

funds were put into the expansion of industry within the State.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	10
Noes	..	..	..	12

Majority against .. .. 2

AYES.			
Hon. L. Craig		Hon. W. H. Kitson	
Hon. J. M. Drew		Hon. T. Moore	
Hon. C. G. Elliott		Hon. H. Seddon	
Hon. E. H. Gray		Hon. C. B. Williams	
Hon. E. M. Heenan		Hon. G. B. Wood	
		(Teller.)	

NOES.			
Hon. E. H. Angelo		Hon. G. W. Miles	
Hon. C. F. Baxter		Hon. J. Nicholson	
Hon. L. B. Bolton		Hon. H. V. Piesse	
Hon. J. T. Franklin		Hon. A. Thomson	
Hon. V. Hamersley		Hon. H. Tuckey	
Hon. J. J. Holmes		Hon. W. J. Mann	
		(Teller.)	

AYES.		NOES.	
Hon. A. M. Clydesdale		Hon. H. S. W. Parker	
Hon. E. H. H. Hall		Hon. C. H. Wittenoom	
Hon. G. Fraser		Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	

Question thus negatived, the Bill defeated.

*House adjourned at 11.8 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 27th October, 1936.*

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

### AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received a copy of the Auditor General's report, which I will lay on the Table.

### QUESTION—SEWERAGE, CLAREMONT-COTTESLOE.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Works: 1, What is the policy governing deep sewerage house connections in Claremont-Cottesloe—(a) where septic tanks are already installed; (b) where the sanitary service is still in use? 2, Is he aware that many owners were compelled to connect with the deep sewerage although they had already, at great expense, installed septic tanks? 3, Is he also aware that in other cases residents are still using the pan service? 4, When is it expected that the pan service will be abolished in the sewered area of Claremont-Cottesloe?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Connection to sewer is compulsory, notwithstanding existence of a septic tank. Septic tanks serve W.Cs. only; whereas deep sewerage disposes of all household wastes. 2, Yes. 3, Yes. 4, When all premises are connected. Endeavours are made to get owners to connect, but in cases where they are unable to finance work deferment is granted, subject to municipal council continuing the pan service.

### BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Land Tax and Income Tax.
- 2, Land and Income Tax Assessment Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—TRADE DESCRIPTIONS AND FALSE ADVERTISEMENTS.

Further report of Committee adopted.

### BILL—METROPOLITAN MILK ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: As is indicated in the Title, this is a Bill for an Act to continue the operations of the Metropolitan Milk Act, 1932, with certain amendments. The board has had a very unpleasant task to contend with. It has been the butt for all and sundry who have had an interest in some particular avenue connected with the milk industry. Members will recall that last year many amendments were

made to the Act, in an endeavour to render it more workable, to remove many anomalies, and, in general, to assist in the fair administration of the Act. The amendments were also made with a view to ensuring that no levy made upon the industry fell with injustice upon any section. It was considered at the time that these were the only amendments necessary to bring about that condition of affairs, and that as the legislation had been in operation sufficiently long to have it said that it had passed the experimental stage, it was thought that in giving the board certain added powers, to review the position relating to licenses, etc., this was all that was necessary to be done. Prior to the passing of the legislation brought down last year, many scores of complaints were heard. The Press at least weekly, and in some cases daily, featured the complaints of various sections interested in the industry. It is very noticeable this year that the complaints have been few, if any, either through the Press or sent through me, concerning the operations of the board and the administration of the Act. It can, therefore, be said that there is very little criticism of the Act, and very little dissatisfaction with its administration. The industry has reached the stage when even those who are averse to forms of control have accepted the control as it affects them, as being something necessary in the best interests of the industry. The board has had a difficult task. Even in the case of those who have from time to time sponsored the claims of persons engaged in some section of the industry, the board has endeavoured to be impartial and to do its work thoroughly and efficiently. It has been necessary for members of the board to show a great deal of determination, as well as efficiency, in their administration. They have had to show a great deal of initiative in grappling with the problems with which those people for whom this legislation was primarily introduced have had to contend. The chairman of the board, it can be said, has displayed considerable energy and initiative in handling the many problems with which he has been faced. Prior to 1932, when this legislation was initiated, the industry was in a parlous position. The producer, it was said at the time, received varying amounts for his milk, and as small a sum as 5½d. per gallon was mentioned in Parliament as the net return which some producers received. It was also shown that the consumer did not at any stage ob-

tain any benefit from any low prices that were prevailing. The retailer, due to the disorganised condition of the industry, was also very unhappy, and many milk rounds at the time changed hands. To-day it is a rare thing for a milk round to be made available for sale, for no one is sufficiently dissatisfied with his position in that capacity to wish to dispose of his business. After making a careful review of the whole situation in this State, in other States, and in other countries where the control of the supply of milk in large towns and metropolitan areas is in vogue, I am satisfied that the Act in operation in this State is indeed a very satisfactory law. The administration under that Act gives very little cause for dissatisfaction. No doubt there are certain factions which are not satisfied either with the existing law or its administration. That should not in any way concern us when we know it is only through those who are particularly interested, or who are not suited to be in the industry, that these complaints arise. The law in this country is sufficiently sound, and the administration is sufficiently good, to warrant the continuation of this Act, and in our giving to the board an extended term of office.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: The Act can be improved considerably.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That may be so as to certain minor particulars, but it is so in almost all things. I feel that we should give the board an opportunity, by an extension of its term of office, to put into operation the provisions of the Act, and by the exercise of its powers justify its continued existence. We should also see what will be the effect of the board putting into operation the powers it has and has not yet tested. Possibly many people will be dissatisfied with this Bill. There may be sections in the industry which, in their own interests, desire a considerable alteration in the existing law. It may also be that even the board would suggest being given additional powers. There are many people who think that all milk consumed in the metropolitan area, and all milk passing through the metropolitan area, should be under the control of the board. I am opposed to that view, and base my opinion not only on the experiences of other States and countries where that procedure has been adopted, but on my knowledge that the board has not utilised all the powers it pos-

sesses under the existing Act. Although the Bill is very brief, it applies only to the extension of the term of office of the board, and to the election of future members on the expiry of the term of the present members. For the present at least, I think the measure fulfils all the requirements of the milk industry, its distribution and consumption. Last year, when the Act was under review, many amendments were made. On that occasion I stated that the consumer represented the only market for this commodity, and that it rested upon the producer to supply the maximum quantity of the best quality article. It is very pleasing to note the great improvement in quantity during the past year or two, and that, due to the activities and operations of the board, there has been a marked improvement in the quality of the food submitted to the people for consumption.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Is that not a sufficient argument to give the board wider powers?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Certainly not. There is no basis of argument in that statement for the granting of greater powers because there is more power under the existing Act than many boards can wisely use. There is much scope under the existing law for the board to do all that is best in the interests of all sections of the community. I am indeed pleased that there is a marked improvement in the quality of the commodity, because it would be quite useless to advertise and force sales of milk as a food if it were in any way deleterious to health. We can safely say that the improvement in quality is such that the milk, as a food, can be highly recommended.

Mr. Cross: Why do the board members restrict the sale of milk by refusing to grant licenses for shops?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The board do their utmost in every way to encourage the sale of milk, and in each instance where a license has been refused, there has been a very good reason for that action. I shall be pleased to answer any specific case where a license has been refused, and shall give the hon. member the reason for the refusal. With regard to inspections made, particularly with regard to quality, 600 sample tests were taken between May and August, 1936, and they showed a remarkable uplift in quality compared with re-

sults recorded during the previous year. Some 470 samples of first-class milk were tested this year as against 236 first-class samples during the preceding 12 months.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Were they from shops, or from the producers?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They were from the distributors. Forty-four of the samples were classed as bad as against 133 during the earlier period. It can safely be said that whereas many producers at the outset had no idea of the requirements for perfect sanitation most of the producers to-day realise what should, and must, be done in order to furnish a good article in the form of pure milk. At one stage there were in the industry many who were totally unfitted for it. Many have gone out of the industry who were quite unsuitable from the standpoint of the requirements of sanitation necessary to provide a proper article to the consuming public. For the 12 months ended the 30th June last, over 4,500,000 gallons were sold for consumption in the metropolitan area compared with 4,350,000 gallons during the previous 12 months, an increase of over 150,000 gallons during the year. The accounts of the board are at present awaiting examination by the Auditor-General, and it is expected that that examination will take place in the near future. The surplus of income over expenditure last year was £660 9s. 11d. In considering the accumulated funds, respecting which there has been a great deal of comment from one particular section, it must be realised that from the inception it was difficult for the board to estimate their requirements in connection with the operations relating to any particular fund. The board commenced operations in February, 1933, and regulations were operative in June of that year. Those regulations were repealed and fresh ones gazetted. It was necessary to alter the system of collections because the second regulations were found by a decision of the Full Court in May, 1934, to be ultra vires. No contributions were accepted in respect of milk sold after that date until it was possible to gazette new amended regulations, which enabled the board to make the necessary collections to maintain the funds. Although every endeavour has been made to fix a rate of collection necessary satisfactorily to continue the opera-

tions of the board, it has been difficult to arrive at just what the correct rate to strike would be in order to obtain the necessary collections to secure the funds that are required, with their accumulations.

Mr. North: The surplus amounts to about £9,000 now, does it not?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In the aggregate, both funds hold an amount approaching that sum, but it must be remembered that one of the funds is being built up in order to provide for compensation and no claim has been received under that heading. In those circumstances, it is hard to say that the sum that has accumulated is excessive. It would be very unwise to say that, because it cannot be anticipated just what claims may be levied upon that particular fund.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: From either section.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. It would not be safe for the board to retain less than the amount now in that fund. With regard to the other fund, a considerable sum is now being spent by the board in an endeavour to induce the public to consume more milk. Money is being spent on advertising. Last year the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) raised that question, and endeavoured to secure an amendment that would specifically permit the board to use some of the funds for advertising purposes. As a matter of fact, that power is already possessed by the board. So it is, particularly under Section 36 of the Act, that there are very wide powers that will enable the board to do almost everything that any other boards elsewhere are able to do. In connection with depots and distributing centres, the board again possesses wide powers. Until the board are placed in a position that will give them sufficient tenure of office and enable them to demonstrate how wide their powers really are, we should not in any way amend the relative sections.

Mr. Cross: Why will you not give retailers representation on the board?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member will be hard put to it to justify that claim on behalf of the retailers.

Mr. Cross: They find most of the money.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They do not. I shall be very pleased to debate that subject with the hon. member.

Mr. Cross: Why are you afraid to give them that representation?

Mr. Marshall: Give notice of the question!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The member for Canning will be hard-pressed to justify such a proposal.

Mr. Cross: You promised to do it a year ago.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. Cross: You did.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is an entirely wrong statement. It is an absolute misstatement.

Mr. Cross: I will reply to that later.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I will give the hon. member some fuel to work upon when he deals with that aspect, and suggest that he show how the consumers will benefit if the retailers are given representation on the board.

Mr. Cross: That is not a fair way to put it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: With regard to the compensation fund, I have already mentioned that it has been accumulating, but we have not a basis for calculation to determine just how far that accumulation should be permitted to continue. It would be very unwise to disturb the levy in that regard until some claims are received, or until a much more substantial sum is vested in that fund. In submitting the Bill to the House—it will be agreed by everyone who has been in any way associated with the operations of the board that they have been doing very good work, but have not yet exhausted their possibilities or powers under the Act as it stands at present—I suggest to members that it would be wise to pass it as submitted. Any contention that much wider powers are necessary cannot be substantiated, and the board have not used all the powers they already possess. In the circumstances, I have no desire to increase the powers of the board; I do not think it would be wise. It will be agreed that we have given the board a satisfactory measure under which to carry out their operations. Last year's amending legislation cleaned up a great deal of the trouble, assisted the board considerably in their administration, and

removed many anomalies. If members will consider the position as it was two years ago or even 12 months back, they must admit that there has been a great improvement, particularly when the lack of complaints is recognised. I know there is great activity among one section of the industry who desire the board to have extended powers, while another section is equally desirous that the board should be prevented from exercising additional powers. Then there is always the point of view of the consumer, who represents the only market for this particular commodity. It would not be wise to do anything that would increase prices or decrease consumption. What we desire to do is to ensure the fullest possible supply of the best quality milk. I consider that the board under the existing law have the fullest opportunity to assure a full and complete supply to the consuming public. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. P. D. Ferguson, debate adjourned.

#### **BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BUSH NURSING TRUST.**

Received from the Council and read a first time.

#### **BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*In Committee.*

Resumed from the 20th October; Mr. Sleeman in the Chair, the Minister for Employment in charge of the Bill.

Clause 19—Repeal of Section 42 of the principal Act and insertion of new section (partly considered):

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:  
I move an amendment—

That in lines 1 and 2 of paragraph (a) of Subsection (1) of proposed new Section 42 the words "any one of the eight last-mentioned holidays" be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu:—"any of the following holidays, viz., Labour Day, Australia Day, Foundation Day, or the birthday of the reigning Sovereign."

This proposed alteration is necessary in order to meet the requirements of certain days such as those mentioned in the amendment. If the clause in the Bill were allowed

to remain as it is, complications would arise in regard to Anzac Day and the other days referred to.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:  
I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (b) of Subsection 1 of proposed new Section 42 the words "of such eight last-mentioned holidays" be struck out, and the words "such holidays" be inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:  
I move an amendment—

That the following paragraph be inserted after paragraph (b):—" (c) When any of the following holidays, viz., Christmas Day, Boxing Day, or New Year's Day falls on a Sunday, a paid holiday shall be observed on the next following Monday."

