

Mr. RODOREDA: This difficulty affects more than my district. It affects the cattle and sheep men from the Kimberleys down through the Murchison, Meekatharra and Mullewa. While the safety of my seat may prevent me from securing the satisfaction I desire, the Government should certainly adopt my suggestion, or some similar scheme. I have heard the member for Murchison complain strongly about the condition of the stock route wells, but little improvement has been effected for some years past.

Mr. MARSHALL: I endorse the remarks of the member for Roebourne. The contract that existed between the department and the local authorities has not operated for some considerable time. Under that scheme, the department subsidised the road boards to the extent of £10 per well per year, for which the boards had to attend to the maintenance of the wells within their respective districts. Unfortunately, the department conceived the idea that a profit was being made out of the grant, and reduced it by 50 per cent. The Meekatharra Road Board dissociated itself from the contract, and the department now maintains the wells. One feature of present-day conditions is that very few head of stock have been travelled over the route to the railheads at Meekatharra, Nannine and Cue. That explains why few, if any, complaints have been received regarding the maintenance of the wells. There has been no demand for work to be undertaken there, because there has been no transportation of stock. Recently, however, several drovers have been along the route.

The Minister for Water Supplies: Perhaps you are not aware that we have now agreed to recondition all the wells from Broome to Meekatharra.

Mr. MARSHALL: Then I shall immediately sit down.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.30 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 15th November, 1938.

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

QUESTION—UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF.

Metropolitan Area and Country Districts.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL asked the Chief Secretary: On page 70 of the Auditor General's Report under the heading "Unemployment Relief" the following disbursements for the year 1937-38 are shown:—Bed tickets £217 15s., Meal tickets £350 13s., Board and lodging £477 8s., Ration orders (34) £979 18s. 1d., Cash relief (12) £429 1s., Firewood and freight £711 4s. 1d. What portions of these amounts were expended—(a) in the metropolitan area; (b) in country districts?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: £441 6s. 7d. of the above amounts was expended in centres outside the metropolitan area and adjoining districts. As most of the Government works are being carried out in country districts, approved unemployed men living in the country have almost invariably been advantaged by being given work instead of sustenance.

QUESTION—BUNBURY HARBOUR BOARD.

Interest, Siltage, Dredging.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What was the amount of accrued unpaid interest owing to the Treasury by the Bunbury Harbour Board on (a) the 30th June, 1924, and (b) the 30th June, 1938? 2, What is the amount of expenditure on the work designed to prevent siltage at Bunbury? 3, What was the average annual expenditure on dredging for the five years prior to the commencement of the above

work? 4, What was the expenditure on dredging Bunbury harbour for 1937-38?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, (a) £247,305; (b) £22,848. 2, £98,972 (this figure includes half the expenditure on the breakwater). 3, £3,104. 4, £3,937.

BILL—MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair: the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 4:

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: May I point out an obvious typographical error in Clause 1, which says "and shall be read as one with the Workers' Compensation Act, 1912-1934 (No. 69 of 1912) as reprinted in the appendix to the sessional volume of the statutes for the year 1927 and amended by the Act No. 36 of 1934"? The Act was reprinted in the statutes of 1937, not 1927.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I am sure the hon. member is right.

The CHAIRMAN: The Honorary Minister will note the point, and if necessary Clause 1 can be recommitted.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I desire to secure the deletion of the words in paragraph (a) substituting £500 for £400 in the Act. I understand that my object can be achieved only by voting against the clause.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Paragraph (a) of the clause proposes to increase the amount of £400 in the Act to £500. The matter should be viewed in the light of all our industries, as I said when speaking on the second reading. I thought then, and still think, that members supporting the amendment overlooked its detrimental effect upon all industries, because the Bill is not singling out one industry, such as the mining industry, but will affect all industries. The rate of insurance is bound to be increased all round, because of the extra liability. If it is desired to meet a particular position in the mining industry, the amend-

ment should be framed in a totally different form. If it passes, there will be a serious repercussion. Industries generally will have to meet hard times that are not far distant.

Hon. A. Thomson: I am afraid they are here now.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I also am afraid they are. The increase will have the effect of raising prices all round. Even the man in the country will have to pay higher prices for his commodities if there is an increase in the cost of production. A more important phase is that by imposing these additional burdens upon industry, we shall make it easier for outside countries—apart from the Eastern States—to compete with us. They will be able to bring their goods here and sell them at an enhanced profit because of the charges we are raising against ourselves. These facts should be carefully considered by members before voting on the amendment. I hope, however, the Minister will see the desirability of allowing the amendment to lapse. I do not know whether you, Mr. Chairman, wish me to speak to the amendment I have placed on the notice paper, or whether you prefer that it should be taken later?

The CHAIRMAN: It can be taken as a new clause.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I hope the Committee will vote against the amendment. When speaking on the second reading, I stressed some instances of the effect that the amendment, if passed, would have on industries, and I quoted the industry in which I am concerned. I have since had conversations with business men and find that other industries will be affected even more severely. I refer to the milling industry mentioned by Mr. Piesse, the timber industry, and others. The proposed increase from £400 to £500 will place a much heavier burden upon industries than that which at present exists. The Honorary Minister, in his reply, twitted me with quoting an industry that had some additional elements of danger. He went so far, although I do not think he was very sincere in doing so—if he was, I am surprised—as to compare a motor car policy with a policy covering an industry not very well managed.

The Honorary Minister: No.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I understood the Honorary Minister to do so. He quoted a motor car accident policy at 9s., against a

premium rate of 110s. that I quoted for an industry. How he could compare the two I cannot fathom. I appeal to the Committee to oppose the amendment.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I cannot support the amendment. The premium rate in the flour-milling industry is 85s. per cent. here, against the Victorian rate of 35s. per cent., whilst the South Australian rate is still lower. That fact increases the cost to the Western Australian flour-millers by 6d. per ton above the cost to the Eastern States millers, which has a very detrimental effect not only on our export trade in flour, but also upon the carrying on of this industry. Members listened with interest to Mr. Bolton's speech on the second reading, and I feel sure they will give careful consideration to the amendment before deciding to inflict this additional impost upon industries in Western Australia.

Hon. G. FRASER: I hope the clause will be approved. A sum of £500 is little enough when a fatal accident occurs.

The CHAIRMAN: The amount of compensation is not under discussion. The question is whether a man receiving £400 or £500 may participate in workers' compensation.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: To increase the amount to £500 would be injudicious. I have no desire that an injured worker should be denied compensation, but the conditions in industry are such as to make it difficult to carry on. Yesterday on the occasion of the celebration of the King's birthday, we had an experience of Labour putting up a proposition that obstructed industry to a large extent. Most men work under awards, and the Minister for Employment proclaimed that shops must close yesterday. Other places had to close in consequence, and business in many directions was brought to a standstill. I noticed, however, that the State Sawmills' yards were working. All these little imposts add to the burden on industry, and this clause will lead to increased charges. We shall thus be giving to the Eastern States or to overseas countries a further opportunity to capture our business.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: We are told that, owing to the drought and the low prices for primary products, the financial outlook for the State is bad. I should like to know how many Government employees will be affected by the clause and what additional cost will be imposed upon the Govern-

ment if the Bill becomes law. I have not heard of any hardship being occasioned by the fixing of the amount at £400.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Members are obviously hard pressed to present a case against the clause. Mr. Nicholson made a general appeal to negative the clause. Mr. Macfarlane referred to the celebration of the King's birthday, which has nothing to do with the Bill, and mentioned that the State Sawmills' yards were working.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: He was pointing out the disadvantage by reason of State trading.

The HONORARY MINISTER: We have always celebrated the birthday of the reigning sovereign.

The CHAIRMAN: That is not under discussion.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Every worker under an award, except those under the Factories and Shops Act, was working yesterday. In reply to Mr. Bolton, I did not refer to a motor car policy when speaking last Thursday. I said the hon. member had quoted an extreme rate, and I would go to the other extreme and quote a rate.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Your rate did not refer to an industry.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister is out of order in reverting to that matter.

The HONORARY MINISTER: All I wish to say is that my statement was correct. The rate I quoted was not for a motor car policy: it referred to a policy covering a worker whose duty in part was to drive a motor car. I have made further inquiries and ascertained that my statement was quite correct. In reply to Mr. Parker, I can say that all Government employees will be affected by the increase from £400 to £500.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I asked how many Government employees would be affected.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member cannot expect me to answer that question offhand.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I thought you would have inquired before you moved the second reading of the Bill.

The HONORARY MINISTER: A worker in ordinary business receiving £500 would not be engaged in the more dangerous parts.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What about mining inspectors?

The HONORARY MINISTER: There would not be many of them. In the mining industry particularly, a large number of men such as tribulers and men working on

contract should be made eligible for workers' compensation. Another argument in favour of the clause is that we should, if possible, bring our Act into line with the legislation in other States. Here the amount is lower than that in any other State except Tasmania.

