaking, shut down.

The Commission does not hesitate to say that an industry that cannot bear the burden of maintaining those who have been wrecked in pursuit of that industry had better be closed down. In this State very little provision is now being made for those affected by miners' complaint. The Mine Workers' Relief Fund was started in 1915, with a contribution of 3d. per week from each of the workers, the employers and from the Government. After two or three years it was found that the sum so raised was insufficient, and the weekly contributions were increased to 6d. and later on to 9d., which is the figure to-day.

Mr. Davies: From each party?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. In addition to that the Government last year made a grant of, I think, £575 to the funds. The amount

raised by this means last year was a little over £5,000, which has been found wholly insufficient for requirements. Not only has the board been compelled to reduce the weekly payments, which they set out to pay when the fund was inaugurated, but it has been compelled year by year to keep on reducing the amount until to-day it is altogether insufficient to maintain the necessary amount of relief.

Mr. Davies: What is the monthly relief?

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is so much for a single man, so much for a man and his wife, and so much for each child. It is largely a matter of discretion for the board, and if the person is receiving any other income that, too, is taken into account.

Mr. Mann: Do the Federal authorities object to paying invalid pensions in such cases?

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, but there is a corresponding reduction made by the board. The board compels the person to apply for an invalid pension in order to relieve the fund. I do not blame the board for doing this because the funds are insufficient for the claims made upon it. Each year it has become more financially embarrassed because of the many calls that are made upon it. The number of applications received by the board since 1915 is 884. The number of people to whom relief has been granted is 574, and the number who have been refused is 310. Assistance has been granted in the case of 1,000 children. The number who have died since is 448. Money will have to be found by the Government, or some other source, even if the taxpayers have to be levied upon for this purpose. If the employers are not in a position to find the whole of the money required to compensate these men, they should be made to pay a great deal more than they have paid in the past. The industry has been responsible for the death of thousands of men, and for wrecking the lives of thousands of others. The only amount the industry has contributed by way of compensation for these men has been the paltry few thousand pounds that has been contributed to the Mine Workers' Relief Fund; I think it was £5,000 last year. Taking the seven years during which the fund has been in operation, the annual amount would not average more than £3,000. Gold has been produced to the value of 148 million pounds, and dividends to the amount of 28 million pounds have been paid out of the industry. Notwithstanding this, not more than £20,000 or £25,000 has been paid by way of compensation to those whose health has been so greatly injured.

Mr. Boyland: They paid a third of £89,000.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is roughly £30,000, which represents the total contributions from this wealth towards those who have made possible the production of the gold. I understand that immediately the Miners' Phthisis Bill was introduced, the Chamber of Mines circularised some members of this Chamber. I did not receive the circular.

Mr. Johnston: Nor did I.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I understand it requested them to oppose the Miners' Phthisis Bill, although the Bill itself does not propose to levy one pound of contribution from the mine owners of this State. There is no provision for that in the Bill at all.

Mr. Wilson: There should be such a provision.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yet the mine owners are already moving to secure the defeat of the measure.

Mr. Marshall: The Bill is really devoid of all substance.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. The mine owners do not want the principle of interference established at all. What is the attitude maintained by these men? Are they not concerned about the health of the workers engaged in the industry? Do they consider that workers affected with tuberculosis should be permitted to go down into the mines and there, in the warm, moist atmosphere than obtains in underground workings, be permitted to spread infection to all their fellow workers? Is it of no concern to the mine owners that that state of affairs should continue to exist? Is it of no concern to them that a large number of men should be day after day going nearer and nearer in health to the sanatorium at Wooroloo, until they are eventually carried out of that institution? Is it no concern of the mine owners that these human wrecks are going to be thrown on the scrap heap after obtaining dividends for shareholders resident in some other part of the world? I venture to say that there is no other civilised country in the world which would permit such a state of things to continue. It is up to this Parliament to say that that state of affairs shall not continue to exist, but that we shall by legislation make provision for taking the men affected out of the mines, and also for seeing that they and their dependants will be maintained. I move the motion, and hope that it will be carried, as an instruction to the Government to bring in legislation to deal with the matter. There is no difficulty about the question, except, as I have stated, the difficulty of finance. There is legislation in other countries which can be followed if it is thought desirable. The only difficulty, I repeat, is the financial one; and it ought not to be beyond the capacity of this House and of this country to make the necessary financial provision. I hope that before the session closes something will be done to alter a condition of things which has obtained altogether too long on the mining fields of this State.