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: This is a new departure. It has not been adopted in the past when Christmas Day has fallen on a Sunday. It is a fairly long period for shops to be closed from Saturday till Tuesday. I do not suppose there is much use opposing the suggestion, but I do not think the paragraph should be inserted.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:  
I move an amendment—

That the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph (c):—" (d) When Boxing Day falls on a Monday a paid holiday shall be observed on the next following Tuesday."

If Boxing Day fell on a Monday Christmas Day would fall on a Sunday. The holiday for Christmas Day would have to be on the Monday, which in turn makes it desirable that Boxing Day shall be observed on the Tuesday.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I move—

That paragraph (c) of Subsection (1) of proposed new section 42, as it appears in the Bill, be struck out.

Under this paragraph if a job on which a man is employed finishes within a week of a paid holiday he is entitled to an extra day's pay in lieu of such holiday. Suppose the man then went to another job, would he have to be paid by the second employer for the holiday? I do not think the Minister intends that that should be the case. I propose to oppose the adoption of this paragraph. If the first employer were made to pay the man for the holiday there

would be no check-up. It is not likely that the employee would inform his second employer that he had already been paid.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** It is provided that this practice shall operate only where the services of an employee are terminated other than by summary dismissal for good cause within one week of the day on which the employee would have been entitled to the holiday. The paragraph is inserted with the object of preventing a continuance of the practice which has developed in certain quarters of giving an employee notice of dismissal without good cause for the sole purpose of dodging the liability to grant a holiday. It may be that in one or two cases the fear which the Leader of the Opposition has might be justified but such cases would be so few and far between as not to justify striking out this paragraph.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	16
Noes	..	..	..	..	24

Majority against .. .. 8

# AYES.

Mr. Brockman  
Mr. Boyle  
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver  
Mr. Ferguson  
Mr. Hill  
Mr. Latham  
Mr. Mann  
Mr. McLarty  
Mr. North

Mr. Patrick  
Mr. J. M. Smith  
Mr. Thorn  
Mr. Warner  
Mr. Watts  
Mr. Welsh  
Mr. Seward

(Teller.)

# NOES.

Mr. Collier  
Mr. Coverley  
Mr. Cross  
Mr. Doust  
Mr. Fox  
Mr. Hawke  
Mr. Hegney  
Miss Holman  
Mr. Johnson  
Mr. Marshall  
Mr. Millington  
Mr. Needham

Mr. Nulsen  
Mr. Raphael  
Mr. Rodoreda  
Mr. Shearn  
Mr. F. O. L. Smith  
Mr. Styants  
Mr. Tonkin  
Mr. Troy  
Mr. Wilcock  
Mr. Wise  
Mr. Withers  
Mr. Lambert

(Teller.)

# PAIRS.

**AYES.**  
Mr. Doney  
Mr. Stubbs  
Mr. Keenan  
Mr. McDonald

**NOES.**  
Mr. Munsie  
Mr. Wilson  
Mr. Collier  
Mr. Cross

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, agreed to.

Clause 20—agreed to.

Clause 21—Amendment of Section 44:

Mr. NORTH: What is the intention behind the clause?

Mr. Marshall: The very best.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** Persons are necessarily employed on the half-holiday to bring out an evening newspaper and sometimes a weekly newspaper, but their employment on the half-holiday is not necessary to bring out a monthly newspaper. The clause proposes to delete the words "or monthly."

Clause put and passed.

Clause 22—Amendment of Section 45:

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The clause proposes to fix a minimum wage for junior workers. The policy of the Labour Party, as well as of members on this side of the Chamber, has been that hours of labour and rates of wages should be fixed by the Arbitration Court.

Mr. Marshall: That is not so.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: For a number of years when Mr. McCallum was in charge of similar Bills, he said the Arbitration Court should undertake those responsibilities. Otherwise political parties would be vying with each other to grant the best hours and wages. Mr. McCallum was right. This Chamber should not fix hours or wages for industry, and I protest against using this measure to do that class of work. The Arbitration Court is in a far better position, after hearing evidence from both sides, to give a just decision.

The Premier: What if the workers concerned are not under the jurisdiction of the court of arbitration?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Bring them under.

The Premier: The object of the provision is to prevent sweating.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have not heard of any protest on that score. The Arbitration Court was brought into existence to prevent sweating. What are the trades and labour councils and unions doing?

The Minister for Employment: This would not apply where an award of the court was in existence.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The principle is wrong. The court should do the work. This is an interference, really by subterfuge, because the Arbitration Act should deal with the matter.

The Premier: There has been a provision of the kind for years.

Mr. Hegney: This is not different in principle.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I wish to keep the matters of hours and wages apart from

politics. Although on many occasions I disagreed with Mr. McCallum, I supported him on this principle, which was sound. He definitely assured us that the trade unionists would not agree to Parliament fixing rates of wages and hours of labour.

The Premier: It has been in the Act for 15 years.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If it found a place in any Act, it should be the Arbitration Act.

The Premier: The principle has been in the Factories and Shops Act.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Then it should not be continued.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I move an amendment—

That columns 3 and 4 be struck out.

If the amendment is carried, I have a further amendment in view. The amendment speaks for itself. Every member of the Labour Party, I believe, is pledged to support equal pay for equal work, and I cannot understand how the clause, which must operate unjustly to the persons concerned, came to be inserted in the Bill. I should like members to carry their minds back a few months and recall a ruling by the Speaker that there were no ladies in the House, which meant that there were no women in the House. We in this House legislate on an equal footing. There is equal pay for equal work; at least there should be, though I realise that some do more than others. It is not logical that we should observe one principle in this Chamber and legislate for another principle outside. If members argue that women are less valuable than men, I reply "Prove it." Here, equal pay is provided for equal work and, if that principle applied outside, I am sure business men would dismiss those women or men who were least competent. The War Cabinet Committee on "Women in Industry" declared—

Women doing similar work or the same work as men should receive equal pay for equal work in the sense that pay should be in proportion to efficient output. This covers the principle that on systems of payment by results, equal payment should be made to women as to men for an equal amount of work done.

The committee agreed that equal pay for equal work is not only a standard simple to enforce, but corresponds as well to an instinctive sense of equity and justice, and this principle alone gives hope of that final settlement of the old feud between men and women workers which is inspired by fear of undercutting.

Many European countries are in advance of England in this respect, but England is very much in advance of Australia. Women in Australia receive only 52 per cent. of the basic wage for males, whereas in England the percentage is 58. I know that the argument against equal pay for equal work is that the men are potential fathers. So long as they remain potential fathers, they are not of much use to the race. To be of use they have to become fathers. I understand that we have a large number of men in this State receiving the basic wage and they are not fathers. Women do not wish to oust men from their jobs.

The Minister for Employment: You ousted a man from your job.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I remind the Minister that there are no women in the Chamber. Out of approximately 900 trades there are only 88 in which women predominate. Equal pay for equal work would naturally drive the women into the trades for which they were most suited, and this, from an economic point of view, would be very desirable. The only trading concerns that do not want equal pay for equal work are the large emporiums and the factories that wax fat upon cheap labour. Surely the Labour Party members do not want to ally themselves with such concerns! Surely they do not seek the approval of places like the chain stores that make 100 per cent. profit on cheap labour! I want justice not only for the woman worker but also for the man worker, and for that reason I have moved the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: The clause represents an effort to bring more into accordance with modern conditions the section of the Act which provides minimum rates of pay for junior workers not covered by Arbitration Court awards or industrial agreements. The clause does not propose to go any further. It could operate only with respect to youths and girls under the age of 21 years working in shops, factories or warehouses wherein no industrial award or agreement operated. It is true, as suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, that the Bill raises the minimum rate payable to junior workers; but that proposal does not imply that we mean to interfere with the activities of the legal tribunal set up to prescribe wages in Western Australia. We are merely endeavouring further to pro-

tect those junior workers who at present have no legal protection other than that provided in the existing Factories and Shops Act. The new rates set out in the Bill are warranted and justified. The carrying of the clause will have the effect of preventing a good deal of the exploitation of junior workers now going on. The amendment of the member for Subiaco seeks to provide that the wages of male junior workers shall automatically apply to female junior workers. While the clause does not in any way conflict with industrial awards or agreements, the amendment does seriously and gravely conflict with them. Therefore I hope the Committee will not be influenced by a suggested desire to place female and male workers on an even basis in respect of wages for work done in factories, shops and warehouses. The effect of carrying the amendment would be to destroy the employment now received by thousands of female junior workers throughout the State. It is difficult to understand what is the object of the member for Subiaco.

Miss HOLMAN: I support the amendment. It is time we set an example by asking, not for equal pay for equal work, but for equal pay for the sexes. The principle of equal pay for equal work—with which I do not agree—pre-supposes some means of measuring the work, which is entirely impossible, and thus might lead to numerous wrong interpretations. I stand for equal pay for the sexes.

Mr. MARSHALL: I assure the mover of the amendment that its passing would be detrimental to the employment of young girls, because obviously an employer likes to get the most he can for his money. The male youth is undoubtedly physically more capable of rendering efficient service in constant daily employment than is his sister.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That does not apply in a general way. For instance, it does not apply to girls employed in offices.

Mr. MARSHALL: It depends on the type of work. We must all admit that where a female and a male are engaged on work which is at all laborious, the male must necessarily excel the female over a working day of eight hours. On principle I am prepared to support the amendment. However, I have recently had difficulty in placing young girls in factories, and I am

convinced that the carrying of the amendment would aggravate that difficulty. I believe the member for Subiaco would speedily regret the amendment if it were adopted. The argument of the Leader of the Opposition is essentially true, but in connection with the Bill introduced by a former Minister for Labour in 1926 to establish a 44-hour week the Leader of the Opposition said it was the duty of the Arbitration Court to fix working hours. The principle of fixing hours has long been condemned by Presidents of the Arbitration Court. Mr. Justice Rooth, for example, declared that working hours should be fixed by Parliament. Again, the Geneva Labour Conference has repeatedly dealt with the question. Yet the Leader of the Opposition contends that the matter should be left to the Arbitration Court. A former Minister for Works said not that the question of hours was one for the Arbitration Court but that it was one for Parliament. I shall vote for the amendment.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	19
Noes	.	..	..	..	18
Majority for					1

#### AYES.

Mr. Boyle	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Brockman	Mr. North
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Doust	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Hill	Mr. Thorn
Miss Holman	Mr. Watts
Mr. Latham	Mr. Withers
Mr. Mann	Mr. Seward
Mr. Marshall	

(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Coverley	Mr. F. O. L. Smith
Mr. Fox	Mr. Styants
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Troy
Mr. Jonsson	Mr. Warner
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Welsh
Mr. Millington	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Needham	Mr. Wise
Mr. Rodoreda	Mr. Nulsen

(Teller.)

#### PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Collier
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Cross
Mr. Doney	Mr. Munsie

Amendment thus passed.



**Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER:** I move an amendment—

That at the top of the first and second columns the words "and females" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed.

**Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER:** I move an amendment—

That after "division" at the bottom of the first and second columns the words "for males" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed.

**Hon. C. G. LATHAM:** Exactly what I said would happen has already happened. I had to do it, because I wanted to show the mistake that was being made.

The Minister for Employment: You cannot put that over me.

**Hon. C. G. LATHAM:** I pointed out exactly what could happen. This indicates that it is impossible to leave it to Parliament to decide, because we have not the data before us. I pointed out to the Minister what would happen, and now it has become so impossible to give effect to the provision that I suggest we should cross out the whole thing.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** This is a very pretty development on the part of the Leader of the Opposition. Feeling that the clause as it stood would be endorsed by a majority of the Committee, he conspires, together with the member for Subiaco,—

**Mrs. Cardell-Oliver:** I object to that. I have never spoken to the Leader of the Opposition on the subject.

**Hon. C. G. Latham:** The Minister is always wrong.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** I have not suggested that the Leader of the Opposition met the member for Subiaco in some secret place and conspired for the purpose of evolving the amendment which the hon. member moved; I merely stated that the Leader of the Opposition conspired with the member for Subiaco by voting with her in supporting the amendment which the Committee has just carried.

**Hon. C. G. Latham:** I ask the Minister either to substantiate the statement that I conspired with the member for Subiaco, or else withdraw the remark.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** It is quite clear that, as the strange actions of the Leader of the Opposition are being revealed, his conscience is beginning to jump a bit, and so he is becoming uncomfortable.

I state again that the Leader of the Opposition, realising that the clause as printed would not be defeated, conspired with the member for Subiaco to the extent—

**Mrs. Cardell-Oliver:** I object to that word "conspire." I do not conspire with anybody. I want that word withdrawn.

The Minister for Lands: It cannot be withdrawn.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** If the member for Subiaco would show that patience for which women are alleged to be famous, she would raise no objection to my statement. I say again, that after the Leader of the Opposition realised that the clause as printed would be accepted by the Committee and his objection on the point that we would be interfering with the Arbitration Court would not be upheld, he conspired with the member for Subiaco to the extent of voting for the amendment she moved. He realised that if that amendment were adopted, the argument he had put up prior to the amendment being moved would be appropriate, and would have some strength. This amendment adopted by the Committee now makes the provision in the Bill run counter to the principles that have guided the Arbitration Court in the decisions it has made in setting down awards for shops and factories and warehouses that come under the jurisdiction of that court. So there is now something in the argument raised by the Leader of the Opposition on that point, but only because he and the whole of the members of his party assisted the member for Subiaco to so alter the clause as to bring about the situation that he speaks of. If the provision in the Bill now runs counter to certain principles, the Leader of the Opposition is responsible, together with every member who supported the amendment. Instead, therefore, of condemning the provision which the Bill contained when it came before the Committee, his condemnation should be directed against himself, and all the members of his party, with the exception of the member for Mt. Marshall (Mr. Warner).