Hon. J. Nicholson: But the other States can produce more cheaply than we can.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Mr. Williams told us that those men in the mining industry were all covered automatically.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Under this clause they will be covered legally. The clause will mean increased business for insurance companies.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The time is inopportune to add to the burdens upon industry. The Honorary Minister is correct in saying that this will mean increased business for insurance companies, but we should not add to the burdens on industry in view of the unpromising outlook for wheat, wool, and other products. Especially should we not make the position of our industries more difficult because the imposts upon industry in the Eastern States are already lighter than those borne by Western Australian concerns. Early next year, the Federal Government will enforce its national insurance scheme and that will mean another burden. Yet this is the time when the State Government proposes to increase the difficulties confronting local employers by raising from £400 to £500 the limit of wages that will bring men within the scope of workers' compensation. The only justification the Minister has advanced for the alteration is that it will make insurance compulsory, but the mining companies will insure for their own protection. This legislation will affect industries apart from mining, and will apply to the Public Service, which is already expensive enough. We should recognise the unattractive outlook for industry and prepare for the consequences, which would certainly not mean increasing the burden upon industry. I hope the Committee will not be a party to killing local industry.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: This provision is serious from the standpoint of the cost of government. Looking at one page of the Public Service List, I find it covers the State Mining Engineer's Department, and a perusal of the officers and their salaries shows that in one branch there are 15 officers for whom the Government will have to pay

premiums, thereby increasing the burden upon taxpayers. I am surprised that the Honorary Minister should say he is not in a position to know how this will affect the State finances. Until he does, the Committee would be wrong to agree to a provision for which I have heard no call outside the walls of this Chamber.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Government desires to give to employees who receive £500 not a benefit but merely justice and protection.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Why leave the amount at £500?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Parker asked me how many Government employees were affected and I told him I could not say offhand. The workers have every right to be protected, and Mr. Parker has misconstrued the position. When we consider the matter from the standpoint of real wages, the men on the goldfields are entitled to receive consideration, especially when we realise the position of the workers in the metropolitan area.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 3 put and negatived.

Clause 4—Further amendment of Section 6:

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I particularly mentioned this clause during the second reading debate, and I appeal to members to vote against it.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It is a very serious clause.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It would be unwise to reject this and other provisions without treating them with some respect. The clause relates to lump-sum payments and weekly payments of compensation, and will involve no hardship. As the law stands now, a man may lose an arm as a result of an accident, and yet may not be deprived of much employment, partly because of his physical condition and partly on account of expert surgical treatment. In the same industry a fellow worker may suffer a similar injury, but, perhaps because of physical unfitness and less expert surgical treatment, he may lose a long period of employment. In the second instance the weekly payments, when deducted from the lump sum settlement, might leave him almost insufficient for bare living necessities. The amendment in the clause has been found necessary in the light of experience.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The difficulty regarding the clause is that the second schedule is wrongly framed in that it provides for amounts of compensation in an arbitrary manner. For instance, a young fellow lost the very tip of his thumb. He was off for two or three days only, and yet he received £112 10s. That case went to the Full Court, and counsel pointed out how ridiculous it was that the lad should receive such an amount for the loss of about one-hundredth part of the tip of the bone of his thumb and of a few days' employment. The amendment will put a premium on expert malingering. The good worker will not suffer, but the bad worker will gain an advantage. The Second Schedule should be altered so that the man who really suffers loss shall be paid, while the man who does not suffer loss shall not be paid. The clause will leave the door too wide open for malingering.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The clause is dangerous because it will increase the amount allocated in the schedule. A man may be awarded £100, but in the meantime he receives compensation payments at so much per week. Under the Act the weekly payments are deducted from the lump sum settlement of £100. If the amendment be agreed to, the worker will receive the full £100, plus the amount of weekly compensation, together with medical expenses up to £100. The amendment will increase the burden upon industry for no justifiable reason. I know of a young fellow who received an injury and got £130 without recourse to the courts. After a few weeks he was back in a job and has been there ever since. For the purposes of his work he is required to use his thumb, for the injury of which he received £130. That man is now earning more wages than before his accident, which, actually, did not affect him one iota. Had the amendment formed portion of the Act, that worker would have been paid waiting time while he was off plus the compensation for the injured thumb and surgical expenses. The Committee should reject the clause because the provisions of the schedule are already generous, and, in fact, over-generous regarding medical expenses.

Hon. G. FRASER: One side of the picture has not been disclosed. A man may be in hospital for three or four months and the deduction of the weekly compensation payments from the lump-sum settlement may

result in the worker receiving 30 per cent. or 50 per cent. of the actual compensation mentioned in the Act. That would amply justify the amendment embodied in the clause.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: What if a clerk lost the little finger of his left hand?

Hon. G. FRASER: How could a clerk suffer such an injury to the little finger of his left hand?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The typist might have bitten it!

Hon. G. FRASER: One swallow does not make a summer; while such an accident might occur, it would not happen frequently. The clause is quite reasonable and will ensure that the actual amount set down in the Act is provided.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 5—Amendment of Section 10:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That in lines 1 and 2 the words "by adding thereto a subsection as follows" be struck out.

The CHAIRMAN: Has the hon. member read Clause 6?

Hon. H. SEDDON: My amendment is wider than Clause 6 because that deals purely with an incorporated company, while my amendment covers such firms as Harvey Trinder and Lloyds, who are able to carry out insurance. My amendment is necessary in order to enable those firms to be placed on the same footing as incorporated insurance companies.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I think the amendment standing in my name on the notice paper should be taken first; but the amendment as submitted by me appears to have been altered in the process of printing. The object I had in view was to make provision that not only could an employer get the benefit of insuring, but also that any group of employers could do so.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Is that not covered by the definition?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No, I do not think it is.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The definition states "Employer" includes any body of persons corporate or unincorporate."

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That would include not a group but only a particular employer. Section 10 of the Act contains a proviso as follows:—

Provided that if an employer proves to the satisfaction of the Minister that such employer

has established a fund for insurance against such liability, and has deposited at the Treasury securities charged with all payments to become due under such liability, the Governor may, by Order in Council, exempt such employer from the operation of this section.

That extends only to an individual employer. It might include a body of persons, corporate or unincorporate, but it means one body and not a group. Sometimes several associated companies are interested, directly or indirectly, in a business. That associated group should be entitled to the benefit of this provision.

Hon. G. W. Miles: But each individual company of the group must show its bona fides to the Government in order to get the concession.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Suppose the matter is left entirely to the Minister and he is satisfied that a group of employers has provided a fund, he should be able to extend to them the benefit of the proviso. All I am asking is that a group of employers shall be assured of receiving that benefit.

The CHAIRMAN: I should like to clear up the position with regard to the amendment submitted by the hon. member. The amendment submitted to the Clerks was as follows:—

Clause 5 of the Bill:

Strike out all the words in the first two lines and in lieu thereof insert the words:

“Section 10 of the principal Act is amended by adding the words ‘or group of employers’ after the word ‘employer’ wherever appearing in the proviso to Subsection (1) of that Section.”

And by adding to the section a subsection as follows:—

The amendment on the notice paper is as follows:—

Clause 5:—Strike out all the words after the word “by” in the first line and substitute the words “inserting the words ‘or group of employers’ after the word ‘employer’ wherever appearing in the proviso to Subsection (1) of that section.

And by adding to the section a subsection as follows:—”

If, therefore, there is any misconception, the hon. member is responsible.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I am not concerned about any misconception, but I am concerned about having the clause amended as suggested by Mr. Nicholson. The position could perhaps be stated more clearly in this way. A firm carrying its own insurance may desire to run some section of its business under a subsidiary company. According to the

definition as I read it, each of the companies will be required to have the approval of the Minister, and perhaps to put up a large sum of money. By amending the clause as suggested by Mr. Nicholson, the original firm, running perhaps two or three subsidiary companies, would be able to undertake the whole of the insurance as a group of employers. I want to make it safe for an employer to insure more than one part of his business under one guarantee as a “group of employers.”

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I hope the position has now been made clear. My amendment should precede the proposed new Subsection 3. The Act provides that when an employer is exempted from the operations of Section 10, he will not need to insure with an incorporated office. If, after the word “employer,” where it appears in the proviso, the words “or group of employers” are inserted, such group will be able to establish its own insurance fund and we shall thus have achieved a very desirable position, one that will be of considerable benefit to those who are working together in a given industry.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Would not the amendment complicate the position? The Minister's duty is to protect the workers.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: They would be fully protected. Unless the words “or group of employers” were inserted in the way I propose, the Minister would not be able to deal with the matter in a comprehensive way. Why should not employers as a group have extended to them an advantage that would help them to maintain their industry? I point out that my amendment refers only to the proviso to Section 10.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I think Mr. Nicholson has overlooked the Commonwealth Insurance Act. Under that legislation groups of employers would scarcely be permitted to insure anyone. Insurance business under the Commonwealth legislation does not include any scheme or arrangement whereby staff superannuation benefits are provided by an employer for his employees. Should a group of employers get together to insure its individual employees, it would be carrying on an insurance business within the meaning of the Act, and would be liable. I do not think the amendment is necessary.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: My amendment has nothing to do with that part of the Act

which deals with insurance. Mr. Parker will see from Section 10 that it is "obligatory for every employer to obtain from an incorporated insurance office approved by the Minister a policy of insurance for the full amount of the liability to pay compensation under this Act to all workers employed by him." There is a proviso at the end of Subsection (1), and that is the proviso I am seeking to amend. This reads—

Provided that if an employer proves to the satisfaction of the Minister that such employer has established a fund for insurance against such liability, and has deposited at the Treasury securities charged with all payments to become due under such liability, the Governor may, by Order in Council, exempt such employer from the operations of the section.

It is here that I want to insert the words "or group of employers" after the word "employer" wherever it appears in the proviso to Section 10.

The CHAIRMAN: The Act says it shall be obligatory upon every employer to insure. Any employer who fails to comply with the section shall be liable to a penalty. The proviso says "Provided that if an employer proves to the satisfaction of the Minister that such employer has established a fund," etc. Mr. Nicholson apparently wishes to insert a proviso to cover a group of employers, whereas it is not obligatory upon a group of employers to insure.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I think you have overlooked the important effect of my amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: My impression was that the hon. member intended the words "or group of employers" to appear after the word "employer" wherever it appeared in the section. I see now he wants those words to appear in the proviso.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: That is what the amendment says, as it appears on the notice paper.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It will not get you anywhere, even if it is carried.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The amendment is very important. It would extend the right not only to an employer, but also to a group of employers to establish an insurance fund. The matter has been discussed with the Minister in another place and he has recognised the need for such an amendment. Only by the insertion of the words suggested can the need be met.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The words are unnecessary, but I shall not oppose the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: The proper place to insert those words, I suggest, is in the definition of "employer."