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

MOTION—DINGO PEST.

Mr. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [9.21]: I formally move—

That this House is of opinion that the Government should take immediate steps, either by the creation of a board of those directly interested, or by other means, more

effectively to deal with the dingo pest, which is daily becoming more alarming, and is seriously affecting both the cattle and the sheep raising industries of this State.

I had collected, for the information of hon. members, a good deal of information regarding the ravages of dingoes, and of other dogs which have gone wild, throughout the length and breadth of the State. The pest has affected the cattle industry in the Kimberleys and also near Denmark, and has been particularly bad in the sheep-breeding districts, one of which I represent. I had also collected some interesting articles which have appeared in the Press of the Eastern States, pointing out what the scourge has done there. It appears that in the East the dingoes have got so bad that many sheep breeders find themselves compelled to abandon sheep-breeding and to go in for cattle-raising. I had also intended to recommend what I consider would be a good way to deal with this alarming menace, namely, by the creation of a board of those directly interested, which body, assisted by the Government, could raise the necessary funds. However, since I gave notice of this motion, it has come to my knowledge that the Minister for Agriculture is having a measure prepared to deal with the subject. It is hoped that the Bill will be presented to the House within a very short time. We shall then all have full opportunity to express our opinions on the matter, and to make suggestions. Such being the case, I ask leave to withdraw my motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

RETURN—PEEL AND BATEMAN ESTATES, EXPENDITURE.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [9.24]: I move—

That a return be laid on the Table of the House showing the expenditure incurred to date in connection with the Peel and Bateman estates on (a) land purchase, (b) clearing, (c) draining, (d) road-making, and (e) other expenditure.

The Premier has been good enough to intimate to me that he will accept this motion.

Question put and passed.

BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Mrs. COWAN: (West Perth) [9.25] in moving the second reading said: I have been asked to move this Bill in the interests of the mothers of Western Australia. They are anxious to be placed on exactly the same footing as the father in the case of sons or daughters dying intestate. I think we all now realise that no man wishes his wife to be on any different footing from himself, that is, when he comes to think about the matter. I feel sure the House will be with me in regard to this Bill, more especially when hon. members realise that it is the earnest desire of women to be placed on an equal footing with men in this respect. The measure merely asks for equality between husband and wife.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Can you give us some reason why we should pass the Bill?

Mrs. COWAN: The reason that the Bill is absolutely just is sufficient. During the war it was found that the want of an amendment such as the measure proposes was very detrimental in many instances to mothers who were left in a more or less dependent condition, and whose sons had died intestate. The existing law has operated unjustly in many cases. I leave the matter to hon. members' sense of justice. I think every man has had time to look into the question generally of late years. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. Lambert: I think you would be well advised to give more reasons than you have yet given, because there are very wide principles involved in the Bill. Parliament is not moved by sentiment.

Mrs. COWAN: If it is not moved by sentiment, then it should be moved by justice. I know the hon. member interjecting feels in that respect just as I do myself.

Mr. Lambert: Can you show where injustice has occurred?

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara) [9.28]: I second the motion for the second reading of the Bill. In doing so I am not greatly worried regarding the necessity for the measure, or, as the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) says, the justice of it. We have been living in difficult times, but times and conditions are changing. In the days of my parents it was understood that everything belonged to the man, the woman being to some extent a chattel. We now realise that the man and the woman are equal partners in the business. All that the Bill asks is that the mother shall have an equal share with the father of any money or property left by a son or a daughter who dies intestate. I do not know that it requires many words to demonstrate the fairness of such a measure. Even if the parents are not agreeing too well, still each of them is entitled to his or her share. If they are agreeing well—as they should agree—then it is all right, because they will divide between themselves anyhow. I hope the House will not adjourn consideration of the Bill, but will pass it. The principle underlying the measure is in accordance with the conditions under which we live at present. The Bill will make a mother an equal in shouldering with the father the responsibility for the children they have looked after and an equal in the result sought to be achieved by the Bill.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [9.31]: I support the second reading of the Bill. It is customary, however, when introducing a Bill to advance some reasons for the measure.