**Hon. C. G. Latham:** Do not forget your own members.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** No, in fairness to the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Welsh), it should be said that he is not a member of the Country Party. So the Leader of the Opposition has now no justifiable complaint.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I never pretended to have one.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: This display of self-righteousness on his part is justified only as the result of the amendment in this provision. So if he desires to direct his condemnation in the direction in which it should go, he will condemn his own action.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister cannot get away with that. I have not at any time conspired with any member of the House. Whatever I do, I do openly. If it be the Minister's habit to enter into conspiracies, at all events it is not mine. I pointed out to the Committee how dangerous it was to leave it to members of the Committee, who were not trained in that class of work. I said it should be left to the Arbitration Court. Irrespective of my personal action, the Minister did not say that we had a minority in the Committee, and that it was only by the support of his own people that the amendment was passed. All those supporting the amendment thought it was advisable to point out the danger of leaving to members work that ought to be done by the proper tribunal. It is about time we left it to the Arbitration Court to decide. There will be found means of approaching the court, if it be desirable. I say it is not desirable for this Committee to fix wages, for we are not competent for the task. If we are going to proceed along these lines, the day will come when we shall regret it, for it is not the function of this Committee to fix wages. I think we ought to eliminate this provision, and pass it over to the Arbitration Court to decide what is a fair thing.

Mr. NORTH: In view of what has just been said about rates, I draw attention to the table in the clause which sets out that for the first year's employment males and females shall receive 14s.; in the second year's employment, 18s. 6d., and in the third year's employment 23s.

The Minister for Employment: These are to meet all cases.

Mr. NORTH: I should like to know whether another amendment can be moved.

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, the question is that the clause stand as amended.

Mr. NORTH: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (b) "fortnightly" be struck out with a view to inserting "weekly."

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. WATTS: The attitude of the Leader of the Opposition has been perfectly consistent throughout the whole of the argument, and the observations of the Minister were uncalled for. He told us that the principle was bad, but as far as the people in my district are concerned they are paying a greater minimum wage than is prescribed in the schedule. Therefore I do not object to the rates in the schedule simply because they are in the schedule. This is a job for the Arbitration Court, and has been for 20 years, and on the information that is before us the Committee cannot know sufficient of the circumstances or the facts to be able to judge. Therefore I hope the clause will be struck out altogether.

Clause, as amended, put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	22
Noes	..	..	..	..	17
Majority for					5

#### AYES.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Fox	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Styant
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Miss Hoiman	Mr. Troy
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Welsh
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Millington	Mr. Wiso
Mr. Needham	Mr. Withers
Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Lambert

(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Mr. Boyle	Mr. North
Mr. Brockman	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Doust	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Hill	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hughes	Mr. Warner
Mr. Latham	Mr. Waits
Mr. Mann	Mr. Seward
Mr. McLarty	

(Teller.)

#### PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Munie	Mr. Doney
Mr. Wilson	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Collier	Mr. Keenan
Mr. Cross	Mr. McDonald

Clause, as previously amended, thus passed.

Clause 23—Amendment of Section 46 of the principal Act:

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Will the Minister tell us how it is proposed to police this amendment?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: When it becomes operative it will be policed by the inspectors of the department.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 24 to 27—agreed to.

Clause 28—New sections:

**Hon. C. G. LATHAM:** This clause provides that the Minister may appoint a competent person to hold an inquiry with regard to any draft regulations and report to him thereon. It also provides that the Minister may appoint a board or competent person to hold an inquiry. I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of proposed Section 62B “may” be struck out and “shall” inserted in lieu.

The clause will then provide that the Minister shall appoint a competent person to hold an inquiry.

**The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** I have no objection to the amendment.

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

Progress reported.

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

## **BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY TAX.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [7.30] in moving the second reading said: It was fully explained when the Budget was being introduced that there would be no reduction in taxation during the current financial year. Since then the position has been made worse by the reduction in the grant from the Federal Government to the extent of £300,000, and by the prospective effects of the drought in the agricultural area upon our finances. It is, therefore, necessary to impose this form of taxation for a further year. This year, however, certain alterations have been introduced in the legislation, not for the purpose of raising more revenue, but to spread the incidence of the tax in a more equitable manner. Last year the tax realised £827,119, compared with the estimate of £685,000. It is anticipated that this improvement will continue, and that a slight additional sum will be produced, the estimate for this year being £840,000, as disclosed on the Estimates. For the last three years the exemption under this tax for people with dependants has been fixed at a figure just above the basic wage in the metropolitan district at the time, so that all persons with dependants in receipt of that wage would not have to pay any tax. The method of determination of the basic wage makes

no allowance for the payment of this tax. If it be deducted the people concerned must therefore be deprived of money intended for the necessities of life. On more than one occasion increases in the basic wage have taken place, and these have brought the basic wage within the scope of the Act. That is the position as it exists at present. The Bill is, therefore, drafted to exempt the basic wage, whatever it may be, in the various parts of the State, when it is received by persons with dependants. Single men and single women are treated differently, as has been usual during the past few years. It is also provided that the tax payable shall not reduce the wages of persons with dependants to an amount that brings such wages below the basic wage. That is to say if a man receives 6d. or 9d. above the basic wage he will not be called upon to pay a larger amount in tax than would preserve to him the full basic wage. He will pay the tax on whatever amount he receives over the basic wage to bring it, if necessary, down to the basic wage, but no lower. If a man receives 2s. above the basic wage and the tax comes to 1s. 4d., he would pay the 1s. 4d. If the amount he received was 1s. above the basic wage and the tax was 1s. 4d., he would only have to pay the 1s., so as to bring his income to the basic wage after he had paid the tax.

**Hon. C. G. Latham:** If it is 1s. above the basic wage, he only pays 1s.

**The PREMIER:** Yes. He really gets that 1s. extra so that he may pay it over to the tax gatherer. It preserves inviolate the position of the man who earns only the basic wage. He will not be subject to any imposition that will bring his wage below the basic wage. Much of the criticism which has been levelled at the present tax is that it presses too hard upon the man on a moderate income of from £6 to £8 a week. We know the incidence of the tax, and how it jumps from 6d. to 8d. As a result of the incidence of the tax, and by means of the steep graduations, a man pays the full rate of tax when his income reaches £8 a week. It is our desire to make that more equitable in the case of people with moderate incomes. By making the steps longer we shall make the incidence of the tax more equitable. The man on a moderate income will thus not have his tax raised rather higher than most people consider is equitable. The Act has been subject to criticism on that account.

A man on £500 a year pays at the same rate of tax as the man on £5,000. We thought it more equitable to raise the steps so that people on a moderate income would not be subject to the full rate of tax until they had reached a higher income than £8 a week. In effect, the Bill aims at overcoming the present objection and placing the greater burden where it can best be borne by spreading the increases more gradually and raising the maximum amount on the higher income. The existing rates are—

With dependants—

Less than £3 12s.—Exempt.  
£3 12s. to £4 10s., inclusive—4d. in the £.  
Over £4 10s. up to and including £6—5d. in the £.  
Over £6 and less than £7—6d. in the £.  
£7 and less than £8—8d. in the £.  
£8 and over—9d. in the £.

Without dependants—

Less than £1 10s.—Exempt.  
£1 10s. and less than £3 12s.—4d. in the £.  
£3 12s. and less than £6—5d. in the £.  
£6 and less than £7—6d. in the £.  
£7 and less than £8—8d. in the £.  
£8 and over—9d. in the £.

The rates proposed under this Bill are—

With dependants—

Basic wage (male) as declared in various parts of the State—Exempt.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You will have a bit of bother there.

The PREMIER: I do not think so.

Hon. C. G. Latham: How is a farmer in the South-West going to define his boundary from the point of view of the basic wage?

The PREMIER: All of the South-West, with the exception of the metropolitan area, is known by that description.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You know it, but there are many others who do not.

The PREMIER: Most people know what the basic wage is in their own district.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You are only talking of business men, the wages of whose employees are fixed by awards. Many persons are employed whose wages are not fixed by awards.

The PREMIER: The basic wage is a statutory declaration of the court. As such it is well known everywhere. I do not know of anyone who could not say what the basic wage was.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Where do the gold-fields end and the agricultural areas begin?

The PREMIER: On the boundary of the South-West land division. Most people know where that is.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Some farmers are not even inside it.

The PREMIER: Perhaps they ought not to be farming there. I do not want to deery that land, but once outside the South-West land division one is getting into doubtful areas. But what I want to do is to explain the difference with respect to the tax. This is to go up in much easier stages. The man on the basic wage will be exempt. The other rates are as follows:—

Over basic wage and less than £5—4d.  
£5 and less than £6 10s.—5d.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is not exempt from the basic wage to-day.

The PREMIER: That was the intention of the Act. The table continues—

£6 10s. and less than £8—6d.  
£8 and less than £9 10s.—7d.  
£9 10s. and less than £11—8d.  
£11 and less than £12 10s.—9d.  
£12 10s. and less than £14—10d.  
£14 and less than £15 10s.—11d.  
£15 10s. and over—12d.

Mr. Sleeman: Keep going.

The PREMIER: That is the end of the table. The man who is earning £8 10s. must pay 9d. in the pound to-day, but before he pays that under this Bill he must be earning at least £11 a week. That considerably eases the position of many people on a moderate income. In the case of persons without dependants, the rates are as follows:—

Up to £1 10s.—Exempt.  
£1 10s. and not more than the basic wage—4d.  
Over the basic wage and less than £6—5d.  
£6 and less than £8—6d.

The proposed rates for those with dependants start with a tax of 4d. for an income over the basic wage, and increase by 1d. for every 30s. of income with a maximum of 1s. in the pound, which is reached at £15 10s. per week. This will mean that from £6 upwards the rate of graduation is more even. In addition to being more equitable in its graduation, this Bill will bring the emergency legislation, or special taxation, much more into line with the tax existing in other parts of Australia. In most parts of Australia the tax goes up to about 1s. in the pound. The graduations are more in accord with those proposed in the Bill than with those contained in the Act. Under this proposal some revenue will be lost, particularly perhaps

on the goldfields. It will not amount to much, because most people working on the goldfields receive more than the basic wage. At present the rate of tax starts from £3 12s., the same as in the rest of the State. The Bill proposes that the payment of tax shall not commence until a man receives at least the basic wage. Somewhat less revenue will be received from people on moderate incomes. A man on £8 a week used to pay 9d. in the pound, but under the Bill he will pay 7d. Consequently, he will be paying 2d. less in the pound. That will mean that considerably less money will be received by the Commissioner of Taxation from people on that particular wage.

Mr. Patrick: Has he made any estimate of the amount he is likely to receive?

The PREMIER: Yes, by bringing up what was the maximum by further gradations to 1s. the amount the Commissioner expects will be collected from these sources will just about counterbalance what was received in the past when the gradations were much steeper. It is anticipated that the amount received will be just about the same. The object we have had in view has been to spread the burden more equitably on those in receipt of the various groups of salaries without materially increasing the burden on the people as a whole. There has been a tremendous volume of criticism in the past from people who received £6, £7, or £8 a week.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You will hear even more criticism under this proposal.

The PREMIER: I do not think so.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I am sure of it.

The PREMIER: The proposal will benefit more people than will be affected by any increase.

Mr. Marshall: You will lose on this proposal.

The PREMIER: I will not say I am competent to express an opinion on that point, but the Commissioner of Taxation considers, having regard to all the circumstances and all the data at his disposal, that the amount of taxation he will receive under the altered provisions, with the less steep gradations, will result in about the same amount of money being collected.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: And he is pretty careful in his calculations.

The PREMIER: Yes. I think it can be said that there are considerably more receive-

ing £8 a week than there are in receipt of £10 or more weekly. The man in receipt of £8 a week will have to pay 2d. less in respect of this special taxation. So it would seem that there will be a considerable amount of revenue lost under that heading, and not so much from the comparatively few who are in receipt of £15 a week or more. In the circumstances I think the Commissioner's estimate is somewhere near the mark. Last year we expected to receive £100,000 less than was ultimately paid. That was because considerably more people were in employment, industry was more profitable, and many more people were in a position to pay this tax. That was the reason why we received £100,000 more than we anticipated. It may be that the position generally is becoming improved, and we may receive at the end of this financial year a little more than we anticipate. On the other hand, if conditions remain the same in almost every respect, the position will be that we shall receive just about the same amount of revenue from the incidence of this special tax as we did under the previous measure. The major principle involved in the alteration in the tax is that the basic wage shall be the determining factor in deciding whether the individual will have to pay this impost. The exemption of the basic wage has necessitated a like concession to persons who receive incomes of a similar amount, but not from salaries or wages. I refer to those who conduct small businesses, primary producers, poultry farmers, and so on, who have to send in their returns annually, and are assessed for the payment of the special tax. Those people do not pay on weekly wages or salaries, and their taxation under this special heading has to be assessed on their returns for income tax purposes. In respect of those incomes the tax on which is not collected at the source, but is assessed by the Commissioner of Taxation, the new rates under the Bill will apply only to the second half of the year. For the first half, that is until the present Act expires, on the 31st December, 1936, the rates as at present prescribed will apply. It is necessary, therefore, to provide for the apportionment of the income between the two taxing periods, and that is done by Subclause 5 of Clause 3. This tax must be considered in conjunction with the income tax to ascertain how it bears on people in receipt of various

income. While some may be inclined to say that the people in receipt of £15 a week should be called upon to pay more than 1s. in the pound, and that those in receipt of even higher incomes should pay at a still further increased rate, it has to be remembered that those people pay considerable sums under the heading of income tax, and taking the two taxes together it will be agreed that those in receipt of the higher incomes already are called upon to pay a pretty fair impost, and I do not consider that we would be warranted in increasing the rate of the special tax beyond 1s. in the pound.