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The words cannot be inserted in the definition. The desire is that the Minister shall be able to say whether a group of employers has satisfied him that the security is sufficient to meet the position.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That the following words be inserted in lieu of the words struck out:—“(a) by striking out the words ‘an incorporated insurance office approved by the Minister’ in lines 2 and 3 of Subsection (1) and substituting the words ‘any insurance office, company, firm or person (insurer) who has complied with the requirements of the Commonwealth Insurance Act, 1932.’”

I take it that will include the State Government Insurance Office.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Does it mean that every employer will be obliged to take out a policy of insurance for the full amount of the liability to pay compensation to all workers employed by him?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If the word "from" were also deleted from the section, there would be no need to insert the words proposed by Mr. Seddon. Subsection 1 of Section 10 would then provide that it shall be obligatory for every employer to obtain a policy of insurance for the full amount of the liability to pay compensation under this Act to all workers employed by him. Such a policy could be obtained from the State Insurance Office or from any company that had complied with the Commonwealth Insurance Act.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I have no objection to altering the amendment as suggested by Mr. Parker. That would leave it open to the State Insurance Office to operate.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I oppose the amendment. The intention is to approve of the incorporated companies to do business under the Act. I have given an assurance two or three times that the companies will be approved.

Hon. G. FRASER: Under the amendment the need for the approval of the Minister will be deleted and we shall merely be pro-

viding that employers must obtain an insurance policy.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That has already been established.

Hon. G. FRASER: There will be nothing to show that a company must have complied with the Commonwealth Insurance Act.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment, as altered, reads—

That the following words be inserted in lieu of the words struck out:—“(a) by striking out the words ‘from an incorporated insurance office approved by the Minister’ in lines 2 and 3 of Subsection (1).”

Hon. A. THOMSON: It will be obligatory for every employer to obtain a policy of insurance, but an employer may fail to obtain such a policy. If a worker loses his life and the employer is not insured, the employer might have nothing and the penalty would be ineffective. I am concerned to ensure that a worker who is injured receives compensation.

The CHAIRMAN: If the amendment is agreed to, the Act will make it obligatory for the employer to insure.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, but if the employer neglects to insure, what then?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: He will be committing an offence.

Hon. A. THOMSON: He will be liable to a fine, but he might have nothing. Where is the injured worker or the widow to obtain compensation? What redress will they have?

Members: None.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The position will be very much better than it is at present, because now we do not discover that employers are uninsured until after an accident has occurred.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Commonwealth Government has laid it down that before any person or company can set out to insure, he or it must deposit £5,000 with the Federal Treasurer; and if any person attempts to issue any policy of insurance without having deposited the necessary money with the Federal Treasurer he is liable to a penalty of £500 and, in addition, a penalty of £100 for each day during which the failure to deposit continues. So the penalty is severe.

Hon. G. FRASER: That meets the point regarding companies, but I am still doubtful about groups of employers.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: There are no groups to-day.

Hon. G. FRASER: But there is provision later for groups of employers.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The group of employers will have to put up a fund satisfactory to the Minister.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: If the Honorary Minister is satisfied that without the insertion of other words the provision will enable the State Government Insurance Office to operate, I shall not move their insertion.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I shall make inquiries into the matter.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That the following paragraphs be added:—“(b) by inserting the words ‘or group of employers’ after the word ‘employer’ wherever appearing in the proviso to Subsection (1); and (c) by adding to the section a subsection as follows:—”

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

Clause 6—Amendment of Section 10:

The CHAIRMAN: The clause is unnecessary now.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The Minister on inquiring into the matter may come to the conclusion that he should have a definition of a policy of insurance.

The CHAIRMAN: Members can vote against the clause.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 7—Amendment of Section 11:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This is a vital provision. The section lays down that a contractor shall have the responsibility of insuring the men working for him. That provision is made mainly to protect farmers. The obligation would be very difficult for them to carry out if it were thrust upon them. The clause proposes that the responsibility shall be on farmers as well as on contractors. How can a farmer or a pastoralist either, safeguard himself when the contractor might have two or three men working to-day and 10 or 12 next week, without the farmer or the pastoralist knowing anything about it?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I have an interesting letter from a farmer which deals with the Bill, and I would like to read part of it for the information of members—

Workers' compensation proposal to include contractors: sub-contractors and men engaged by contractor will mean great hardship; expense will be much greater than insuring for

12 months on account of necessity of insuring for a short period, perhaps a few weeks. Also contractor might put on a man without consulting farmer, and give him no opportunity to insure, or might engage a well-known lead-swinger. For high cost of insuring clearers, I am enclosing a letter from Bennie Cohen.

The Bennie Cohen letter states—

With reference to the footnote on form No. 2, we wish to advise that clearers are not covered under the above policy, and as the rate for same is extremely high and we are not desirous of accepting risks of this nature, we suggest that it would be in your own interests to have this work done by contract.

That goes to prove that even for workers on contract present costs of insurance are in many instances prohibitive. The original letter is from Mr. N. B. O'Halloran, who is well-known in the Great Southern district and has given close study to this class of insurance. I hope the Committee will reject the clause, because Section 11 represents the farmer's only protection. In the case of a chaff-cutting gang, for instance, the owner of the farm would be responsible for every man in the gang if the provisos were deleted.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No reasonable argument can be adduced why a contractor working for a farmer or a pastoralist should not insure his men. Neither is there any reason why the farmer or pastoralist should not see that such men are insured. Why should the farmer be exempt any more than, say, a manufacturer of machinery?

Hon. H. V. Piesse: That is something quite different.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There is no difference.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The reason for the clause is that many instances have been brought to the notice of the Government of contractors having failed to insure their workers and, when some accident occurred, the contractors have been found to be men of straw.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Is not the farmer a man of straw? What can he do?

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Sell his farm.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The farmer must insure his own workers. Why should he not insure the workers of the contractor? I think that is reasonable.

Hon. G. B. Wood: I am amazed at the remarks of the Honorary Minister. I have

engaged contractors who have employed a large number of clearers, and I may not have seen some of those clearers for months. The same thing applies to fencing contracts on a station. A contract may be let for 100 miles of fencing, and the station owner would not know what men the contractor was employing. Why should the obligation be placed on the farmer to insure the workers of the contractor?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Whether the contractor employs 10 or 15 men does not matter. The policy is taken out on the amount of the estimated wages. All that the farmer has to do is to make certain the men are insured.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: You want a joint and several guarantee. You want two or three people to be responsible for the insurance.

Hon. H. Seddon: Why should not that be the responsibility of the contractor, not of the farmer?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Because some of the contractors are careless and have no reserves at all.

Hon. V. Hamersley: The contractor is the employer.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If I were a worker, I would rather let the contractor insure me, because he is certain of getting his money. The farmer, however, has nothing at all except what the Agricultural Bank allows him, and the bank will not advance him money to pay the claim of an injured worker. The farmer probably has no equity in his farm, whereas the contractor must have some equity to be able to take on the job.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I agree with Mr. Parker. Generally, a farmer has his stock under bill of sale. Assuming that it is under bill of sale to Elder Smith & Co., that firm would arrange with the contractor for the shearing of the sheep; the farmer has nothing at all to do with the payment to the contractor. As Mr. Parker said, the insurance should be the responsibility of the contractor, not of the farmer.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Section 10 of the Act provides that it shall be obligatory for every employer to obtain a policy of insurance for the full amount of the liability to pay compensation to all workers employed by him. If a farmer does not employ the workers referred to, why should he accept responsibility for their insurance? Take a contractor who travels about the country

with a threshing machine, how are the wages of his workers to be assessed?

The HONORARY MINISTER: In the same way as a factory manager assesses the wages of workers.

Hon. A. THOMSON: No. Under Section 10, as it has been amended, the duty devolves upon the contractor of insuring his workers. The Act definitely provides that the contractor is the responsible person, and I think that quite reasonable. I hope the Committee will not agree to the clause.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Recently a contract chaffcutter, travelling from one place to another, employed a worker who was injured. There was no insurance. A doubt arose as to which farmer was liable to pay compensation. Mr. Thomson is right; the present provision should not be altered. A farmer should not be responsible for the insurance of workers of a contractor.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The provisos were unquestionably inserted in the Act for the special purpose of placing the onus on the contractor of protecting his workers by insurance. If the contractor were relieved of that responsibility, would he worry about the appliances which he used and make certain that everything was right for the safety of the workers? Not if the responsibility were thrown upon another person. I feel sure that was in the mind of Parliament when the provisos were inserted in the Act. If not, is this the time to swing over to something of the nature of the clause proposed? Why should the Government at this stage place an additional impost on an already over-burdened industry? What is at the back of it?

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: The Government disregards the future.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It is a wrong procedure to adopt. To place the responsibility on the farmer is absolutely ridiculous, as there are so many jobs that are completed in a few days, a week or a fortnight. The Committee should not hesitate to reject the clause.

The HONORARY MINISTER: These arguments have been used before.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It is to be hoped they will not have to be used again.

The HONORARY MINISTER: What difference does it make to the farmer?

Members: A lot.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No difference at all.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: When an accident occurs, you will find out.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Elder Smith & Co. act as agents for farmers, but I am not dealing with cases such as that mentioned by Mr. Wood. The clause is necessary to protect workmen against small contractors who are devoid of responsibility and leave their workmen in the lurch. There is no difficulty at all in taking out the insurance.

Member: There is every difficulty.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Any man who takes on a threshing or fencing contract can estimate within £5 or £10 the amount of wages that will be required to complete the contract, what he wants for material and so on.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: How does the farmer know what the contractor pays?