Mr. Underwood: It does not require reasons; the Bill explains itself.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: As the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) interjected, we cannot always act on sentiment. I know of instances where money has been left by a person and the father and mother have been living separately. The father was living in another part of Australia. The mother reared the family and yet, when the son died leaving some money, the mother could not get it and it went to the father.

Mr. Willcock: There are quite a number of such instances.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I thought the member for West Perth would have advanced some such instances to show why this Bill should be introduced. The measure is along the right lines and is one that we should all support. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) seems to think there is no necessity to show where hardship has been worked under the existing law.

Mr. Lambert: It is the first time he has been in such a reasonable frame of mind for a long time.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Some reasons should have been given in support of the Bill, which I have much pleasure in supporting.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [9.33]: I support the Bill. Some cases have come under my notice which show the necessity for such a measure. I do not suppose the Bill would have been brought forward had it not been for our experiences during the war. Most young people do not think there is any necessity to take steps in anticipation of dying before their parents. We know that during the war period many young people went away and, unfortunately, were killed. They left amounts varying from £50 to £100 and in all cases that money would go to the father. If there is anyone who has been connected with the upbringing of children, who is entitled to anything, it is surely the mother. The member for West Perth (Mrs. Cowan) is to be congratulated upon trying to secure equality and justice for her own sex in these matters, but the Bill does not go far enough. There are several other matters that could be included. For instance, if a man dies intestate and dies without issue, the widow only gets a certain proportion of the estate, whereas, if the wife died first, the husband would receive the whole of the estate.

Mrs. Cowan: That is only when they die intestate.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The estate could be secured by order of the court, in accordance with a measure we passed some years ago.

Mr. WILLCOCK: That is so. There is no reason why the widow should not have that benefit without expense, just as in the case of the husband. I think the member for West Perth could well have adjourned the consideration of the measure and endeavoured to provide for some of these other aspects, because women suffer under serious disabilities. I know of a case recently in which the husband died intestate, leaving an estate worth about £1,000. In that case half the estate went to a relative of the husband who had not been in communication with the family for 10 or 15 years.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I know of a case where the wife went away and left the husband——

Mr. WILLCOCK: That may be so. The member for West Perth will have considerable support in any effort she makes to equalise the rights as between woman and man. The Bill deals with one way in which this can be achieved, but I do not think it goes far enough, especially regarding people dying intestate. If the hon. member looks into this aspect, she will be able to do a considerable amount of good for her sex.

Mr. LAMBERT (Coolgardie) [9.35]: The member for West Perth (Mrs. Cowan) should have advanced reasons for seeking the approval of the House to these amendments to the Administration Act. A striking instance came under my notice three or four years ago, when a young man was killed at the war. The mother had lived apart from her husband for 16 or 18 years. She had looked after that boy from infancy, and although the son had been dependent upon her practically until he went away to the war, she was not able to apply for probate. This is one of the details in connection with our Adminstration Act which suggests that there is a field for investigation. If there is a field for serious and mature thought in connection with obsolete Acts of Parliament, it is to be found in the Administration Act for the transmission of wealth. There is no more glaring instance of stupid inconsistency and utter ignorance than the transmission of money under this Act. I believe that no person has the right to transmit wealth to another unless that person is directly or indirectly dependent upon the other individual. Some time ago there was a case in which money was to be transmitted to an individual, and it took five or six years to find a dependant to claim the money. That person was ultimately found in Scotland.

Mr. J. Thomson: The best place to find him, too.