Mr. Patrick: Then they have the Federal taxation.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And all their local taxes.

The PREMIER: Yes, taking them all into consideration, a fairly large sum has to be paid. It would be inequitable to place an increased burden on those in receipt of the higher incomes by making the rate exceed 1s. in the pound. That rate seems to be pretty near the usual maximum rate applying throughout the Eastern States. I have the figures and I will give them to members during the Committee stage.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You should give us those figures now, and perhaps save discussion in Committee.

The PREMIER: I can supply the hon. member with the figures regarding the rate of income he is particularly interested in.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I should like to know what the rates are in Victoria.

The PREMIER: I will give the hon. member the particulars. In the meantime I want to point out that the Bill has been drafted on a pattern different from last year's measure. Instead of enumerating all the various rates in the body of the Bill, it has been thought better to incorporate them in a schedule. This makes reference to the rates easier. It facilitates comparison between the rates applying to the various grades of income and the difference with those with dependants and those without. It also enables members to see at a glance the variations in the incidence of the proposed rates of tax compared with those at present operating. That should be much more convenient for members. With regard to the rates the Leader of the Opposition desires, I have them in tabulated form. In Victoria the rate on £2,000 is 8d. and goes up by steps to over 1s. in the pound. It goes up in

decimal points of 1d. somewhat similar to our income tax.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is graduated by the Commissioner as additional income tax.

The PREMIER: No, it is regarded as a special tax.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I thought it was a super income tax there.

The PREMIER: No, that is the position in South Australia, where there is no special tax as in the other States. In South Australia they increase their income tax by the imposition of a super tax, but this year, I understand, the Government intend to reduce it by 2d. in the pound. They have found the incidence of taxation rather high in South Australia.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They have driven capital away because of it.

The PREMIER: The law of diminishing returns has commenced to apply itself there, and the Government have realised that it would be better to reduce taxation.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Are you sure that you have not introduced this special tax on account of the Disabilities Commission?

The PREMIER: No. A year or two ago the Commission considered our taxation was a bit low, but since then it has gone up and our rate of taxation closely approximates that applicable throughout the rest of Australia. The Government considered there was something in the complaint that the incidence of the special tax was inequitable and too burdensome on the people in receipt of moderate incomes. In order to grant relief, we have made the gradations a little less steep. Naturally, when we give relief to one section of the community, we have to make that up in another direction. As the Australian average is, roughly, about 1s. in the pound, that maximum rate has been suggested in the Bill. I think the criticism in the past regarding the gradations was correct. We have made the gradations less steep and, in going to the Australian average of 1s. in the pound, we consider we can do so without inflicting any undue burden upon the taxpayers. The maximum rate in Tasmania is 1s. in the pound, whereas in New South Wales at one stage it was 1s. in the pound on a flat rate.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Yes, Lang introduced that.

The PREMIER: That arrangement has been altered and the rate reaches 9d. in the pound earlier but goes up to 10d. in the pound. In Queensland the rate reaches

11d. in the pound on £500, and in New South Wales the rate is 9d. on £500. In Western Australia the rate we propose is 1s. In Victoria the rate goes beyond 1s., but I do not know what the highest rate is. On £3,000 the rate is 12.09d. in the pound, but it goes higher than that.

Hon. C. G. Latham interjected.

The PREMIER: I do not want to hide anything from members. If the Leader of the Opposition desires to look through these figures—

Hon. C. G. Latham: It will save me hunting them up.

The PREMIER: He or any other member of the House who desires to study them may do so.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Would it cost much to print them and supply members with copies?

The PREMIER: I do not know that anybody is interested enough to warrant that being done.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Members should be interested.

The PREMIER: I have not given that matter any consideration. It may be possible to have them printed. We considered formulating this rate of tax without very much regard to what was taking place elsewhere, but we found afterwards that we got extremely close to the general Australian average so far as the different incomes are concerned from £100 to £3,000. I shall be glad to give members any further information they may desire at a later stage of the second reading debate. The chief alteration in regard to this tax is that the basic wage becomes exempt from taxation. That is the first big alteration. Under the new provisions men who are exempt from taxation at one period will not find themselves, without any alteration having been made in the Act, being called upon to pay tax, as has been the case recently, because the court declared that the cost of living had gone up and they were thus brought within the incidence of this legislation. The second alteration is that we make the grades of taxation much less steep than they were. The third is that instead of the maximum amount of taxation being 9d. on the higher incomes, it goes up to 1s. in the pound. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. G. Latham, debate adjourned.

## BILL—FAIR RENTS.

### *Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. F. C. L. Smith—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [8.5] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is long overdue. On three or four previous occasions a Bill similar to this has passed through this Chamber, but has been defeated in another place, so perhaps I may be more correct in saying that legislation of this kind upon the statute book of this State is long overdue. If there is one thing more than another that needs control by way of legislation, it is the rent that the breadwinner has to pay in Western Australia. We have a method of fixing wages through a tribunal that takes into consideration the item "rent." This rent is an average between the minimum and the maximum actually being paid, and all those who are paying above that average are being exploited. I believe that this question of rent control is much more important than we have regarded it as being in the past. Control is necessary, not only because we find that tenants are exploited in certain parts of the State on account of the house shortage, but also for the reason that because of the power exercised by landlords who are not controlled, many people have attempted to purchase their own houses; and whilst they have been rescued by their efforts from the clutches of the landlord, they have been thrown into the arms of the moneylender, and their condition is very little better than it was formerly, if it is any better at all. The question of rent control is really an aspect of the housing problem generally, and the housing problem, as all will agree, is one of the most important questions facing this community and other communities to-day. The question of the clearance of slums, for instance, is being faced in many countries. The Leader of the Opposition painted rather a glowing picture the other evening of the way this question has been tackled in the Old Country, but I doubt very much whether the picture he painted is a true reflection of the position as it exists there.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Why do you say that?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Perhaps the hon. member would like to know?

Hon. C. G. Latham: I think you should tell us, because I will provide you with proof of

my statements from the local authorities' own books.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: At the annual conference of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers held in London in June, 1935, the president of that organisation, Mr. Luke Fawcett, in his presidential address, said, *inter alia*, with regard to the building scheme that had been undertaken in the Old Country—

It has fostered the building speculator and jerry builder, just as it has protected the slum landlord. The very problems with which it has purported to deal, it has aggravated. It has made slum clearance harder by the additional burden it has laid on the local authorities through provisions to safeguard landlords and property holders. It has provoked the hideous rash of ribbon building which has spread ugliness throughout the countryside, and against which every lover of Britain's beauty is now crying aloud in horror, and it has created the conditions whereby thousands of poor house purchasers, the hard-driven prey of unscrupulous builders and money-lending building societies, now find themselves in sorry possession of "heart-break houses" and a frightful burden of debt.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They are not paying rent. That is dealing with people buying their own homes.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Of course they are paying rent in many of those areas.

Hon. C. G. Latham: He did not refer to that.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: As a matter of fact, a little while ago when we had an outbreak of slum emotionalism in the city of Perth, and a good deal of criticism with regard to certain slums supposed to exist within the metropolitan area, the agitation was given its quietus by the appearance in the "West Australian" of a letter in regard to conditions in the Old Country in certain slum areas. On the 8th July of this year, over the pen name of "Humanitarian," a writer pointed out that in a place called Stockton-on-Tees slum clearance took place in an area known as Housewives' Lane. The buildings were replaced by houses conforming to modern hygiene, and the area was called "Mount Pleasant" after the reformation. It was pointed out by this correspondent—who quoted a very interesting report in the course of his remarks—that while there was no increased mortality amongst the children born in the new areas, there was a vast increase, as much as 46 per cent., in

the mortality amongst the adults who were moved from the Housewives' Lane slums to the Mount Pleasant building area.

Hon. C. G. Latham: There might have been an outbreak of influenza.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There might, and the hon. member might have suggested that to the committee which was appointed to ascertain what the real cause was. That committee found, however, that it was not due to an outbreak of influenza, and reported thus:—

Several suggestions were investigated, and Dr. McGonigle at length discovered that rents were the clue to the solution. The Housewives' Lane area had low rents. The mean all-in rent per family was 4s. 3d. weekly. In the Mount Pleasant area that figure rose to 9s. a week. To move into the new houses meant 4s. 4d. off the average family food bill. Those in poor circumstances shifted at the risk of ill-health and death. Grown-ups half-starved themselves to pay the higher rents and to feed their children at all costs. House to house inquiries and a collection of family budgets brought to light terrible details of semi-starvation. Unemployed existed on 2s. 10½d. per man per week for food. Under-nourishment was the only discoverable reason for the Stockton-on-Tees tragedy. It is asserted that similar conditions exist in other parts of the land. The great half-starved can be found dying off nearly three times as fast as the community at large. While Mt. Pleasant's death rate rose to 33 per 1,000 persons, the mean death rate of England and Wales hovers round 12 per 1,000.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And he was not game to put his name to the article.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: He signed it "Humanitarian."

Hon. C. G. Latham: Why did he not give his name?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: He quoted from the "London Star" and his remarks could be checked. Those are not the words of the writer; they are an extract from a report in the "London Star."

Hon. C. G. Latham: Did you ever read "Wild Lives" in the "London Star"?

Mr. Marshall: Why read it when we have that sort of thing here?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The quotation I have read is a striking illustration of the importance of the rent item in the cost of living. The whole question of housing is not a social problem but an economic problem. It is not to be remedied by social uplift; it can be remedied only by the control of the rent factor for houses let to tenants, or by making available to the community very cheap houses. The control of rents is an important factor of the housing



problem. The only alternative to control is to throw people into the hands of money-lenders in their endeavour to get houses. The control of the rent factor is of sufficient importance to warrant legislation in many parts of the world. Legislation exists in New South Wales, Queensland, New Zealand, Irish Free State, India, South Africa and many other countries, and it is most desirable that we also should have such legislation. The conditions on the goldfields illustrate the need for it at present. Similar conditions have existed in the metropolitan area, illustrating how desirable it would be to have power to cope with those conditions should they recur. Recently the "West Australian" published an article from a special correspondent on the subject of goldfields housing. He stated that in some instances rents there were outrageously high. In a report that appeared in the "International Labour Review" in 1933 on the subject of "Recent Family Budget Inquiries," the following appeared:—

The figures of housing are difficult to compare internationally, especially on account of the rent regulations in force in many countries. In the Irish Free State the relative expenditure is less than 6 per cent., and in the United States of America it is nearly 28 per cent. of the total expenditure.

I do not think members need more convincing proof of the efficacy of rent control legislation than is provided by that illustration. The International Labour Office has definitely stated that, owing to the rent regulations existing in many countries, it is difficult to make comparisons on an international basis. Six years after the New South Wales Act came into operation—a measure similar to the Bill before us—the Registrar of the Fair Rents Court wrote to the Crown Law Department on the operation of the statute as follows:—

There is no question that the Fair Rents Act has been of great benefit to a very large number of tenants of whom those actually applying to the court may be taken to be a very small number. Many landlords treat their tenants with regard to rent and other matters with due regard to the moral obligation imposed upon them as owners of property in which human beings live, but there are unfortunately others who, as a hard business proposition, appear to consider themselves justified in exacting the last shilling in the way of rent and spending the smallest sum in keeping their houses in order and providing for the health and convenience of their tenants. Some of the agents victimise the tenants by raising the rent out of all proportion to the value of the property in order to procure the sale of properties by guar-

anteeing the purchaser a larger net return than he is entitled to under the Act. There is no doubt that the Act gives a certain measure of relief to such tenants.