The HONORARY MINISTER: He would be a poor farmer that had not a good idea. Provision should be made in the conditions of contract.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: When you were farming, did you see to that?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Always. The provision will inflict no hardship on the farmers, but will protect the workers.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I agree that the clause has been included particularly to protect certain people. I recently entered into a contract for the cartage of wheat. The contractor is receiving a big price. He has protected himself, but under this clause, I should also take out a policy to cover myself, because I would be held responsible equally with him, and both must insure. In the clearing of certain land I had to take the precaution that no wages hands were employed by contractors. Instead of letting the job as a whole, I let it in a series of small contracts. The employer should not be held responsible for the flotsam and jetsam that might be employed on a contract. Men engaged on chaffcutting and contract clearing are probably not known to the farmer. The contractor should be held responsible for the men he employs, because he is paid sufficient to meet the cost of insurance.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: I oppose the clause, which would be most unfair to small farmers. To apply it to large farmers and pastoralists would be impracticable. I have in mind a farm of 60,000 acres east of Moora, on which well over 100 Englishmen

and foreigners were engaged on contract work. On a station contract work is done at a great distance from the homestead, and the pastoralist does not know how many men are employed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The main point of the amendment has been missed. It will not mean, as Mr. Hamersley suggested, that both the contractor and the employer must insure the same men. What is desired is that the employer shall satisfy himself that the contractor has insured his men. Mr. Hamersley gave an excellent illustration of the lengths to which some people will go to avoid responsibility under the Act. I have had experience of letting farming contracts, and I always satisfied myself that the contractor insured his men.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: If he did not do so, what would happen?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I insisted on seeing the policy before the contractor started work. Having satisfied myself that the men were insured, I had no need to worry. Somebody should be responsible for seeing that the workers are insured, and if the responsibility is placed on the employer, he will insist upon the contractor taking out a policy.

Hon. V. Hamersley: It sounds easy.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have not experienced any difficulty. The individuals employed by the contractor do not matter, because the insurance is paid on the wages bill.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: Stations in the far north are 200 or 300 miles distant from a town or insurance agency. A contractor may be employed to do fencing or windmill erecting, and may inform the employer that the men are insured. The employer cannot verify the statement. Yet, if an accident happened he would be liable although he had taken reasonable precautions. It is a dangerous clause. The Minister says someone must be responsible, and the Government seems to think the employer should ensure that everything is in order. Has the employee no responsibility? Could not the unions advise the men to satisfy themselves that they are insured before undertaking work for a contractor?

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 8—Amendment of Section 13:

Hon. H. SEDDON: What is the object of the amendment in this clause?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The amendment will make the section more effective, and should appeal to every member.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The clause will create a position that does not exist in any other State, and represents a step that I consider highly undesirable. The Act provides that where injury for which compensation is payable was caused under circumstances creating a legal liability in some person other than the employer to pay damages, the worker may take proceedings both against that person to recover damages and against any person liable to pay compensation, but shall not be entitled to recover both damages and compensation. The proposal is to provide that payment by the employer of compensation shall not operate by way of election, estoppel or otherwise as a bar to proceedings by the worker to recover damages from such other person liable to pay damages. This issue has been before the courts from time to time and the High Court has laid down that where compensation has been paid under the provisions of the Act, then payment cannot be sought under any other provisions that might have been availed of previously. That is reasonable and proper, because otherwise employers would not know where they stood. This proposal may lead to much litigation.

Hon. G. Fraser: But it will not interfere with the relations between employer and employee.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I think it will. Why alter a law that has been established for so long and been regarded as equitable?

Hon. A. Thomson: How will this act detrimentally?

Hon. G. Fraser: It will improve the position.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not think it will.

Hon. A. Thomson: This will relieve the employer of liability.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I think it better to leave the Act as it is.

The Honorary Minister: This clause will assist the employers, and you will not allow the Government to help them.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I will leave the matter to members for their consideration. If the Honorary Minister can present further information, I am prepared to reconsider the views I have expressed.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: At present a worker may be paid compensation voluntarily, or he may sue his employer successfully and receive payment accordingly. If he does, he can no longer proceed against a third party. The amendment sets out that, notwithstanding that he may have received compensation, he will in future be able to proceed against a third party. If successful, and the compensation received from the third party is greater than the payment under the Act, he can reimburse the employer. The clause will improve the position of both employer and employee and is beneficial.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 9—Amendment of Section 13:

Hon. H. SEDDON: The proviso sets out that any damages recovered by a worker from a third person in excess of the compensation paid under the Act shall be payable to the worker.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 10—Amendment of First Schedule:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This clause is one of the highlights of the Bill and will increase the range of compensation payments from a minimum of £400 and a maximum of £600 to £750, irrespective of other considerations. The principle is wrong. Such a jump in the amount of compensation payable to dependants on the death of a worker will increase the burden on industry. We brag about fostering secondary industries, but such legislation as this will make the position of manufacturers impossible. They will not be able to compete with the Eastern States. This amendment gets away from the principle that should govern workers compensation. I move an amendment—

That paragraph (a) be struck out.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I hope the Committee will retain the paragraph. The provisions of the Act in setting out the method of computing the compensation payable to dependants on the death of a worker are complicated and are not regarded as satisfactory or just. The provisions of the First Schedule were enacted in 1924 and have not been amended since. The trend all over Australia has been to increase the amount of compensation payable to dependants of a deceased worker.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Do you know how much the premium will have to be increased to meet the added amount of compensation?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Only a small increase will be entailed. Fatal accidents in industries other than the mining industry are rare. The Bill proposes a flat rate of compensation at £750. In New Zealand the maximum compensation is £1,000. New South Wales provides for a minimum of £400 and a maximum of £800, with an addition for children under 16 years of age. In Queensland the compensation is £750. In Victoria the compensation provided is not less than £400 and not more than £750.

Hon. G. FRASER: I hope the amendment will be defeated. Mr. Baxter suggested that the clause got away from the general principles of the Act. To my mind no other provision we have discussed has been nearer to the principle, for it sets out what is reasonable compensation for the loss of the breadwinner's life. Surely £750 is little enough compensation.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I am inclined to favour the clause. If the Honorary Minister had been able to give the Committee information as to what extra premium cost was involved, members would probably be more sympathetic.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Wages and salaries have increased. In the city the basic wage is £4 1s. If the basic wage is multiplied by 156, as provided in the Act, the increased compensation proposed seems to be justified. Some information from the Minister as to how many fatal accidents have occurred on an average in the last few years would be helpful. I am opposed to additional imposts on industry, but my sympathies are like those of Mr. Fraser. If a family lost its breadwinner, even the payment of the additional amount of compensation would not be a real recompense for the loss.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am advised that the additional cost, except in regard to the mining industry, would be a mere bagatelle. The percentage of fatal accidents outside of the mining industry is small.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: I must oppose this clause because of the heavy cost it will impose on industry. I have previously submitted figures to show the difference between the cost of workers' compensation in this State and in the other States. That cost ranges from 1s. 6d. in Tasmania to 10s. 11d. here. The Honorary Minister stated that he had upset the figures.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I thought he said he had accepted them.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: He blamed gold mining for the higher costs here, but he did not tell us that the figures I quoted had nothing to do with goldmining, because all the goldmining insurance business is transacted with the State office, and was not embodied in the figures I gave.

The Chief Secretary: The figures were not accurate.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: They were figures for the insurance companies, not the State office, and were exclusive of mining. Let me quote the figures given by the Honorary Minister on Thursday. Those figures per head of population were as follows:—Premiums paid exclusive of miner's phthisis payments, Victoria 6s.; South Australia 4s. 11d.; Queensland 9s. 2d.; New South Wales 8s. 11d.; and Western Australia 12s. 7d.

The Honorary Minister: Quote the figures for miners' diseases in the other States.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: The Honorary Minister said that those figures were exclusive of payments made in connection with miners' phthisis. Does not that show the Government there is something wrong with workers' compensation? The Minister said just now that there has not been an amendment to the Act for many years. I agree that it is time the Act was amended, after full consideration of the case to be made out by both sides. In previous sessions members have pointed out how a big saving could be made by employers if the Government would only alter the Act. The Honorary Minister, in quoting the comparative figures for the total compensation payable, did not tell us that in this State the mining benefits are far ahead, indeed double those of any other State.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is not to say they are too high.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: It makes the cost to industry far greater in this State. I contend that the Act can be so altered that the employee will obtain perhaps a little more benefit than to-day, and at the same time the employer will derive much relief.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Make the employee responsible for paying his own premium, and costs will be brought down.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: The fees of the doctors may not be very high, but it is the time taken to send an employee back to his work that counts.

The CHAIRMAN: The question is what an employee shall get if he is killed.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: I am afraid the industry and not the employee will be killed if the benefits are increased to this extent.

Hon. J. Nicholson: You mean that there will not be any employees to be killed?

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: I suppose that is so: industry will be wiped out. I will help the Government to ensure that the employee gets a fair deal provided that the employer also obtains a fair deal.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I support the remarks of Mr. Angelo. Had the Government been wise it would have overhauled the Act from end to end and gone into the question of compensation payable, not only in the event of death, but under the Second Schedule. That schedule provides that if a man loses a hand or a foot he receives £750; yet if he is killed his dependants at present receive a maximum of only £600. The employer's position, as well as that of the employee, should be considered in an overhaul of the Act.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The proposed provision is infinitely better than that at present in the Act. Whether the amount should be £400, £600, or £750, I am not discussing, but the wording suggested is better than that existing in the schedule at present, and I hope the Committee will pass the clause, even if it decides to alter the amount.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Clause 1 (c) of the First Schedule provides for the payment of a sum up to £100 for medical expenses. I should like to know whether the intention is to provide by paragraph (c) of this clause a sum for travelling expenses additional to the £100.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I intend to oppose paragraph (b) because I regard it as providing for an increase on the £100 allowed.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I presume that paragraph (a) of the clause can be amended? If the paragraph remains as at present the payment of £750 in the event of death will be mandatory.