Mr. LAMBERT: Hon. members should realise that in the present state of our mental development—and apparently the member for West Perth calls upon our conception of what is right and what is wrong—the whole idea governing the transmission of wealth and, side by side, the transmission of poverty, requires overhauling. To-day it is looked upon as a fine thing to inherit wealth; it is looked upon as contemptible to inherit poverty. The one cannot be inherited without the other. If it is said that a man is to be allowed to accumulate and transmit wealth, it must be said equally that he will be allowed to accumulate poverty and to transmit it. Under our social system to-day, that is what is happening. The Premier may be looking for wealthy men about Perth to-day, hoping for the time

when he may reduce the deficit by large amounts in probate duties. I think the field I have suggested is a just one for investigation as a source of revenue. I hope hon. members will realise that there is a just claim for their support for the Bill. At the same time, I trust that they will realise that they are dealing with a dangerous thing when they open up the consideration of the principle of wealth transmission. They must remember that besides the transmission of wealth, we have the transmission of poverty.

Mr. Underwood: What is the good of wealth, anyhow?

Mr. LAMBERT: As a matter of fact, if the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) were suffering from a little wealth of knowledge, we would appreciate it. I hope the Premier or some other reformer will lay down the principle upon which wealth shall be transmitted and the principle upon which proverty shall not be transmitted.

Mr. Underwood: I will not have any trouble with mine.

Mr. LAMBERT: Social reformers to-day can talk of socialism, syndicalism, or any other "ism," but, getting down to bedrock, there is this difficulty to which I have referred regarding the transmission of wealth or poverty.

Mr. Underwood: You cannot transmit poverty.

Mr. Angelo: It is with us always.

Mr. Simons: No one disputes the possession of poverty.

Mr. LAMBERT: The member for Pilbara has probably been influenced in his attitude towards the Bill and in the more charitable state of mind he has displayed, by his friendliness with the member for West Perth. Last night we witnessed his hostility to a speech which elevated this House by reason of the high ideals the speaker dealt with. I anticipate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, your objection that I am straying from the path, but I crave your indulgence.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Perhaps the hon. member will speak to the Bill.

Mr. LAMBERT: What a striking difference was presented by the attitude of the hon. member to-night towards this Bill, when without reason or explanation he gave it his full endorsement! His attitude would have been very different had it been the Licensing Bill. I hope the Administration Act will have a proper overhaul. To-day it is laid down that a person dying and transmitting wealth shall pay a certain percentage, irrespective of whether his money is going to a 42nd cousin or to a deserving wife and child. The Administration Act is a farce, and the sooner we review it the better. I hope hon. members will support this Bill and that, later on, the Government will bring down a more comprehensive amendment.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell —Northam) [9.47]: The Bill constitutes a perfectly fair proposal. The member for West Perth (Mrs. Cowan) said that a man and his wife should be equal. I think the wife should be regarded as being very much superior.

Mr. Underwood: You are smoodging now.

The PREMIER: I know that if it be a matter of control in the family, the wife is superior. I have experienced it. In every walk of life women are more than holding their own.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do not give yourself away too much.

The PREMIER: Of course we cannot object to that, since we have made it possible. Probably this is the first Bill ever introduced by a woman in any British Parliament. I congratulate the member for West Perth on the reception her Bill has had in the Chamber. No measure was ever more generally approved. If only I could get my Bills as warmly accepted by the House, I would have a very much easier time. I readily support the Bill.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [9.50]: It is proposed to distribute the estate equally between the father and the mother. Whereas most women know how to look after money, I have heard of instances of the father being a good-for-nothing sort, and probably there are other instances in which it is the woman who is at fault. Under the Bill the mother is to have half the estate. I remind members that after she has spent the whole of her share she will still have in common law a claim against her husband for maintenance.

Mr. Underwood: The old man ought to be able to stand it.

Mr. LATHAM: No doubt he will be. Nevertheless the point ought to be thoroughly investigated. I do not know what was the intention of the member for West Perth in not carrying the subsection of the Victorian Act through to its end. When in Committee I will move to amend the clause in that direction. It is only right that in the event of the estate being a big one a maximum should be placed on the amount which the mother may claim. In other respects I support the Bill.