That is the experience of fair rents legislation everywhere, as the quotation from the International Labour Office indicates. Rents definitely should be controlled. We fix a basic wage to give a reasonable standard of comfort, and allow more than half of those on the wage so fixed to be exploited by landlords whose rents are above the average. There is a great difference between rent and the other items upon which the basic wage is determined. There is a big gulf between the minimum and maximum rents which determine the average. The average rent is taken into account by the court, and consequently those workers who are paying above the average rent are not receiving sufficient from the basic wage to meet their needs in order to live in that reasonable comfort which we consider right.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Does not the Arbitration Court take rent into consideration?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, but the average rent. If every tenant paid the average rent, there would be no need for legislation of this kind. All landlords are not rapacious. I do not suggest that they are. Some of them must charge less than the average. Their contribution to the statistics is that they are charging less than the average.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What do you think the rent works out at for the Workers' Homes Board?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I cannot say.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You should know.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There are other landlords who charge more than the average. Those are the people who are exploiting their tenants, and it is those tenants this Bill is designed to help. The average rent is one between that which a reasonable landlord would charge and that which an exploiter would charge. Although the average rent usually does not impose conditions upon industry out of proportion to conditions generally, sometimes it happens that high rents in a particular district cause a definite increase in industries' costs. That happened in the metropolitan area in 1929 when an increase of 2s. in the basic wage was definitely attributable to a 3s. increase in rents, whereas the cost of food, clothing and miscellaneous

articles had been reduced by 1s. It seemed that there was a concerted move by landlords at that time to increase rents without justification. That increase in rents imposed an additional burden of £600,000 per annum on industry. I feel sure that, in opposition to the measure, we shall hear something of the law of supply and demand. In Kalgoorlie on one occasion a prospective candidate was asked about the law of supply and demand, and he said it would not have been on the statute-book if Billy Hughes had not put it there. Even had Billy Hughes put it there, he would be very displeased at the exposition of the law of supply and demand sometimes given by members of Parliament and candidates for Parliament. There is no commercial transaction in which the law of supply and demand operates less readily than in the renting of houses. Those who have had experience as tenants know how difficult it is to get a suitable house. Usually a long pursuit is necessary. Three or four months of continuous and sickening search might be involved before a suitable home is found. Because of that, tenants become a prey to exploiting landlords. Landlords, as a result of their experience in letting houses, have a fair idea that tenants encounter this difficulty to find suitable houses. They know that tenants do not leave houses readily. They also know that tenants do not move readily, because of the difficulty of getting houses which suit them. And because of that very fact, tenants generally are a prey to exploiting landlords in the process of renting houses. There is another aspect which interferes with the law of supply and demand in the matter of renting houses—that in many instances workers have to live near their work and consequently are compelled to rent premises at higher rentals than they would pay if they were able to take advantage of the full supply of houses available in the metropolitan area. There is also the question of moving from one house to another. It is seldom that a person, once he has got into a house, can move into another under a cost of £5 or £6. If the landlord comes along and raises the rent a shilling a week, the tenant thinks twice before he shifts as a protest, since it would take two years before the cost of removal would be overtaken by the saving of the additional shilling per week. These factors in the matter of renting of houses by tenants undoubtedly interfere

with the law of supply and demand as regards housing generally. Personally, I feel that landlords who are in the business for the purpose of renting houses are definitely seized with a desire to get as much as they can from tenants. At the same time I would say that landlords can be divided into three categories. Firstly, there are those who are fairly reasonable with tenants. Secondly, there are those who look upon their houses as definite business propositions and demand the right to fix their own rents, and would sooner let their houses stand empty for 12 months than rent them below the figure they have fixed. Thirdly, there is the type ready to exploit all the circumstances of the situation which happens to exist.

Hon. C. G. Latham: There are not too many in the No. 2 category.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There are some. And there are a number in the last category, the exploiters; or, if they are not great in number, they control numerous houses in goldfields areas throughout the State, and have been definitely exploiting the circumstances existing with regard to housing generally. I do not know how long this Chamber proposes to tolerate conditions that make such exploitation possible. It has been going on for the last three or four years in a district in which there is an industry to which recently there has been a great transference of labour. We have to face the fact, in connection with labour and in connection with industry generally, that as the result of technical improvements in industry we shall have in future the necessity for transference of labour from one industry to another arising rapidly. As a result, conditions will be set up making it very difficult for workers to own their homes; and they will have to rely upon houses rented from landlords in one district or another.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is a very good argument for higher rents, you know.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Workers will be compelled to move for the purpose of seeking employment. I would not object to the increase in rents on the goldfields if the increase imposed had been a fair increase. There has certainly been some improvement in the capital value of property in goldfields districts; and if the increase in rent had been comparable with the increase in capital values, there

would not be so much room for complaint. But what actually happens, and has been happening, is that the capital values of property have been ignored in the fixing of rents. As a result of the transfer of labour to which I have referred, there has been a demand somewhat in excess of the supply; and because of that excess in demand for houses which has existed during the past three or four years, landlords and house owners who let houses have been able to demand extortionate rents from prospective tenants. They have used the excess, too, for the purpose of demanding excessive rents from existing tenants, under the threat of termination of tenancy. Many of the houses in the district to which I refer would, I believe, be condemned in the metropolitan area as unfit for human habitation. In fact, I believe I can say that many of them would be condemned where they are as being unfit for human habitation but for the house shortage which exists there at present. If those buildings were condemned, it would only render the house shortage still more acute. The average rent supposed to prevail on the Eastern Goldfields is 24s. per week for a four-roomed or five-roomed house. This average, of course, is far below what one would have to pay when endeavouring to rent a house. I do not suppose that at present, if one were fortunate enough to find an empty house in that district, one could get it under £2 a week for a four-roomed or five-roomed house. In this Chamber we have recently heard the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Styants) quoting numerous instances of four-roomed, and some five-roomed, houses minus such amenities as bathrooms and wash-houses; and yet in each case the rent paid was higher than the average rent that enters into the computation for fixing the basic wage in that district. It would be interesting to see the figures from Kalgoorlie and Boulder on which the average rent is based. I know that the average rent for the goldfields areas—meaning the areas outside the South-West Division of the State—is based on the average rent prevailing around Kalgoorlie and Boulder. However, it would be interesting to see the figures from those particular districts, so that we might learn how the average of 24s. is arrived at, that being the average supposed to prevail in Kalgoorlie and Boulder. The fact is that the figures are returned by agents, many of

whom are themselves owners, and in some cases are exploiters of tenants. I venture to say that in Kalgoorlie one could not get a house for a rent representing less than a fifty per cent. increase on the so-called average rent. Those who are charging above the average rent, unless for a house possessing special virtues or a house of modern design with exceptional conveniences, are definitely exploiting their tenants. It is at exploiters of situations such as I have described that this legislation is aimed. There is no need for legislation of this nature as regards some landlords. Similarly, during the recent depression, there was no need with respect to some mortgagees to introduce legislation controlling them relatively to their mortgagors. But there is at all times a certain element ready to take advantage of such situations. It is for that element legislation like this, and legislation such as that brought in during the depression, is required. I do not wish to detain the House by reading from an article appearing in the "West Australian" of the 20th of the current month. That article gives a pretty good description of housing conditions existing on the Eastern Goldfields at present. The instances quoted by the member for Kalgoorlie of landlords definitely exploiting tenants are supplemented in that article by many other instances. It will be argued, as it has been argued here previously, that this type of legislation will discourage building. Those who use such an argument have a stock-exchange type of mind. They can see no good in anything that does not offer opportunities to exploit those whom they are endeavouring to exploit. To the contention that this legislation will discourage building, I answer that it will not discourage the genuine type of enterpriser who deserves to be encouraged. In my opinion, no legislation proposing to ensure conditions which are reasonable between landlord and tenant can be subject to very serious objection. If it should be contended that such a measure as this will discourage building, that is tantamount to saying that those who engage in this form of enterprise engage in it because of the opportunities it offers for exploiting people. Members generally can argue that way if they like, because it only makes the case stronger for rent fixation. Generally speaking, I think that under fair and reasonable

conditions it cannot be denied that building homes offers a pretty sound investment. The Bill will not disturb its soundness; all that it asks is that a fair rent in all the circumstances be struck. In the census taken in 1933 it was shown that in this State there were 103,578 occupied dwellings, and 4,029 unoccupied, while 260 were being built. Of the occupied dwellings, exclusive of hotels, boarding houses, etc., there were 97,308 private houses and 3,133 tenements, or a total of 100,441. The occupancy of the private dwellings and tenements in the Commonwealth showed as follows:—

	Ownership or Acquiring Same.	Tenanted.
	per cent.	per cent.
Queensland ...	63·9	30·3
South Australia ...	59·1	36·8
Western Australia ...	61·8	33·3
Victoria ...	57·4	38·7
New South Wales ...	61·6	43·9
Tasmania ...	61·2	42·6

In Western Australia private dwellings occupied by tenants numbered 31,398 and tenements and flats 2,725, or a total of 34,123. The number of private houses of from three to six rooms with walls of wood, brick or stone occupied by tenants in Western Australia were as follows:—

	Rooms.				
	3.	4.	5.	6.	3 to 6.
Walls of Wood	1,360	5,411	2,869	1,012	10,652
Walls of Brick or Stone ...	1,153	6,018	4,231	2,189	12,591
Total ...	2,513	10,429	7,100	3,201	23,243

Of the 96,028 private houses for which particulars concerning rooms were stated at the 1933 census:

1933—

- 7.5 per cent.—One room.
- 5.6 per cent.—Two rooms.
- 8.2 per cent.—Three rooms.
- 31.5 per cent.—Four rooms.
- 25.2 per cent.—Five rooms.
- 13.5 per cent.—Six rooms.
- 5.0 per cent.—Seven rooms.
- 1.9 per cent.—Eight rooms.
- 1.6 per cent.—More than eight rooms.

It is significant that 52.8 per cent. of the total private dwellings are of four rooms or less, whilst at the same time 70.2 per cent. are of four, five or six rooms. The average

number of rooms of all private houses in Western Australia, 4.44, was lower than that for any other State in the Commonwealth. Since the 1921 census, the private dwellings in Western Australia in the under 10s. per week rental group increased in number by 3.7 per cent.; those between 10s. per week and £1 increased by 28 per cent.; between £1 and £1 10s. increased by 91 per cent.; between £2 and £2 10s. increased by 79 per cent.; and those over £2 10s. per week increased by 18 per cent. There are many other interesting tables disclosed by the census to be found in numbers 21 and 23 of the census bulletins, if members are interested in them. But they mostly deal with average figures and average rents. The Bill is not designed to reach out to those who are charging average rents as disclosed by statistics. As I said before, if landlords did not charge more than the average of the goldfields areas of 24s. a week, there would be no room for complaint. If they did not charge more in the metropolitan area than the average of 18s. 1d. per week, there would be no complaint, and if they did not charge more than 16s. 6d., the average rate throughout the rural or the South-West land division, there would be no complaint. But the Bill definitely reaches out to those who are exploiting the situation in which tenants find themselves in the goldfields area and in many instances throughout the country and rural districts.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: What happens when the goldfields peter out?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: What happens when wheat or wool peters out? They say that the gold mining industry is a wasting asset. But it is one of those wasting assets that are always renewing themselves. The gold mining industry generally throughout the world has been just as active and prosperous as any other industry.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Only for a short period.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: And it has been perpetuated throughout the centuries in a fairly active condition ever since the days of King Solomon.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Go to New South Wales, or Victoria, or New Zealand, and see the deserted gold mining areas there. Look at Ballarat.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Because they found other ways of making use of the districts there, just as they will find

other ways of making use of districts where gold mining is carried on to-day. There are still possibilities in gold mining districts for industries other than that of gold. However, I do not know that I shall be in order in discussing that aspect of the question any further just now. But I definitely say the Bill is intended to reach out to those landlords who are exploiting tenants in the goldfields areas today, and exploiting them elsewhere throughout the State, by threats to terminate tenancies, or using threats to extort a higher rental as an alternative to the cost and inconvenience of moving, or are taking advantage of booms in certain districts to demand higher rents. Like the mortgagee whom we dealt with in the financial emergency legislation, the landlord who will exploit his tenant is to be found everywhere in the State, not only in the goldfields districts, but in the metropolitan area, and in the rural districts. There is perhaps only a small percentage of landlords that definitely need to be dealt with. Such a landlord is of a type that does more harm than anything else I know of to the investment of money in building. A bad landlord is a breeder of bad tenants, in whom he inculcates a resentment against the whole body of landlords. The Bill will promote the interests of both tenants and landlords, that is to say, landlords of a type that is reasonable and deserves to be encouraged. The Bill generally will vest in local courts jurisdiction to determine rents and exercise other powers conferred on the courts under its provisions. The determination of rents under the Bill is confined to dwelling houses. In this regard it will generally be confined to rents of £156 per annum or less.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Do not you think that rents should be higher on the fields?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: But nothing will prevent a tenant who is paying more than that from applying to the court to determine the rent. The rent determination by the court shall be the fair rent, calculated on the basis of the capital value of the dwelling house. Such capital value will be the capital sum that the fee simple of the property comprising the dwelling house and the land occupied by it, is expected to realise if offered for sale on such reasonable terms and conditions as a bona fide seller would require. A fair rent determination from this basis shall be such as would give a return on the capital value of not less than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. above the rate of interest being

charged upon overdraft for the time being by the Commonwealth Bank, plus an allowance for the annual rates of the same; the amounts estimated to be required annually for repairs, including painting, maintenance and renewals; insurance on buildings, and the amount estimated to be the annual depreciation in the value of the dwelling house, if such depreciation diminishes its letting value. Provision is made for the determination of a "fair rent" for portion of a dwelling house which is occupied by two or more separate lessees. In addition to determining the "fair rent" of the dwelling house, it can further determine the fair rent of the furniture in the case of dwelling houses let as furnished. Application to have a fair rent determined will be made to the court held nearest to the situation of the dwelling house, and it can be made either by the lessor or lessee. Where the dwelling house is subject to a mortgage, the mortgagee must be notified of the proceedings. Care is taken in the measure to see that tenants are not frustrated in their rights to take action for the determination of a fair rent, by notices to quit and such like. When the court determines the rent, that shall be the rent from the date of determination, except where an increase is made, in which case it will not operate for 14 days. The determination shall remain in force for 12 months and no application shall be made to vary it within that period except the lessor can show he has made substantial additions, or his outgoings have increased. Under no circumstances shall the rent paid by the lessee be in excess of the fair rent, and the lessor shall be guilty of an offence if by any subterfuge he extracts from his tenant more than fair rent. Contracting out will be prohibited and will be an offence under the Bill. If the tenant duly pays the rent no increase in the rent can be demanded during the period, but in certain circumstances, such as the non-payment of rent, or the sale of the dwelling house, the tenancy can be terminated at 28 days' notice. Other provisions are mostly the usual machinery clauses in Bills of this character. I commend the Bill to the favourable consideration of the House, and move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Watts, debate adjourned.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1936-37.