The CHAIRMAN: That paragraph can be amended only on recommitment of the clause.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I have the records of a factory at which, in the course of five years, 600 accidents occurred, and yet the amount of medical fees provided was never reached in that period. The sum provided

is too high, and I would object to adding to it the cost of artificial teeth and eyes, spectacles, etc.

Hon. A. Thomson: These extra items will be a charge on the £100, I imagine.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of paragraph (b) the word "and" be struck out.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Does the Honorary Minister consider that the cost of artificial teeth, artificial eyes, etc., will be deducted from the £100?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The cost will be part of the £100.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of proposed subparagraph (d) to the proviso to Clause 1 of the schedule, after the word "required," the words "by his employer" be inserted.

Hon. G. Fraser: Suppose a man were requested by his own doctor to travel?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: In that case the doctor would be acting for the employer.

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

Clause 11—Further amendment of First Schedule:

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move an amendment—

That in paragraph (c) after the word "redemption" in line 1 of the proposed new Clause (16A), the following words be inserted:—"or the employer or an insurance company or any person acting on behalf of the employer enters into an agreement to redeem his liability to continue weekly payments of compensation by payment of a lump sum."

This amendment will ensure that the compensation is paid as a lump sum.

[Hon. G. Fraser took the Chair.]

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: This amendment would be dangerous. Often there are borderline cases in which it is questionable whether the Workers' Compensation Act applies. A settlement is arrived at on the basis of give and take. Under the amendment, no agreement could be arrived at, because the employer would be bound to pay the actuarial amount. Agreements of this kind are arrived at to avoid litigation, but any compromise in borderline cases would in

future be impossible. I agree with the other aspect of preventing advantage being taken of a worker who settled for an inadequate sum.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Clause 20 (c) of the First Schedule reads—

The magistrate may, within six months after a memorandum of an agreement as to the redemption of a weekly payment by a lump sum, or of an agreement as to the amount of compensation payable to a person under any legal disability, or to dependants, has been recorded in the register, order that the record be removed from the register on proof to his satisfaction that the agreement was obtained by fraud or undue influence or other improper means, and may make such order (including an order as to any sum already paid under the agreement) as under the circumstances he may think just.

Paragraph (f) of the Bill proposes to insert after "means" the words "or that the amount of compensation payable under the agreement is inadequate." This means that after a worker has agreed to accept a lump sum he may, within a period of six months, dispute it. This will place the employer in an unfortunate position. No similar redress is provided for the employer, who will not know where he stands. Surely such a provision is not fair.

Hon. L. Craig: It is a repudiation of a contract.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: To impose such a condition would be unreasonable. I move an amendment—

That paragraph (f) be struck out.

The HONORARY MINISTER: A worker might have sustained an injury to his shoulder, and received compensation. After apparently recovering, a development may ensue entitling him to additional compensation. The paragraph does not mean that a dissatisfied man can have his case re-opened.

Hon. L. Craig: But the employer would have paid a lump sum.

The HONORARY MINISTER: We ought to look after the interests of the genuine man who, after an accident, resumes his work as soon as possible.

Hon. W. J. MANN: A worker might do foolhardy things and accentuate the effects of an injury, and he would be at liberty to get his case re-opened.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The paragraph affords protection in the event of fraud, undue influence or other improper means,

and now the Minister wishes to include as a reason for re-opening a case that the amount of compensation was inadequate. This could occur within six months after a definite agreement had been reached.

Hon. J. Nicholson: There would be no finality.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is so.

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

Clause 12—Amendment of Third Schedule:

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Paragraph (b), which relates to yolk boils, should be struck out. Station-owners in the North should not be held liable for a disease contracted by shearers who travel from place to place, especially as the origin could not be traced. This complaint is probably due to the shearers having too good a time.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I should like information regarding paragraph (a), which extends the scope of the schedule by including "stone or metal screening." This schedule is supposed to be an expensive luxury that led to the inauguration of the State Insurance Office.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The screening of stone or metal is believed to be even more injurious than either stone-crushing or quarrying. Screening is dusty work, wherever it is undertaken. It is already covered by the Third Schedule if carried on at a quarry as part of the operations, but not so if the screening is carried out elsewhere, as is frequently done in certain parts of the State. The object is to add stone and metal screening to the processes covered by the Third Schedule.

[Hon. J. Cornell took the Chair.]

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The Third Schedule renders all persons coming within this description subject to its provisions. It is a question whether road board workers might not come within the scope, as numerous road boards now engage in quarrying operations, having opened quarries of their own. Road boards would hardly expect their employees to come under the Third Schedule.

The Honorary Minister: If the employees are working in quarries, they are under it now.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Members having in their provinces road boards engaged in quarrying will need to study the position.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The point is that where the screening is carried out away from the quarry, the men are given the same protection. All workers engaged in stone-cutting or screening are covered, but if the material is carried away from the quarry they are not covered. The clause is perfectly reasonable. Since the Act was passed, a great deal of metal screening has been carried out away from quarries. Nevertheless, the workers might get dusted in the same way as men working in quarries.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Not in the case of an open quarry.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Men working in open quarries are covered now. Why should not all men engaged in screening stone be covered?

Hon. L. Craig: The work is not constant.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There is not much of it, but quite enough to justify the bringing of the men under workers' compensation.

Hon. W. J. Mann: An hour a week!

The HONORARY MINISTER: My information is that stone-screening is carried on away from the quarry, absolutely by itself.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I desire to move that the words "or cutting" in paragraph (a) be deleted. Further, I wish to move that the words "or stone or metal screening" be struck out.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Those words are now in the Third Schedule.

The CHAIRMAN: In order to carry out his wishes, Mr. Thomson must move to strike out paragraph (a).

Hon. A. THOMSON: That being the case, I shall vote against the whole clause. Yesterday I saw men getting out of the dust from screenings being dropped on the side of the road. Those men would come under the Third Schedule, though they would not be engaged on that work for more than an hour. The Third Schedule is intended for men engaged in a continuous process.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I shall vote against the clause, which is unnecessary and too far-reaching. The original provision was intended for men engaged continuously in dust. A road board employee might be doing this work for only an hour per week, and yet he would come under the Third Schedule. Any

trouble with his chest might not be due to the work at all.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I shall vote against the clause. The work in question is not nearly as dusty as droving sheep or driving a binder, or doing cultivation work in summer. The proposal opens the whole of the Third Schedule to all persons working in dust at any time. I have done screening myself. As a rule, a bit of a breeze is blowing and one is not inhaling the dust constantly. The clause represents the thin end of the wedge for letting all people who work at any time in dust to come under the Third Schedule.

Hon. G. Fraser: If men suffer from dust, why should they not come under that schedule?

Hon. L. CRAIG: There are all sorts of dust in cultivation work. The clause is highly dangerous.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Surely members must realise that a man working in a cloud of dust will not suffer in the same way as a man working in a cloud of metal screenings. To come under the Third Schedule a man must undergo an X-ray examination, and that examination must disclose dust in his lungs. Working behind a harvester does not give a man disease of the lungs, but men continuously screening stone require protection in the same way as do miners.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I hope the Minister will look into the question of men working in connection with clover plants. Should not those men come under the Third Schedule? I have seen men engaged in clover work wearing gas masks. The work calls for legislative protection.

Hon. L. Craig: It lasts only about a month.

Hon. G. W. MILES: No matter how long it lasts, protection should be given.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 13, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—LIGHTS (NAVIGATION PROTECTION).

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—WHEAT PRODUCTS (PRICES FIXATION).

Personal Explanation—Standing Orders Suspension.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [9.14]: I would like to make a personal explanation in regard to the Bill, as I desire to ask the leave of the House to put the measure through its remaining stages at one sitting. Members will doubtless realise the importance of the measure and the desirability of passing it without delay. Members are also aware, I believe, that to-morrow a conference is to be held in the Eastern States at which the Premiers of all the States—or their representatives—will be present, as well as representatives of the Commonwealth, to deal with the question of assistance to be rendered to farmers. In view of all the circumstances, I trust we shall pass this Bill without delay. I therefore move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Bill to be passed through all its stages at the one sitting.

Question put.

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

Question thus passed.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [9.17] in moving the second reading said: I feel sure there is no need for me to stress the necessity for and the importance of this Bill. I appreciate very much the assistance given me by members to enable the Bill to pass through its remaining stages at this sitting. The Bill is the result of an agreement reached at the conference of Premiers held in Sydney last August to formulate a scheme to assist wheatgrowers to weather a period of low prices. Briefly, the objects of that conference were to evolve a plan that would give greater stability to the wheat industry and preserve it, as far as possible, from the violent price fluctuations that have taken place quite recently. In addressing itself to this problem, the conference felt that, although the Commonwealth had treated the relief of the wheat industry as a matter of national importance in the years 1932 to 1936, it would be futile to seek

any special monetary assistance from the Federal Government, either by way of bounty or grant, to implement an equalisation fund created by a home consumption price. The conference therefore decided that it would be necessary for the States to take action to ensure wheatgrowers a payable price for their product. Accordingly, conference resolved that the Governments of the Commonwealth and the States should take immediate action to implement a plan for a home consumption price for the season 1938-39, based on a levy on wheat or flour used for home consumption, such levy to be collected under the excise powers of the Commonwealth.

The sum of 4s. 8d. per bushel for wheat at country sidings, or its equivalents at the ports, was agreed upon as a fair price for grain sold for home consumption. It was also agreed that a stable home consumption price for flour and bread should be fixed in the various States at such a level as would ensure growers that price, and at the same time prevent exploitation of the consumer. Of course, the producer will not get 4s. 8d. per bushel for the whole of his crop.

Hon. A. Thomson: I wish he could.