Mrs. COWAN (West Perth—in reply) [9.53]: In answer to the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) let me say I am not asking for the transmission of poverty, but rather in some cases to lessen poverty. I welcome the suggestion that the Administration Act should be thoroughly overhauled; it would be to the benefit of women. However, I was anxious to avoid bringing into the Bill any controversial matter. The Bill is not intended as a reflection on the member for Coolgardie or any other member. It appeared to me better not to suggest that they should have brought down some such measure long ago. Like the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin), I could give from my own experience instances of great injustice wrought through lack of this provision. However, I thought it wiser to avoid controversial issues. Be-

cause of that, I am sorry the member for York (Mr. Latham) proposes to move an amendment, for it will then be necessary, in order to make it equal, to put the father in a position which under the Victorian Act he does not occupy. To avoid doing that, I purposely left out that provision about the £500 only going to the mother; because, if the widowed mother is to be limited to the inheritance of a certain sum, why should not the father be limited in like manner, and the balance divided amongst the children in both cases? I think the Bill is quite equitable, and so I hope the member for York's forecasted amendment will not be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; Mrs. Cowan in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Next-of-kin of intestate without issue to include mother:

Mr. LATHAM: I move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

Mr. LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That after "father" in line 1 of paragraph (b) "and the net value of his or her estate does not exceed £500" be inserted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The amendment will spoil the spirit of the Bill. There is no justification for limiting the amount the mother might receive.

Mr. Underwood: Give the mover a chance to state the justification.

Mr. LATHAM: If an estate were worth £20,000 the mother would get the whole of it. There might be invalid brothers or sisters who, if the mother married again, would not obtain one penny piece. If the estate were under £500, it would be fair and reasonable for the mother to get it absolutely. Victoria has a similar provision in its Act of 1916.

Mrs. Cowan: You are handing it to the man and not to the woman.

Mr. MONEY: The amendment is not so simple as it appears to be. Paragraph (a) provides that whatever would go to the father, whether whole or part, must be divided equally between the father and mother. Paragraph (b), however, takes it away from the other next of kin who might be invalid brothers and sisters.

Mrs. Cowan: No.

Mr. MONEY: It does.

Mrs. Cowan: The Act already provides that the father may take the whole to the exclusion of the children. Why not the mother?

Mr. MONEY: This amendment really affects the old statute of distribution dating back to King Charles. There is nothing in the Administration Act dealing with this matter. The Committee have no desire to exclude next of kin such as brothers and sisters, but that is the effect of the amendment.

Progress reported.

BILL—PENSIONERS (RATES EXEMPTION).

Second Reading.

Capt. CARTER (Leederville) [10.10] in moving the second reading said: It is not my intention to labour what is in effect a very simple Bill. It is simply a compassionate measure which, in the light of cases which have come before me, should long ago have found a place on the statute-book. I am not in a position to say how many cases there are—I have endeavoured to ascertain some approximate number from the local authorities but without success—but there are old age pensioners who, by reason of their thrift, energy and industry in younger days are in the happy possession of a home of their own, some sort of a home, but still a home which means very much to them in their old age.

Mr. Harrison: A rateable shelter.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Some of them very big shelters, too.

Capt. CARTER: That might be, but I think the Federal Act protects the Government against imposition. An individual in my constituency is in receipt of this munificent pension of 15s. a week, but at the same time he is called upon to pay 2s. 10d. per week in rates. I do not suggest that this is the fault of the municipal authority. I am led to believe that in some cases a good deal of leniency is shown.

The Minister for Mines: Do you mean 2s. 10d. a week?

Capt. CARTER: Yes.

Mr. Lambert: It must be good property.

The Colonial Secretary: That means £7 7s. 4d. a year.

The Minister for Works: Surely that includes sewerage and water rates.