*In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 22nd October, Mr. Sleeman in the Chair.

*Department of Public Works (Hon. H. Millington, Minister).*

*Vote—Public Works and Buildings, £91,688:*

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn) [9.5]: It is usual when introducing the Revenue Estimates to present a brief resume of the activities of the department during the preceding year. The expenditure last year was—From revenue, ordinary public works and buildings £88,518; from revenue votes for maintenance and other charges, including interest and sinking fund—Goldfields Water Supply £114,411; other hydraulic undertakings, £51,092; a total of £165,503; from loan funds, including expenditure from Loan Suspense Account, £995,285, making a grand total of £1,249,306. In addition, an amount of £137,240 was expended by the department in connection with works not provided for on the Estimates under my control, the main items of this expenditure being—Commonwealth Employment Scheme grants £69,700; local water boards, hospital funds, etc., £67,540, a total of £137,240. A comparison between the total figures and the total expenditure for the year 1935-36 from all sources, namely £1,386,546, and the total expenditure for the previous year, namely £1,390,000, shows a decrease of £3,544. The dissection of the total expenditure referred to of £1,386,546, plus the expenditure on factories, arbitration and town planning (total £10,327) is as under—

	£
Salaries and incidentals .. ..	87,652
Harbours and rivers .. ..	311,899
Water supplies, drainage and irrigation .. ..	666,145
Roads and bridges .. ..	132,930
Public buildings .. ..	182,590
Miscellaneous .. ..	15,657
	<hr/>
	£1,396,873

The principal works undertaken by the department last year were—

	£
Bunbury Harbour—further progress in dredging .. ..	75,038
Fremantle Harbour—continuation of renewal of quay, etc .. ..	93,344

Geraldton Harbour—work towards completion of improvements scheme .. ..	48,636
Swan River improvements .. ..	15,644
Roebourne Harbour facilities—Completion of Point Samson jetty .. ..	27,588
Water Supplies—	
Geraldton Water Supply—relaying gravitation main, Wieherina to Geraldton, and installation of further pumping machinery .. ..	12,511
Other works—improving Geraldton water supply .. ..	1,905
Narrogin Water Supply—further improvements to mains .. ..	750
Improvements to wells on stock routes .. ..	2,887
Goldfields Water Supply—	
Further progress in renewing main conduit and steel and wood pipes .. ..	231,421
Branch mains .. ..	3,520
New extensions in mining districts—	
Marvel Loch and Burbidge .. ..	38,280
Coolgardie and Norseman extension .. ..	58,024
Bullfinch main .. ..	14,733
Yellowdine extension (Palmer's Find) .. ..	5,771

In connection with the supplies to Norseman, Marvel Loch and Yellowdine, deposits have been lodged by the companies interested towards the cost of the extensions, the department agreeing to allow the amount of water consumed at the rates agreed upon, to be deducted from the deposit when the water is available. The deposits are as under—Marvel Loch Gold Development Co., £6,300 lodged and £6,300 still to be paid. Burbidge extension, Great Victoria G.M. Co., £10,000 lodged. Yellowdine extension, Yellowdine Gold Development Co., £3,000 lodged. Norseman extension, Spargo's Reward G.M. Co., £5,000 lodged, £5,000 still to be paid; Central Norseman G.M. Co., £11,000 lodged £12,000 still to be paid; Norseman Gold Mines Ltd. £10,000 lodged. The expenditure on water supplies in agricultural areas, drainage and irrigation was as follows:—

	£
Completion of Harvey River diversion .. ..	19,472
Harvey irrigation and drainage .. ..	7,364
Warroona irrigation and drainage .. ..	4,567
South Bunbury drainage area .. ..	7,730
Collie irrigation and drainage .. ..	6,034
Other drainage works .. ..	14,121
	<hr/>
	£59,288

The expenditure on boring operations in country lands, and improvements to and extensions of existing reticulation mains, additional standpipes and equipment of bores and wells, including small tanks at Dukin,

Billaricay, Kalannie, Karloning and Lake Grace North, totalled £43,852. The expenditure on water supplies—eastern and other goldfields, was as follows:—Improvements to the Leonora water supply £5,179; Menzies water supply £4,130; and on other smaller works £4,497, a total of £13,806. The improvements and additions to abattoirs involved an expenditure of £5,845. On roads and bridges—continuation of road programmes—there was spent £132,903. This amount includes £19,441 spent on the Northam-York-Cranbrook-road, and £36,308 spent on the Coolgardie-Kalgoorlie-road. On public buildings—new schools and quarters, including the new Perth Girls' School, there was spent £67,834. Of that amount the new Girls' School expenditure came to £50,642. On additions to hospitals there was spent £1,082, on police stations and quarters £2,266, and on minor works £3,609, a total of £74,791. The estimated amount of revenue from all sources for the year 1935-36 was £272,298, while the actual revenue received was £322,214, showing a surplus of £49,916 on the estimate for the year. From the figures quoted it will be seen that, although the expenditure on works totals £1,386,546, per contra the department was able to collect from the services controlled, revenue to the extent of £322,214. The estimated revenue for the year 1936-37 is as follows:—Public Works, £18,200; factories, £5,600; Arbitration, £400; Town planning, £50; Goldfields Water Supply, £260,000; Other hydraulic undertakings, £63,000; a total of £347,250. This amount shows an increase of £25,036 on the actual amount collected last year. I have here details of the expenditure incurred last year, and to be incurred this year. The main activity of the Public Works Department relates to the expenditure of loan funds. It controls the goldfields water supply amongst other things. This can be discussed under the heading of Public Utilities. It also controls the activities of the Main Roads Board, which distribute over half a million pounds per annum. It also attends to all public buildings for every Government department. These matters can be discussed when the Loan Estimates are before us. The Revenue Estimates do not constitute a very large item. Our actual activities will be better portrayed when the Loan Estimates are being considered.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Does the Transport Board come under this heading?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. The Transport Board is self-contained. Its report has been laid on the Table of the House. I shall be pleased to answer any questions or supply any further information.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [9.17]: I understand this Vote deals with the Town Planning Board and all executive works in the metropolitan area. I also understand the Public Works Department will handle the erection of poles for the trolley-bus route and supervise the laying of the main road between Perth and Fremantle. Now should be the time at which to stress the point that the residents of Claremont and Nedlands are very hopeful, seeing that a little argument has been settled in this Chamber—

The Minister for Works: That matter will come under the Railway items when the Loan Estimates for that department are introduced. The Public Works Department will have nothing to do with it.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [9.18]: I wish to lodge a protest regarding the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook road. We have had discussions on this subject with the Minister, and his decision has recently been communicated to the members of Parliament concerned. Some years ago a railway was authorised between these two points, but was not proceeded with. In lieu of the railway a main road was constructed, and thereon a subsidised transport service has been running for the past 12 months. When the road was completed it traversed many farming properties. Most of the properties were bisected. Applications were subsequently made by the settlers for assistance in having the fencing of their properties put right. Had the railways gone through the area the only traffic that would have passed along the line would have consisted of locomotives, coaches and trucks. On the other hand all sorts of traffic pass along the roads, livestock, motor vehicles, etc., and the properties bordering on the road are completely open to it. To overcome the difficulty, in the opinion of the department, cattle stops and gates were erected. These cattle stops have to be of a type that would enable motor traffic to pass over them. They were, therefore, quite different from the type of cattle pit that would have been

used had the railway been built. There can be no doubt that the stops act very differently from railway pits, and it has not been possible to prevent stock from roaming from one property to another. In addition, gates were placed alongside the cattle stops apparently for the use of travelling stock and horse-drawn vehicles. On frequent occasions the gates have been left open with sad results in the case of much of the stock belonging to the settlers. Representations were made to the Minister by the settlers through correspondence and by deputation. On the 26th August we were informed that the Director of Works had assured the Minister that the safeguards provided by the department were reasonably adequate, and that no more would have been done if a railway line had been constructed. The position as it stands today is decidedly unjust to the settlers. To indicate the saving that has been effected by the State in consequence of the road having been constructed instead of the railway, I would refer to the 1935 report of the Transport Board. This discloses that the estimated cost of the proposed Cranbrook-Boyup Brook railway was £451,000, and that the Bill authorising its construction was passed and the money appropriated in 1926. If the work had then been proceeded with the interest charges based on  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. would have been £22,805 per annum. Even allowing for possible increased settlement in this area the board were definitely of the opinion that the taxpayers would have incurred a severe annual loss for many years if the line had been constructed. I do not know what the road cost, but it was much less than the sum mentioned. The State has saved both in capital and annual expenditure consequent upon the railway not having been built. Had the railway been constructed the difficulties confronting the settlers would not have been nearly so great as they are to-day, but the State would have been put to much more expense. The subsidised transport scheme costs the State £500 a year, and is serving the settlers in a satisfactory way. In all the circumstances the decision of the department should be reviewed. The Main Roads Act sets out that whenever land is required for the purposes of the Act it may be taken under the powers contained in and following the procedure prescribed by the Public Works Act of 1902. The question of resumptions, which

have been made for the construction of the road, has only just been finalised, and claims for compensation are just about to be made. The Public Works Act states that except by agreement no fencing shall be removed from any land that is enclosed by a fence without adequate provision being made for the security of the land fenced. The circumstances of these settlers are deserving of consideration under that Act. Their land was enclosed by a sufficient fence, and for the purposes of this public utility the fences have been cut. The provision that has been made in lieu of re-fencing is inadequate, and to all intents and purposes, the lands remain unfenced. Under Section 149 of the Road Districts Act road boards are compelled to fence lands that are taken for roads at the request of the owner. The settlers who comprised the deputation offered, if given the necessary material, to do most of the work themselves. In the circumstances the department have not meted out justice to these people both in refusing to re-fence the properties and in not supplying the material with which the work could be done. The department also claim that they have no further obligation, having erected cattle stops and gates. According to the evidence of reputable citizens these facilities are totally inadequate. An injustice has been done to the settlers, but the State has saved a great deal of money. Some effort should be made to have the matter reconsidered.

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington) [9.28]: I should be obliged if the Minister could give some further information about the water shortage in the Harvey irrigation area. The Irrigation Commission as a result of their efforts will, I hope, be able to overcome the difficulty for this season. This will be done by ensuring the more economic use of water, by cementing the channels, and by doing other necessary things. What I am concerned about is the future. Some thousand acres of land have had to be excised from No. 2 area and the settlers there have been eliminated.

The **CHAIRMAN**: I think the hon. member had better deal with this when we come to the vote dealing with hydraulic undertakings.

**Mr. McLARTY**: I will continue my remarks on that Vote.



**HON. P. D. FERGUSON** (Irwin-Moore) [9.31]: I wish to make a brief reference to some of the activities of the Transport Board and to point out to the Minister, and through him to the board, one direction in which action could be taken of considerable advantage to a section of the people living along the Midland line. I wish to refer to railway freights as they affect the people with regard to whose welfare I am concerned. There is a considerable section of the farming community living at centres along the Midland railways, and the hardships they have had to contend with compared with their fellow producers in other parts of the State demand considerable attention at the hands of the Minister. There is one way in which the Transport Board could, and should, assist them. Railway freights have operated harshly on that section of the farming community. The settlers along the Midland line are paying higher freights than those served by Government lines and any steps that can be taken to relieve them of that burden should be undertaken. When Western Australia entered into an agreement with investors in London to construct a line from Midland Junction to Champion Bay, provision was made that no higher freight should be charged over that line than operated on the eastern railway, which was the only other agricultural railway in the State at that time. The provision was all right in those days, but a lot of water has passed under the bridge since then. Many concessions have been granted to the users of Government railways that have not been applied to those using the Midland Railway system. I will mention one or two instances in order to bring home to the Minister the necessity for inducing the Transport Board to take action to alleviate the burden imposed upon the Midland settlers. Years ago Parliament reduced the land tax and increased railway freights to reimburse the Treasurer for any losses resulting from the reduced land tax. That was a laudable object intended to encourage farm production in the interests of the railways, and the railways benefited considerably. The reduced railway freights do not apply to the settlers on the Midland line. So long as the land tax was in existence, they paid the increased land tax and also the original freight charges that had not been reduced. The Minister may say

that has no application because the land tax has been wiped out, but, nevertheless, that represented a considerable impost on the Midland settlers. I may cite another instance. At a later date there was a dispute between the Midland Railway Company and their employees. Arising out of the settlement of the trouble, a further increase in freights was applied to the Midland settlers. Originally the Midland Company and the Government imposed a freight charge in combination. Practically all goods to and from settlements on the Midland line have to be conveyed over a portion of the Midland line and portion of the State system. The original freights were charged from the point of consignment to the point of destination.

The **CHAIRMAN**: Does the hon. member intend to link up his remarks with the vote?