Hon. G. W. Miles: This will mean that the price of flour and bran will be the same in all the States.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Members will realise that the prices to be fixed provide for a margin. The price will be fixed by a committee to be appointed. Prices may vary as between the States. Under the proposed scheme, millers will pay the equivalent of 4s. 8d. per bushel at country sidings for wheat required for flour for home consumption, and the difference between that amount and the export parity will be collected by excise and paid into a fund from which the grower will receive a bonus payable on the whole of his saleable wheat. This home consumption plan would obviously be ineffective without the co-operation of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has agreed, however, subject to the States initiating Wheat Products (Price Fixation) legislation, to bring down the necessary complementary legislation, which will provide for an excise duty on flour locally consumed and the creation of an equalisation fund, from which a bounty will be paid to growers on a basis to be determined by the Commonwealth Government.

This Bill is the State's contribution towards the implementation of the scheme I have just outlined. The scheme is really very simple. It has been applied to other products, and I hope and feel sure the House will agree that it should be put into operation to assist wheatgrowers not only in Western Australia, but throughout the Commonwealth. The Crown Law authorities of all the States have conferred and agreed upon its main principles, and I understand its proposals are satisfactory to the Commonwealth Government.

The Bill provides that, for the purposes of the proposed Act, there shall be a committee known as the Wheat Products Prices Committee, consisting of a chairman and two other members, all to be appointed by the Governor. The function of the committee will be to recommend to the Government the maximum and minimum prices for any wheat commodity in any portion of the State. In order that the committee may obtain the fullest possible information in the course of its investigations, it is to have the powers of a Royal Commission under the Royal Commissioners' Powers Act, 1902.

Power is given to the Governor to fix minimum and maximum selling prices for flour and all wheat products, which include bran, pollard, bread and such other substances produced by wheat processing as may be declared by proclamation. In no case, however, may the Governor fix the price for "best baker's" flour at less than £11 per ton, or more than £13 10s. per ton, delivered on the buyer's premises at Perth in bags containing approximately 150 lbs. in weight. A minimum price of £11 and a maximum price of £13 10s. per ton will be fixed for flour known as "best baker's" flour. I understand that that is a standard well recognised by the trade. Flour which will be produced from premium wheat will probably be fixed at a higher price. I have no doubt that prices will be fixed for flour produced from wheat of a lower grade.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What about poultry feed?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is exempted by the Bill. The term "flour" as defined in the Bill does not include any substance for use in the manufacture of breakfast foods. Wheat for birds and livestock is also exempted from the provisions of the Bill; so also is flour or any other substance sold for export overseas.

Under Clause 15, any price fixed by the Governor may vary having regard to—

(a) The place of delivery to the buyer (e.g., bakehouse or mill).

(b) The locality of the State in which the substance is sold or delivered.

(c) The quantities in which the substance is sold.

(d) Whether the substance is sold wholesale or retail.

(e) The nature of the bags, packages or containers in which the substance is sold.

(f) The quality, grade or variety of the substance, and

(g) Any other matters or circumstances.

Heavy penalties are provided for persons selling substances at a price higher than the maximum or lower than the minimum price for the time being in force under this legislation. The Governor will have power to revoke or vary a proclamation by a subsequent proclamation. He may also exempt from the price fixing provisions of the Bill any substance which may be exempted from flour tax under the provisions of any Commonwealth legislation.

Provision is made for the distribution to wheat growers within the State of any moneys granted to the State by the Commonwealth by way of financial assistance. The Bill, however, does not deal with the amount that shall be paid to wheat growers as a bonus, nor with the manner in which it shall be allocated, as these are matters for Commonwealth legislation. Until this legislation is passed by all the States, the Commonwealth will not be in a position to introduce its legislation.

Hon. L. Craig: Has the Commonwealth already decided whether the allocation shall be made on a production basis?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A decision was arrived at; but, as I have already explained, a conference is to be held this week to consider a variation of the method by which the money shall be allocated. A number of wheat farmers not only in Western Australia, but in the other States of the Commonwealth, are suffering severely as a result of drought and pests. Under the original arrangement, those farmers would receive nothing, because they have lost their crops, whereas the farmer who was fortunate enough to have a bumper harvest would receive—not more than he is entitled to—but perhaps far too big a share.

Hon. L. Craig: I agree with you. It is all wrong.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Why do you say it is wrong?

Hon. L. Craig: The principle is wrong.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think the hon. member means that some regard should be had for the farmer who has lost all his crop.

Hon. L. Craig: Of course.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think the House is in agreement with the hon. member. The farmer he mentioned is the person looking forward to assistance to enable him to remain on his holding.

Hon. J. Cornell: You cannot help him under this Bill.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, but the Commonwealth Bill will deal with that phase. As I have said, until the States have passed the legislation which has been agreed upon, the Commonwealth Government is unlikely to reach finality with its legislation. Summarised, this legislation seeks to fix a minimum and maximum price for flour to enable the Commonwealth to impose a levy as if wheat for local consumption was purchased at 4s. 8d. per bushel at the siding. It provides for the exemption from its provisions of export wheat and wheats used for livestock and birds, and in the manufacture of certain foods. Finally the Bill proposes to create a price-fixing authority to regulate prices of flour, bread and all other wheat products to ensure a fair level of prices to the producer and consumer. I regret that the outlook for the wheatgrower in this State is almost as depressing as that of 1930-31.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Worse.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I would not contradict the hon. member as regards his district, but there are districts where the prospects are a little brighter than they were in those years.

Hon. L. Craig: The carry-over is very heavy.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Wheat prices have fallen catastrophically to the vicinity of the low level of the depression years, while unsatisfactory seasonal conditions have aggravated the difficulties of the industry. The scheme that this Bill seeks to implement will provide a measure of immediate relief for the industry, and will minimise the effect of those disastrous short-term price fluctuations which have shaken the morale of the growers.

One could say quite a lot on this Bill. From time to time members have told us of

the parlous condition of the wheat industry, and I am sure the House does not desire me to give a resume of what has occurred during the last year or two. There is no escaping the facts. A large number of our wheat-growers are in very serious trouble. Earnest consideration has been given to all the facts of the case, and representatives of the Commonwealth and State Governments have agreed upon legislation of this kind to provide ways and means whereby assistance may be rendered to the industry. I regret that the assistance to be granted under this and complementary legislation is not as great as I think it ought to be or as I would like it to be. Nevertheless, it is the result of close deliberation on the part of the representatives of the Commonwealth and States, and the least we can do is to pass the Bill with as little delay as possible. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [9.32]: I agree with the remarks of the Chief Secretary. This is a very important Bill and it is very necessary that we should pass it through all stages to-night, in order that our representative in the Eastern States, the Minister for Lands, may be fortified by our approval when he attends the important conference to-morrow. There seem to be many people who think that this Bill and other measures like it are designed for the benefit of the wheatgrowers exclusively, whereas a measure of this kind redounds to the benefit of every person in the State. There were some interjections a few minutes ago regarding the application of moneys from a source that this Bill is designed to supplement. Last August an attempt was made to meet the difficulties resulting from the very low value of wheat on the world's markets. Efforts were directed to protecting wheatgrowers to some small extent along the lines that other industries in Australia have been protected over a long period of years, the result of which protection was reflected in increased costs to the wheatgrowing industry. This Bill represents a small compensation for that protection.

The only reason for the imposition of a flour tax to raise funds throughout the Commonwealth was to bring the price of wheat to the growers nearer to a payable basis. It was not intended to meet such a calamity as has overtaken the wheatgrowing States

this season. To-morrow a conference in Canberra will discuss the question whether some of the funds should not be used to make payments on an acreage basis. This scheme, however, is designed to extend over a period of years on the bushel basis, and if we depart from the principle already agreed upon and allocate portion of the funds in another way, how can the scheme be successful? Undoubtedly the wheatgrowers who are suffering through meagre rainfall must be granted assistance, but if they are to be helped from these particular funds, they could not possibly receive more than 5s. per acre. I ask members who understand the plight of those unfortunate wheatgrowers how much benefit they would receive from a grant of 5s. per acre. It is a matter not for the State Government alone, but for the Federal Government also to see that those farmers are re-established.

Wheatgrowing means so much to Western Australia as well as to the Commonwealth. Our wheatgrowers from Ghooli on the Eastern Goldfields line to Ajana in the north are in trouble. What a tremendous extent of territory that represents! This is one of the worst experiences the State has had. Yet we hear people saying that those are marginal areas, and that the settlers there should have been taken from their holdings and established elsewhere. Such talk is very easy and very cheap. Those areas have experienced four bad seasons in succession. That, however, is not sufficient justification for condemning that section of our wheat belt, or the people in it. A tremendous amount of capital has been invested in those areas. Consider the north-eastern district, including Mukinbudin and Moorine Rock. Not many years ago large quantities of wheat were grown there and extensive facilities have been installed for handling the wheat in bulk. Wheat has been successfully grown there in the past and will be successfully grown there again.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Hear, hear!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: A good run of seasons will assuredly return and will re-establish the solid class of settler who remains on his holding. Only the best of the settlers now remain, and a few good seasons will restore them to a sound position, because they have passed the pioneering stage. The ordeal they are now experiencing has taught them that instead of depending solely

upon wheatgrowing, they will be wise to conduct their farms on a sounder commercial basis.

Members of the Commonwealth Cabinet and Commonwealth Parliamentary representatives have voiced the opinion time and again that large sums of money are needed for expenditure on defence. Have we reached the stage when we must spend all the money that can be raised on defence, and neglect our industries? If so, where will the revenue be obtained with which to carry on the country? Where is the revenue to be obtained to pay interest and sinking fund on the large amounts of loan money for defence purposes? Side by side with a defence programme should be a programme for the rehabilitation of our primary industries, which must have assistance.