Capt. CARTER: That is inclusive of all rates. This is one case and there must be similar cases varying only in degree. It is the industry, energy and carefulness of these individuals that is being taxed. On the other hand, one can point to individuals who have been careless and indifferent towards making provision for their old age, and who have used in a haphazard manner what money they could lay their hands on from the Pensions Department. There is a duty cast upon every authority, whether Federal or State, or even the meanest local authority, to help in every possible way those who, having reached old age, are in difficulties such as I have referred to. Many of these men have been pioneers on the goldfields, in the wheat and timber areas, and in the great North-West, but to-day are no longer fit for work. They are practically dependent upon what is really an unliving wage. I do not see how it is possible for them to scrape along on the little they get. They are possessed of a fine spirit of independence, a spirit which causes them to re-

frain from asking for charity, but one which merely asks for the fairest treatment we can give. I hope the House will give the small measure of relief that is suggested by this Bill. I know of an old man who has been a pensioner for many years, but who, during the past few months contracted a disease, not contagious, of such a virulent nature that he could not live more than a few months longer. It was decreed by the department that he should be sent to Old Men's Home. There are very often certain cast-iron regulations which in themselves are necessary, but which in their administration mean unnecessary hardship in particular cases. This man was told to report to the Old Men's Home on the 14th of the month, and his pension was due on the following day. The case was brought before me by a neighbour, who desired that some help should be given to the old man. The one thing the old man was worrying about was the paying off of an old score to the local tobacconist or grocer of about 8s. The department would collect his pension and credit it towards his maintenance in the Old Men's Home. When I brought the matter before the late Colonial Secretary he acted quickly and effectively and the matter was adjusted. The old man went partly happy into what will probably be his last home. This serves to illustrate that there are in all departments certain regulations that are in the nature of cast-iron, and which debar people from rights that could readily be accorded to them. The spirit that these old pensioners display should be recognised by the House. Where there are cases of disability such as I have outlined the House should be ready to accord that help and relief which I feel the services of these men to the country have warranted. The Bill is quite an innocent measure, and is placed before the House as a compassionate one that I hope will be assented to. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 12th September, 1922.

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

BILL—PROPERTY.

Introduced by the Minister for Education, and read a first time.

MOTION—IMMIGRATION, STATE-WIDE SCHEME.

Hon. G. W. MILES (North) [4.36]: I move—

> That in the opinion of this House the Government should at once enter into negotiations with the Imperial and Commonwealth authorities in order to arrange joint schemes of migration, which shall apply not only to the South-West division of the State, but also to the Eucla, Central, Eastern, North-West, and Kimberley divisions.

Hon. members will agree that in the best interests of this country it is essential that all portions of Western Australia should be developed and populated as speedily as possible. The migration scheme put before the public by the Premier I am entirely in accord with, and I consider that the South-West could not only absorb 25,000 people per year, as suggested by Sir James Mitchell, but 50,000 people per year, the question being merely one of proper organisation. This motion, therefore, is not in any way antagonistic to the South-West development scheme, in which I am as firm a believer as anybody. My own view is that the 25,000 people referred to by the Premier could be absorbed within 100 miles of Perth, growing currants and raisins, and also in the wheat belt and in the South-West. But provision should be made for developing the Esperance district, the goldfields country, the central and eastern portions of the State, and the North-West and the Kimberleys as well. The Migration Act passed by the Imperial Parliament is evidence that the Ministers and people of Great Britain have a better grip of this question than the people of Australia have. The people at Home realise the vital importance of populating this continent within a reasonable time. They realise that Northern Australia is the weakest link in the Empire, and that the only way we can have the right to hold it is by peopling it. There is no use talking about what we will do in 10 or 20 years' time, or in the next generation; unless a bold scheme is taken in hand at once, and a policy is evolved for peopling the whole of Australia, we shall stand a very fair chance of losing Australia. I now desire to read the Act passed by the Imperial Parliament:—

> 1.—(1) It shall be lawful for the Secretary of State, in association with the Government of any part of His Majesty's Dominions, or with approved private organisations either in the United Kingdom or in any part of such dominions, to formulate and co-operate in carrying out agreed schemes for affording joint assistance to suitable persons in the United Kingdom who intend to settle in any part