**Hon. P. D. FERGUSON**: Yes, I wish to make a direct suggestion to the board regarding the alleviation of the situation. In the settlement of the industrial dispute a scheme was devised by which the freight charges were cut into two. For instance, the freight charged from Fremantle to Walkaway originally was later divided into two charges, one of which applied over the Midland railway from Midland Junction to Walkaway and the other over the portion of the State system traversed. Instead of having one long distance freight, the charges were divided into two shorter distance freights, which meant an addition of from eight to ten per cent. on the charges to settlers. That impost is still in operation as an additional charge. When the Transport Board commenced operations, they restricted road competition with respect to both the State railways and the Midland Company's line. The result of those restrictions was a considerable increase in the tonnage hauled by the railways, and the Commissioner of Railways was able to report increased returns. He promptly reduced freights on the Government railways by not less than £50,000 per year. The Midland Railway Company did not follow suit, and the original higher rates still continued, notwithstanding that road transport had been obliterated. That is one grievance I have against the Transport Board who were appointed to achieve transport co-ordination. As a result of their operations a directly opposite

effect is apparent with regard to the Midland settlers. Road competition has been completely cut out respecting the Midland areas. There are many ways in which road transport can be beneficial to the settlers, particularly to those who live some distance away from the railways and who are engaged in the production of sidelines, in addition to their ordinary farming operations. The railways do not meet the requirements of those settlers at all. Generally speaking, my main argument against the Transport Board is that road competition has been completely annihilated, yet only the users of the State railway system have benefited by the consequent reduction in freights, whereas the management of the Midland Railway Company have not fallen into line. I want the Transport Board to bring some pressure to bear on the Midland Railway Company. The company have received the added advantage of relief from road competition, which means that they have been given a monopoly of the transportation work in the Midland district. In those circumstances it is up to the company to grant the users of the Midland line concessions similar to those enjoyed by the users of the State railway system. I suggest to the Minister that he discuss this matter with the members of the Transport Board in an endeavour to bring about some adjustment beneficial to those on whose behalf I am speaking. I desire to read to members a letter I despatched to the General Manager of the Midland Railway Company and his reply to my communication. My letter to the General Manager was as follows:—

My interest in and concern for the welfare of residents of the Midlands districts, and all users of the Midland railway, constitute the justification for this letter, the purport of which is to urge the advisability of your company adopting in toto the rates as set out in the new rate book of the State railways.

The numerous anomalies existing, most of them operating to the disadvantage of Midland settlers, constitute a state of affairs which should not be allowed to exist any longer. They represent a serious nuisance so far as railway clients generally are concerned, and also a considerable financial burden upon those who are called upon to pay freights—in most cases the producer, who, owing to the difficult times he is experiencing on account of continued depressed commodity prices, is unable to stand up to it.

The activities of the Transport Board in eliminating road competition with the State railways have resulted in a reduction of certain freights on the State system. The Transport Board has similarly reduced road competition

for your company, and its users have every justification for their request that equivalent reductions should be made in the rates charged on your line.

I feel sure the justice of this claim will appeal to you.

For many years it has been the practice of the Government railways to periodically make certain reductions or concessions to clients, in the majority of which clients of the Midland Company have not been privileged to participate. This differential treatment is resented, as it places Midland residents at a disadvantage in comparison with other citizens of the State.

In my opinion excellent opportunity exists at the moment to abolish this state of affairs, and put every producer in Western Australia on an equal basis in so far as rail freights (a very considerable item in their costs of production) are concerned. The opportunity to do this rests with you. Will you seize it, and thereby prove to your customers your interest in their material welfare? By using the Government rate-book in toto this much-to-be-desired and long-looked-for adjustment of heavy disabilities will be achieved.—Yours faithfully, (Sgd.) P. D. Ferguson.

The General Manager's reply to my letter was as follows:—

I am in receipt of your letter of the 12th inst., and while I appreciate the interest you have so frequently shown in the affairs of the Midland district, and of this railway, I regret to say that I cannot see my way clear to keep step with the Government in its railway management.

Our respective conditions, as you will readily see, differ at many points and particularly in this, that the Government railways pay no rates or taxes and the deficits arising from their operations are merely debited to the public Treasury. It is, I think, unnecessary for me to say that no private company is in this happy position, and for a private company to attempt to carry on business as though it were would certainly not be sound financial practice.

Our rates are now under review largely with the object of simplifying the schedule, but while I am aiming at some reductions in considering the interests of our customers, I must not overlook those of the company whose money is invested in the enterprise. I thank you, however, for your letter. Yours faithfully, (Sgd.) J. J. Poynton, General Manager.

That is the position as it exists to-day and it is entirely unsatisfactory from the point of view of the users of the Midland Railway. While the General Manager has concerned himself with the interests of the company, the interests of the company's clients are permitted to go by the board. The Midland settler has to pay increased rates for the transport of all his commodities over the railway system which he is compelled to use because the Transport

Board have cut out all competition. At the same time, the Midland settlers, as general taxpayers of the State, have to pay their portion of any loss that may be incurred by the State railways. That is entirely unsatisfactory. As residents in an area that is part and parcel of the State, the people of the Midland district resent this differential treatment that is meted out to them. It is true that the Midland railway, like the State railways, is a developmental utility. At the time the Midland railway line was constructed, it is quite probable that, owing to the parlous condition of the finances at the time, the State could not have undertaken the work. In that event, the people residing in the Midland areas would have had no transport facilities at all. Having been provided by a private company with those necessary facilities, it is the duty of Parliament and the Government to see that those settlers receive fair and equitable treatment at the hands of the State. While that is so, it is not right that people who happen to be living in those areas—and many went there because they could not get land adjacent to a Government railway system—should be mulct in charges over and above those levied on their fellow producers in other parts of the State who are fortunate enough to have properties situated near the State railway line. I ask the Government to consider the question of subsidising the Midland Railway Company to enable them to bring about a reduction of freights to a level similar to that operating on the State railway system. I hope the Minister will take the matter up with the Transport Board, to see whether something cannot be done to reduce freights, or to bring about a re-introduction of some of the road transport which operated prior to the advent of the Transport Board.

**MR. NEEDHAM** (Perth) [9.46]: When the Minister is replying to this debate, I hope he will give information as to the intentions of his department regarding the work on the foreshore. The difficulty at present, I understand, concerns the control of a certain part of the river foreshore. His predecessor in office went into the matter, and a joint committee, consisting of a representative of the Works Department and the City Council, was appointed to determine the question of control. This was to be followed by a determination of the purpose to which the area was to be devoted. The last information I

had was that there was to be a meeting of the joint committee. I do not know whether the committee has met, but I would like to know. Since the deputation which waited upon the previous Minister for Works, about 18 months ago on this matter, there has been one meeting of the committee. I suggest to the Minister that an effort should be made to find out what the position is. I think the City Council is prepared to spend a fair amount of money to complete the riverside drive, and thus add to the beautification of the river front. The scheme is not only idealistic, but practical, because once the scheme is completed from the Causeway round to the end of Bazaar terrace, the congestion of traffic which exists to-day in St. George's terrace at certain periods of the day and night will be considerably relieved.

**MR. FOX** (South Fremantle) [9.50]: I should like the Minister to give some consideration to the rebuilding of Robb's Jetty. All the cattle that are transported from the North-West are discharged at Robb's Jetty, and very little has been done to the jetty for a great number of years. While the work would not be very extensive, and would not employ a large number of men for a considerable period, it would at least give a certain amount of work to many in the metropolitan area, and satisfy a very urgent need of shippers to discharge their cargo there safely.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn, in reply) [9.51]: In reply to the member for Kataning, I remember the deputation and the correspondence in connection with the road which was put in on the surveyed route of the Cranbrook-Boypup Brook railway. I was under the impression that the residents along that line had been treated fairly by the Main Roads Board. A very fine road has been put in at considerable expense. The sleepers used could be utilised for a railway if it were decided to put one in. A member suggested that the £500 subsidy was the only expense the Government had been put to. When a road is put in, there is no revenue derived from the road, but considerable expense is incurred in the building of it. So, instead of these people thinking they have a grievance in regard to some twopenny-halfpenny fence, they should consider themselves as having been treated very fairly.

Whoever decided not to build a railway was responsible for a very wise decision, for it would not have been justified. I asked these people why they wanted a railway; they said, "To cart our super." But they had already, in those days—before the Transport Board—made up their minds they were going to cart their wool by truck, so we would have had the pleasure of carting their super. at under cost, and they would have carted their wool by truck. The road that has been put in has been of great advantage to the people. I am not sure whether I have been misled by the official report. I do not know whether the hon. member is a better judge of cattle pits than the engineers, and whether they have misled me in saying that these are similar to those on railway lines, and would be as good a security against straying stock. The report I got and sent to the hon. member was to the effect that the pits were satisfactory. I think there is still some delay in respect to compensation on account of the delay in the survey. Reports have recently come to hand in that connection, and I hope the matter will soon be fixed up. I think these people are making a lot of fuss and actually the road that has been put through, instead of being a disability, has been of great advantage.

Mr. Watts: We will prove the cattle-pit story to you if you come there.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Does the hon. member suggest that he and I should set ourselves up as a reference board to say whether the engineers are right or not?

Mr. Seward: If the cattle get through, there is the proof.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I shall have inquiries made into the complaint. I advise the hon. member to encourage his people not to make complaints over trifles, but to evince some gratitude for the first-class road they have got. With regard to the remarks of the member for Irwin-Moore (Hon. P. D. Ferguson), the question as to whether we can subsidise the Midland railway is one for the Treasurer and the Railway Department. I realise that to an extent the settlers along the Midland line have been penalised for a number of years. It is not so easy to deal with the smart manager of a company as it is to deal with the Commissioner of Railways. After all, in spite of the suggestion that the Commissioner is not subject to political influence, he is subject to governmental policy, and it is

governmental policy that has reduced the freights on Government railways, and just recently refused to increase them, although it would have been a business proposition to do so. I will bring the other suggestion of the hon. member under the notice of the Transport Board. It may be that if the Board suggested that trucks should again compete, the manager of the company might be induced to make some concessions. That is the only way the screw can be put on the manager and he is not the kind of man to whom the screw can be applied easily. Concerning the remarks of the member for Perth, I have received departmental reports containing recommendations regarding the river foreshore, but the joint committee has not met. If the suggestions made regarding the beautification of the foreshore can be carried out, it will be a wonderful place. I am hopeful something will be done.

Mr. Needham: When?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Having received recommendations from the departmental officers I find it is necessary to ask the Treasurer the same question. When will the money be available for the work? There are people who will suggest that money could be spent in more profitable ways than in the mere beautification of the foreshore. I am hopeful that the question of the control of the foreshore will soon be settled. At present, control is exercised by three or four authorities, including the State Gardens Board, the Subiaco Municipal Council, and the Nedlands Road Board. If we can settle the question of control, it will be possible to deal definitely with the foreshore, and the Perth City Council will be able to spend some money on it also. I received the report today and shall endeavour to hurry the work along. I was not aware previously that Robb's Jetty was unsuitable for the landing of cattle. This, of course, is a seasonal trade. I have an idea that in the Fremantle district there are other works more urgent. I shall certainly make sure that the cattle from the North-West are not endangered, and if the jetty is in a bad condition, it will receive attention.

Item, Maintenance Works, including maintenance of dredges and barges, mooring buoys, jetties, embankments and general maintenance of harbour and river works, £5,000:

Mr. McLARTY: Work was done some months ago on the river bar at Mandurah,

the local people subscribing towards the cost. The Director of Works and the Engineer for Harbours and Rivers visited Mandurah and made a report. The bar was opened under the direction of the engineer, and has been open for a few months, but I am informed that it is closing again. I understand that a recommendation was made to the Minister that something should be done to the breakwater. So far nothing has been done. The fact of the bar being closed prevents the water flowing in from the sea. The livelihood of 70 or 80 fishermen is affected, as the fish are unable to enter the river. Many of the fish in the lakes and upper reaches of the river are dying owing to the shallowness of the water. This is a very serious matter for the people of the district, because the fishermen are able to catch only a few fish, and their living is jeopardised. I ask that immediate investigations be made with a view to keeping the bar open permanently.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Factories, £5,200; Arbitration Court, £4,550; Town Planning, £1,450; and State Accident Insurance Office, £8,704—agreed to.*

*Department of Minister for Agriculture (Hon. F. J. S. Wise, Minister).*

*Vote—Agriculture, £93,432:*

*[Mr. Withers took the Chair.]*

### THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [10.5]: In reviewing the introduction of the Estimates of the Department of Agriculture over a long period of years, I find they have invariably been popularly received and, judging by the enthusiasm of members opposite, I feel sure that this year will prove to be no exception. It is unfortunate that we are passing through such a serious position seasonally. The past two years have been such as to cause very serious concern to all those engaged in any form of rural activity. The Department of Agriculture have a very serious responsibility and a very important function to perform in assisting all concerned in agriculture, no matter in which line they might be interested. The Minister for Lands, in introducing his Estimates, explained fully the seriousness of the situation arising from the depletion of our flocks and herds, due to drought, and the shrinkage in our national income, due to poor crops, the

destruction by drought being probably up to a million or more of the sheep of the State. Although we are passing through an anxious period, we have many months to go before much relief can be expected. The Estimates of the Department of Agriculture always necessitate a statistical review of many of our major primary industries. While it is not my desire to weary the Committee by giving a full statistical review of the returns from agriculture, there are some that I should like to mention. The Estimates on this occasion have been increased appreciably. An additional £14,500 has been made available to be expended in several ways. The additional work to be embarked upon will include extra field officers in various branches, their appointment being in furtherance of much work now being undertaken, and in an endeavour to investigate new and increasing problems which confront the man on the land. Provision has been made for the purchase of additional stock for research stations, a continuance on a larger scale of our investigations into the toxic paralysis disease, the purchase of bait for the destruction of grasshoppers, and a contribution to a bonus for the destruction of emus. One important item of increase is for herd-testing, the additional amount being £1,625 to continue this work. The results of herd-testing are obvious in the dairying districts, and the work is doing much to assist in the production of better beasts. To give a little statistical information: the area under wheat in the 1935-36 season was 2,538,930 acres, from which was harvested 23,289,904 bushels, the average having been 9.2 bushels per acre. The area under oats was 447,866 acres, which yielded 4,554,729 bushels, an average of 10.2 bushels of grain per acre. For the season 1936-37, the estimated area under wheat is 2,563,504 acres. As the season has progressed so unsatisfactorily, so has the Government Statistician been compelled to reduce the anticipated yield almost from week to week. His initial estimate was that the crop would exceed 28,000,000 bushels. Previous to the rains of a few weeks ago, his estimate had shrunk to 18,000,000 to 20,000,000 bushels, and since the rains he estimates that the State yield will approach 23,000,000 bushels. I can only hope that his optimistic anticipation will be realised, but I am very much afraid that the State will not harvest anything approaching that quantity.