Consider the harvest forecast and what the wheat export industry means to Western Australia. A few weeks ago, on the then forecast and values, our wheat would have brought £5,000,000 to Western Australia. What is the position to-day? The State will be very fortunate on the present forecast and market value if it obtains a return of £2,750,000. Thus, a huge amount of money has gone by the board in the last few weeks. That loss will make a tremendous

difference to the State. The reason why there is a strong agitation in the East for the part acreage basis to meet the vagaries of the market is that in Victoria particularly the harvest return will be very low, and naturally Victorian wheatgrowers would obtain higher payments under an acreage basis. I hope that the Commonwealth and the other States will stand firm and adhere to the scheme that has been outlined, but I am somewhat afraid that the Commonwealth might change its attitude. The basis at present proposed would be much better than the acreage basis, because I believe that farmers proposed to be assisted on that basis would receive better treatment through the united efforts of Commonwealth and State Governments. If the growers receive only the small amount of approximately 5s. per acre, I am afraid that too much importance will be attached to it when the question of future assistance is being considered.

Let me review the harvest position in the wheatgrowing States. To do so will probably cause some people to think seriously. I have particulars of the probable quantity of wheat to be harvested in each State, the quantity required in Australia and the quantity that will be available for export as follows:—

—	Estimated Yield.	Human.	Seed.	Stock.	Total.
	bushels.	bushels.	bushels.	bushels.	bushels.
Western Australia	30,000,000	2,181,000	3,267,000	700,000	6,148,000
South Australia	30,000,000	2,828,000	3,072,000	1,100,000	7,000,000
Victoria	15,000,000	8,909,000	2,605,000	3,486,000	15,000,000
New South Wales	50,000,000	12,934,000	4,473,000	4,093,000	21,500,000
Queensland, Tasmania, F.C. Territory and Northern Territory	7,000,000	5,948,000	445,000	300,000	6,693,000
Total	132,000,000	32,800,000	13,862,000	9,679,000	*56,341,000

* Commonwealth Statistician estimates—56,000,000 1936-37 and 1937-38.

Victoria will have no wheat at all for export this season, hence the urging for a distribution on an acreage basis. With regard to the details relating to Queensland, Tasmania and the Federal Territories, while the total yield for the whole of Australia is 132,000,000 bushels, the home consumption requirements amount to 56,000,000 bushels, leaving a balance for export for the whole of Australia of only 76,000,000 bushels. The table I have quoted demonstrates the position Australia is in with regard to export

wheat for the current season. Notwithstanding that fact, we see references in the newspapers that no money can be made available for the assistance of the wheatgrowing industry. The truth is that in three out of the four States, assistance will have to be rendered if Australia is to provide the quantity of grain necessary for export to maintain our credit abroad. The requisite funds will have to be found. If we take away our wheat, wool and gold, what has Australia left? Practically nothing. Wheat-growing is

the main primary industry that sheds value all round. That is apparent in the number of men working in the industry, and the money that is put into circulation as the result of production. That is why the Bill is most important to every individual in Australia, and that applies outside the Commonwealth as well. I trust that the passing of the Bill this evening will mean that the one laggard State, Victoria, will be prompted to action, and to-morrow will pass the necessary legislation, so that the Federal Parliament, before it adjourns at the end of the month, will be able to complete the task by passing the Commonwealth measure. After all, that is the important Act, for the State Acts are merely subsidiary. By passing the legislation this evening, we shall demonstrate to the Federal Government our desire that it shall put through its Bill as quickly as possible so as to assist the wheatgrowing industry. I had intended moving one amendment, but I realise the desire to pass uniform legislation throughout the States. If we do not pass the Bill as it stands, the Minister for Lands will not be able to announce at the conference to-morrow that we have agreed to the Bill, but only that we have agreed to it in an amended form. The amendment I had in mind related to the quotas for flour-millers. From the information I have received, I understand there is no intention of adopting the quota set out unless there should be some transgression by a miller. That is not at all likely, and, in the circumstances, I shall not move the amendment. I agree with the Chief Secretary that the passing of the Bill is essential and that it should be passed without amendment. I hope there will be no tinkering with the legislation in the Federal Parliament, and that it will be passed promptly, with the object of providing funds to supplement prices so as to maintain the wheat returns on an even basis and enable wheatfarmers to make at least a decent living out of the industry, at the same time providing the necessary funds upon which revenue so largely depends.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East) [9.51]: I hope the House will agree to the Bill, so that it can be dealt with this evening.

HON. L. CRAIG: Are you speaking as a miller or as a wheatgrower?

HON. H. V. PIESSE: I am speaking as a member of Parliament representing a province where agricultural operations have been severely affected by the want of adequate water supplies and feed. Many hardships have been faced by the settlers. Although I realise the State Parliament will have no control over the manner in which the money will be allocated, I would have preferred the distribution to be on a bushel basis. I understand that legislation is being introduced in the State and Federal Parliaments with a view to its becoming a permanent measure, setting up a fixed price for wheat and arranging for its collection. In Western Australia, the farming community is unfortunate in that no rural bank has been established here. In New South Wales and Victoria, according to reports I have read recently, certain funds have been allocated through that type of bank to meet the position of the farmers in the drought-stricken areas. Our own State Government will have to give close consideration to the provision of funds to assist farmers before the crop is planted for the coming season. If the Federal Government will not provide the necessary assistance to farmers in the drought-stricken areas, the State Government will certainly have to do so.

HON. H. SEDDON: The State Government has done so in the past, and the Agricultural Bank has provided £6,000,000.

HON. H. V. PIESSE: That is so. I feel sure the Government fully realises the necessity for keeping the farmers on the land, and providing them with an opportunity to carry on during the coming year. My own family has been associated with the flour-milling industry for many years, and I am still connected with it. The flour-millers of Australia will be instrumental in collecting the money covered by the Bill, and it will be done at little cost to the various Governments. My only reason for mentioning that is that the committee to be set up is to consist of a chairman and two members to be appointed by the Government. I have confidence in the Government and believe they are genuine in their attitude to this legislation. Two Bills already passed by South Australia and New South Wales embody a provision similarly worded. Therefore I ask the Chief Secretary that when the Government is considering the personnel of the committee, only business men

of experience will be appointed, and that one of their number will possess milling experience. I make that request because the task of collection will, to a great extent, be imposed upon that industry. No mention is made of the tenure of office of the committee and no doubt the Minister during the course of his reply will inform us regarding the position. As to the fixation price, I would have liked it to be £14 instead of £13 10s. My reason is that with wheat at 5s. 3d. per bushel f.o.r. at ports and offal at £5 10s. a ton, a local flour price of £13 10s. a ton would be necessary to give the millers a margin of £3, to cover discounts as well. That is perhaps as low a figure as the millers can work to, in view of the small percentage of the local trade.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Why are the prices for bran or pollard higher here than in the other States?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: The cost of bran in Victoria is 10s. a ton higher than in Western Australia.

Hon. W. J. Mann: But that has only been lately.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Naturally the market fluctuates and if we could get a fixed price all round for everything, perhaps we would all be happy. South Australia had a lot of cheap inferior wheat and the millers there were permitted to use it at a lower figure. It is true that milling costs here are greater than in the Eastern States but, as I pointed out when we were discussing the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill—

The PRESIDENT: Order! It is contrary to the Standing Orders to refer to a current debate on a Bill that is not before the House.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I hope the Federal Government will complete their part of the legislative task at an early date, and I could hope that the distribution would be on a bushel basis.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [9.58]: I do not intend to delay the House, for I hope the Bill will be passed quickly.

Hon. G. Fraser: If you would all sit down, we could put it right through.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Somewhat similar Bills have been passed in two of the other States and in another place the Bill now before members was put through with little discussion. The wheatgrowing industry is

in a parlous condition to-day, and I can speak of that as the representative of one of the largest wheat-producing provinces. The original intention was that the money should be allocated on a bushel basis. At that time there was no thought of a drought. In fact, three months or more ago, when speaking on the Address-in-reply, I submitted a proposal substantially the same as that embodied in the Bill, but at that time, as I have pointed out, there was no thought of a drought. I trust that the money will be allocated on the most satisfactory basis and that the funds will be available to people so sadly in need of it at present. I understand the idea is to make this legislation permanent so as to counteract the disabilities arising out of tariffs and other Australian conditions under which the wheat-growers have laboured so long. It has nothing whatsoever to do with drought relief and I hope that either the State Government or the Commonwealth Government or both will give the necessary assistance to our drought-stricken farmers, particularly in the north-eastern and northern districts.

An interjection was made by Mr. Craig that wheatgrowers would get a big profit out of this. Fancy saying that a wheat-grower receiving 1s. 11d. plus an extra 6d. that will be provided, making the total 2s. 5d., will be getting too much! I am amazed at such an interjection. We have heard about the flour tax being a tax on the poor man's bread, but this measure will have little to do with the price of bread. The increased cost of bread is mainly due to other things, such as increases in the basic wage and profiteering by millers and bakers, particularly millers. The measure will benefit Western Australia more than any other State for the simple reason that we export more wheat than does any other State in the Commonwealth, that is, in proportion to our population and our production. I hope the measure will be passed so that the Minister for Lands will receive to-morrow the wire that the Government is so anxious to send him.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [10.2]: I desire to say a few words on this Bill and make one or two references to a section of the community forgotten by the previous speakers. The purpose of the Bill is to help the farmer suffering adverse circumstances owing to the low prices offering to-day. As

Mr. Woods has said, it was conceived and designed when seasonal prospects were bright. I said then and I say now that the weak feature of the proposal is that the farmer will obtain least out of it when he should get most; because after all, it is worked out at 5d. a bushel. Fivepence a bushel on top of 1s. 9d. is not likely to keep the farmer from the insolvency court even if he has a good harvest. I want to point out that the people who are going to carry the baby are those who eat the bread made in this country, not the section for whom Mr. Piesse speaks, namely, the millers, or the section that bakes the bread. Those sections are going to get a rake-off whatever the price of wheat may be. Therefore I have no howels of compassion for them. The position is that it is immaterial to the miller and the baker whether the price of wheat is 1s. 10d. or 3s. 6d. on a 4d. freight basis. They will gain and not lose anything by the transaction.