Mr. Mann: Unfortunately, I think you are right.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am afraid the harvest will not reach 20,000,000 bushels.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: There are some wonderfully good crops.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: And there are thousands of acres from which not a grain of wheat will be harvested. I consider that the present estimate of 20,000,000 bushels is far in excess of the quantity that will be garnered.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I do not; I think the estimate will be realised.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I hope the hon. member proves to be a true prophet. The operations of the seven research stations under the department show that the area sown to wheat last season was 1,383 acres for an average yield of 12¼ bushels per acre. The quantity of graded pedigree seed produced was 13,506 bushels of wheat and 2,061 bushels of oats. After the departmental requirements had been satisfied, the balance—as in previous years—was made available to farmers under a system of exchange, the farmer receiving three bushels of graded pedigree wheat for 4½ bushels of f.a.q. wheat. As members know, this has assisted materially to disseminate through the State strains of the best wheats to all farmers who can avail themselves of the privilege. For the 50-acre crop competition sponsored by the Royal Agricultural Society, 97 entries were received. This large number showed the great interest manifested in the competition. The best yield was 41 bushels per acre from the variety Bencubbin obtained by Mr. E. Davies of Kebaringup. This entry was awarded the special prize for the competitor obtaining the highest yield per acre of any competitor in any zone. The average yield for the whole of the competitors approached 25 bushels. The Padbury Trophy competition was won by a good farmer, the Hon. T. Moore, of Indarra, with a yield of four bushels 6lb. per inch of growing-period rainfall. This certainly was a very commendable result. The total area harvested by this competitor was 275 acres for 24 bushels 11lb. per acre. During the growing period less than six inches of rain was recorded. The increasing interest of farmers in the laying-down of pastures has been a pleasing feature of agricultural develop-

ment during the past 12 months. Very considerable areas of better pastures have been laid down, and this has enabled them not only to increase their carrying capacity but better to carry the stock they have on their holdings. I anticipate that in the course of this debate some mention will be made of the grasshopper problem. I feel sure that hon. members in whose districts this pest has made itself evident will have something to say on the subject. It may be that they will offer a great deal of criticism; it may be that they will offer helpful advice. However, as this question has been dealt with at some length in the Chamber quite recently, I hope hon. members will take the latter course and endeavour to be helpful. Lately we have seen in the Press a great deal that is not reliable in connection with what the Government have done, and in the form of suggestions as to what the Government should do, for the control of the pest. The Government have endeavoured in anticipation to deal as effectively as possible with the pest by protecting the crops as far as practicable. In the whole history of the pest throughout the world over centuries, it has not been possible for man to combat it successfully where it has occurred in plague form. That has proved impossible. As the control of the pest is in the main climatological and seasonal, there is much that man cannot do in an endeavour to control completely the ravages of the pest.

Mr. Patrick: It was the same over 2,000 years ago.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, and deprived human beings of food over 2,000 years ago. In this case we did endeavour to anticipate where the ravages would occur; and in some districts, particularly in the Narembeen district, a great work has been done by co-operation of the farmers and the road boards interested. In the Narembeen district considerable areas were handled co-operatively, and perhaps it is the best evidence this year of highly effective work being done by all the people concerned. But unfortunately we have to-day complaints from districts which suffered severely from drought conditions. Anticipations are made of what the yield will be even though crops at the time of the complaint were burnt off. Admitting that the destruction by this serious pest has occurred over a huge area, there is much of that area from which no wheat would have

been harvested in any case. Whilst we sympathise deeply with the people who are affected by reason of the vagaries of the season, we are also sympathetic in that a similar season likewise suited the multiplication of this serious pest. The department, in anticipation of how serious the ravages would be, exerted every effort in an endeavour to control the spread of the pest and to deprive it, as far as possible, of the food represented by the crops planted. I can only say that the department will in the current year do their utmost to anticipate the laying grounds of the pest, and also to encourage the destruction of all egg-laying grounds, where destruction is possible, by cultivation on a wholesale scale of abandoned areas and of areas occupied. The problem is most serious, but six inches of rain, as did occur a few years ago over a large area, or even three inches of rain, would mean the rotting and destruction of 90 per cent. of the eggs now being deposited. Three inches of rain before the end of April—and this has occurred—would mean that percentage of destruction. Where cultivation is possible, it will assist in breaking up breeding grounds and in destruction of eggs. This season the department have spent, so far, over £2,500 in supplying materials to assist farmers to poison the pest. In connection with the dairying industry the season has not been altogether favourable, and the production of butter has been maintained on approximately the same level as last year, being 13,018,387 lbs. weight. The quality has again shown great improvement, and the departmental officers in the dairying branch are active in their endeavours further to improve on the quality produced. It is anticipated that with a view to being able to tide the State over a lean period of production, there will be a still further improvement in the quality produced, so that a greater quantity can be stored—less butter, as a consequence, having to be imported. The average price for the year was 1s. 1½d. per lb. for butterfat. Another cheese factory has been opened at Manjimup, and the State's production of cheese has increased from 624,345 lbs. in 1934-35 to 834,000 lbs. in 1935-36. It is anticipated that during the current year the State's requirements of cheese will be met.

Mr. McLarty: Did you see that a factory had closed today?

**THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:** Yes. Last year the value of the quantity of cheese imported, mostly from the Eastern States, was £74,087. As stated previously, farmers are taking a far greater interest in grade herd recording, and the number of herds tested during 1935-36 was 360, exactly double the number of the previous year. The average production of cows under test has increased from 184 lbs. to 212 lbs. during the years the scheme has been in operation; so that a very worthy increase has contributed to the value of those operations. The activities of farmers engaged partly or wholly in pig-raising have been rewarded by very fair prices being received for bacon pigs. The prices vary from 5d. to 6½d. per lb., and over 20,000 cases have been exported to Great Britain during the 12 months. The comments regarding quality have been highly satisfactory. In connection with toxic paralysis, which was a scourge assuming alarming proportions a year or two ago, a great deal of valuable work has been done. During the past year, as hon. members representing country constituencies are well aware, there has been a considerable decrease in the loss occasioned by the disease. Due to the introduction of a toxoid or vaccine, many thousands of sheep this year will be vaccinated against toxic paralysis. The demand for the vaccine is steadily increasing. In connection with the fruit industry the outstanding feature of the year was perhaps the production of another very heavy apple crop, following one of the heaviest in the previous year that the State had produced. The production in 1934-35 was 1,288,300 bushels, with an export of 859,463 cases. The crop for 1935-36 was again over one million bushels, with an export of about 830,000 cases. The major portion of the crop was sold at satisfactory prices free on rail. The pear crop again was much heavier, and 45,785 cases were exported during the past year, as against 30,060 cases for the previous year. Something that has occasioned great alarm in the fruitgrowing districts has been an outbreak of codlin moth and of apple scab pest. As regards codlin moth the department are hopeful that the outbreaks have been controlled, and that the pest is again non-existent in Western Australia. The apple scab outbreak is highly perplexing. The disease is one of the most dreaded diseases, and causes great alarm in my fruitgrowing country. The incidence of the outbreak this year caused consternation

amongst the departmental experts, inasmuch as one outbreak occurred at Manjimup and another at Mt. Barker; but so far as can be ascertained these are the only orchards infested in these particular districts, and in the intervening districts we have been able to locate no signs of the disease. It is pleasing to know that the growers in those districts are most anxious to help themselves in preparing for a similar contingency on another occasion. They have decided to contribute voluntarily to a fund which will accumulate during the years towards not merely compensating those who happen to be the unfortunate ones affected, but towards the cost of eradicating or controlling any outbreak of any such disease. The figures regarding the sheep in the State were dealt with by my colleagues in introducing the Lands Department Estimates, so that I need only refer to the export of wool, which for the 11 months ended on the 31st May last totalled 77,175,500 lbs. weight, valued at £4,387,591, and over 3,000,000 weight of scoured wool, valued at £221,231. The average price paid during the year was 13d. per lb. During the 12 months 168,362 lambs were exported, and 5,411 sheep also were exported overseas, principally to the Near East. Potato production I had perhaps better refer to, because many members are particularly interested in it. A few years ago Western Australia had to import, as is well known, large quantities of potatoes; but our industry is now assuming the importance of becoming an export industry. Last year a record was created in that 732 tons of tubers were exported to the Eastern States, the value being approximately £60,000. So that the potato industry of this State has been instrumental in supplying the needs of a lean season in the Eastern States, and thus has developed into an important export industry in Western Australia. The average yield for the State, as I think most hon. members are aware, is the highest yield in the Commonwealth, being  $4\frac{3}{4}$  tons per acre. The average in some of the other States is very little over two tons per acre. Egg production increased largely last year, 52,885 cases being exported, and there being also a considerable increase in local consumption. The increase in local consumption was due to the regulation governing sales, rendering it possible to guarantee to consumers a much more reliable article, in many cases, than they had received before.

A great work that one branch of the department undertook some years ago was soil survey in many parts of the State, a survey which made possible the determination of good country from bad, of salt country from country not affected by salt. The completion of the Salmon Gums soil survey involved the examination of almost three-quarters of a million acres. Pasture investigations are under way in that district, even in areas which are positively unsuitable for the production of grain crops, and very good stands of subterranean clovers and other fodders are showing encouraging yields within that district. I referred earlier to the vermin in the State in many forms being incidental to a bad season or a succession of bad seasons. Due to the dry season inland in 1934-35 many thousands of emus came down from their usual haunts in pastoral districts, and nearly 57,000 of the birds were known to be killed and paid for by the vermin branch of the department last year. It was a terrific number, and fortunately only certain districts on the outer edge of settlement have again had a visitation this year. The majority of the emus troubling farmers in the northern parts are from those that got through the fences last season. There is, as members know, a bonus of 1s. per head payable for the destruction of emus. Foxes also have greatly increased, 37,711 having been paid for last year, which represents an increase of 8,600 over the figures of the previous year. Another pest also incidental to the bad season in the pastoral and outer districts was the increasing number of dogs. Wild dogs increased to the extent of 10,932 scalps during the past year. This was a tremendous increase, and of course it represents a severe inroad into the funds available to the vermin branch.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Are they coming from South Australia?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, I think they came from the outer parts, where native game is depleted. One work of the branch department of the plant pathologist was the establishment of cultures to enable people to plant leguminous crops during the last year, and 1,200 cultures have been distributed. Over 60 tons of Dwalganup subterranean clover were certified true to strain and purity by the officers of the botanical branch, and the greater part of this seed was shipped to the Eastern States. Seeds of a considerable number of forage plants were introduced for experimental pur-



poses. I should like to refer briefly to the growth of the small industries which have been developed on the banks of the Gascoyne. All those members who visited the Royal Show were able to see a splendid exhibit put up by the people interested in those industries. Only three years ago the total quantity of fruit from the Carnarvon district consumed in Perth was less than 3,000 cases, and in 1931-32 it was nil, there being then no production on a commercial scale. Yet this year the consumption in Perth will exceed 20,000 cases. So it will be seen that these industries are assuming some proportional value. There are 50 families engaged in the industry, and on the river, where three years ago a few sheep were grazed, there are now 50 people firmly established. I think when their initial difficulties are overcome it will prove a very valuable industry to the State. The same thing can be said of the pineapple industry. It was only in 1933-34 that any quantity of plants were got over from the Eastern States, and this year they anticipate planting considerable numbers from their own plants. I feel that members opposite desire to discuss the operations of this department, so I have pleasure in submitting the estimates.

On motion by Hon. P. D. Ferguson, progress reported.

*House adjourned at 10.26 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 28th October, 1936.*

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

### PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

*Hon. C. F. Baxter and State Government Insurance Office Bill.*

**HON. C. F. BAXTER** (East) [4.35]: When dealing with the State Government Insurance Office Bill, the Honorary Minister used some figures which later I combated. The hon. gentleman appeared, when replying, to have in his mind that I was reflecting on his integrity. I can assure him that nothing was further from my intention. I know him to be too honourable a man to think of doing anything in the direction indicated. I was, however, under the impression that he had been supplied with wrong figures. I would like to let hon. members know just what did occur. When analysing the figures put up by the Honorary Minister I naturally looked up the returns of the Government Actuary, as contained in the current Year Book. The figures which I used are to be found on page 83, under the heading "Western Australian business of general insurance companies." That is very plain—general insurance companies' business. The State Government Insurance Office does not come under that category at all. Therefore I took for granted that the figures in question referred to general insurance companies only. I have since learnt that they also include the premium income and administration costs of the State Government Insurance Office. It seems to me that the Government Actuary was wrong in giving figures which included in general in-