The section of the community for which I have sympathy is that whose position should be improved, and it can be improved only at the cost of the consumers generally and not at the cost of the millers or the bakers. The consumers will at least rise to the occasion and endeavour to help the farmers. I agree that something must be done, irrespective of this Bill, on an acreage as well as on a bushel basis, because 5d. per bushel is not much, even on an 18-bushel average, with wheat at 1s. 9d. or 1s. 10d. But there is not even going to be 5d. a bushel for my constituents because they have no wheat at all to sell. What awaits them I know not, but I do hope that the people of Australia will rise to the occasion and give this unfortunate section of the community some financial assistance on an acreage basis. Whatever may be the outcome of the deliberations of the Premiers who are meeting the Prime Minister and other Federal Ministers, I feel confident that the representatives of the States will insist upon assistance being given to those who have struggled against adversity and to whom we must all take off our hats for the manner in which they have stood up to bad times.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban) [10.5]: It is but right for me as a city dweller to express my support of the principles underlying the Bill. I think all

metropolitan members realise that the success of the city dweller is almost entirely dependent upon the success of the primary producer. Almost all the clauses of the Bill are to be commended. There is just one exception and that is Clause 7, which has been referred to by Mr. Piesse. That clause should be examined and a limit should be placed upon the period of the appointment of the committee. As the clause stands, the members of the committee can be appointed for the term of their natural life and I feel that is entirely wrong and a time limit should be imposed.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [10.6]: There are one or two points in the Bill to which I would like to direct attention. I do not believe in legislation of this kind. The Bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly on the 2nd November and the second reading here has been moved to-night. In the circumstances, I do not think it fair to ask us to stampede the measure and pass the Bill as it stands, without any amendment. We are being asked to rubber stamp a measure that the Assembly took some time to deliberate.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You had the week-end to study it.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The second point I wish to raise is that the Bill provides for price-fixing. This House has always attacked price fixing very severely, because price-fixing has been regarded as a dangerous principle. I do not know that the fact that this is emergency legislation makes the principle any less dangerous.

Hon. A. Thomson: Can you suggest any other way of assisting the farming community?

Hon. H. SEDDON: It is getting a fair amount of assistance. There are three other features of the Bill I do not like. The first is that while the definition of flour is set out in Clause 4, Clause 5 contains a provision that the Governor by proclamation may alter the interpretation. Another clause governs the appointment of the committee by the Governor. There is no control of the personnel of the committee. The Governor will simply make the appointment—

Hon. J. Cornell: It is necessary that there should be power to alter the interpretation of "flour" because the Act has to conform with the Commonwealth law.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Very well. The fact remains that in Clause 4 there is a provision that the term does not include any substance for use as or in the manufacture of breakfast foods or foods for birds or livestock, but there is nothing to prevent the deletion of that provision from the Bill as a result of the exercise of the Governor's power. The personnel of the committee is not in any way specified. Mr. Piesse said he hoped it would be appointed from certain sections of the community, but there is nothing in the Bill to say that it shall be appointed from any particular section. The appointment is to be entirely at the will of the Governor.

Member: They will put Tommy Bath on for one.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The Government can appoint whom it likes. Then the committee may be appointed for life. There is nothing to prevent that being tried out by the Government.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You do not think this will last forever, do you?

Hon. H. SEDDON: It might last longer than many members sitting in this Chamber. This House is being asked to pass the Bill *hols bolus* and to sign a blank cheque. Our duty is to investigate these questions and protest against legislation being sprung on us in this manner without our being given time to consider it.

Hon. A. Thomson: Is not the Bill parallel with Bills introduced in the other States?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Because other States do things is no reason why we should do them.

Hon. A. Thomson: This is the only way to obtain Commonwealth assistance.

Member: You have had time to think the matter over.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I am mentioning these points to indicate the dangers that exist. The House can fix prices if it cares to; it can do whatever it likes, but I am indicating the dangers of legislation of this kind, and I think that upon further consideration members would find that amendments should be made to the Bill.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [10.14]: I support the Bill. I oppose the suggestion that the money should be allocated on a bushel basis. I am unselfish in making that remark because such a basis of allocation would suit the district in which I

am farming much better. But I consider that the fairest way to allocate the money is on a combined bushel and acreage basis.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That would upset the whole scheme.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Anyway, that is my opinion. I do not agree with Mr. Baxter that it would benefit Victoria to a much greater extent, because we are going to have a bad season here. If the unfortunate farmers in the wheat districts of this State are to wait for assistance from the State Government, they will get very little assistance. They are likely to get a proportion of the Federal grant much more quickly on an acreage basis. I myself am farming in a district that is going to have one of the best seasons it has ever had. Within a few miles of my property is a large farm operated mostly on the share system where 19,000 acres of wheat are under crop and the estimated yield is between 18 and 20 bushels. Is it fair that these people should get most of their money on a bushelage basis? What will the unfortunate farmers in the outlying districts, who will not reap one bag per acre, receive? If members want to help the wheat-growing community this is the way in which they should do so. I support the Bill.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [10.16]: Mr. Seddon and Mr. Bolton are to be commended for their remarks. Because this is an agricultural Bill, and has been passed by the other States of Australia, we are supposed to put it through in a few minutes. Had it been an industrial Bill we would not have rushed it through in this manner. Members know that quite well. I agree that the amount to be granted for the alleviation of the wheatgrowing industry is as small as it could possibly be. In Canada this year the Federal Government has guaranteed 4s. a bushel for the whole crop. This will cost the Government of Canada between £11,000,000 and £12,000,000, and represents far greater assistance than is being given to the wheatgrowers by the Federal Government of Australia.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Then why object to the Bill?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am not objecting. I say that the basis of allocation is not right. Only a certain sum of money is available, and this should be distributed on the basis mostly of need. Certain portions of the State could with very little detriment to

themselves go out of wheatgrowing. If wheat continues to be grown to the extent it is to-day, huge surpluses will be built up in the world and certain districts will have to go out of that particular industry. In such circumstances any Government would be justified in saying that those particular areas must embark on other industries such as fat-lamb raising, etc., and must leave wheatgrowing to those areas which cannot engage in any other industry. The indications are that the fat-lamb industry is capable of considerable expansion.

Hon. J. Cornell: Not much, I fear.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Meat goes quickly into consumption. In England 400,000 lambs will provide only one meal. We are told that the fat-lamb industry has a future, whereas the future for wheatgrowing is anything but bright. Gnowangerup is a first-class wheat district, and the farmers there could go out of wheatgrowing without their income being interfered with. When the money is limited, as it is in this case, the State Government should have power to allocate it as it thinks best. As Mr. Bolton said, the distribution should be partly on production and partly on need.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Who said no other money was available?

Hon. L. CRAIG: State money may or may not be available. We do not know. Owing to the parlous condition of the finances of the Government, I do not expect that much money will be available.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The Government has already begun to assist the farmers.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Because it could not allow them to walk off their properties.

Hon. G. B. Wood: They were assisted last year without any scheme of this sort.

Hon. L. CRAIG: We know that in certain districts wheat can be grown profitably at 2s. per bushel. Mr. Holmes, for instance, said he could do that. It is largely a question of modern machinery.

Hon. A. Thomson: And the acreage that is planted.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Those who are farming in the best districts and can afford to buy the latest machinery will have the biggest crops and receive nearly all the benefits that accrue from the Federal bounties. Those who are farming in unfavourable districts and cannot afford modern machinery will be pushed out of the wheatgrowing business. This scheme will accentuate the

trouble in many districts, while the best areas will receive the lion's share.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: To him that hath shall be given.

Hon. L. CRAIG: And from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath. Mr. Seddon was justified in drawing attention to the dangers that may exist. Again I would point out that whether this be an agricultural or an industrial Bill, it still requires to be scrutinised. I support the measure.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [10.20]: The Bill is taking longer to put through than members thought it would. I am in entire agreement with Mr. Bolton. What are we going to do with those farmers who have no wheat? I received this morning a letter from the secretary of the Morawa Road Board, reading as follows:—

I have been directed by the board to ask you to convey to the Government a protest from this board at the apathy displayed by the Government towards the conditions of a large number of farmers in the northern district. At present, owing to the adverse season experienced, a number of farmers will harvest very little wheat, certainly not sufficient to carry them on for another season; and quite a large number will be forced from their holdings, as merchants and storekeepers are reluctant to provide them with credit in view of their payments received under the Rural Relief Scheme.

We understand that some relief will be afforded under the home consumption price, but this will be of little use to a great number of farmers in this district, who will have little or no wheat to market. We note that suggestions are being put forward for assistance on the acreage basis, but in the meantime some assistance is urgently required to enable these farmers to exist on their holdings. The board trust you will take up this matter with the responsible Minister and stress the extreme urgency for immediate relief.

The board has requested me and other representatives of the province to take up this matter with the responsible Minister. The people of the district will have read in the newspapers that the Minister was on his way to Canberra or Melbourne to confer with representatives of the other States and the Commonwealth with a view to evolving some scheme that will provide the necessary assistance for those farmers in distress. I would not have risen but for the fact that something must be done quickly for those who will not harvest enough wheat for their seed requirements. I know a man in Mullewa who sowed 300 acres on fallow but will not harvest enough for seed.

Hon. J. Cornell: Ninety per cent. of the farmers in the South Province will not get enough for chicken feed.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The matter is a serious one for many people. I read in the paper in Geraldton a letter from the Yuna correspondent to the effect that the farmers in the district will reap between one and eight bags to the acre. This shows the extreme diversity of the position. This is a national question. If the Federal Government had realised its duty, and had paid a fair price for wheat over the last five or six years, the depression would not have been felt to nearly the same extent as it was. I support the second reading.

HON. A. THOMSON (South - East) [10.25]: I was under the impression, when the Chief Secretary obtained a suspension of the Standing Orders, that we were going to accept this Bill practically without discussion.

Hon. J. Cornell: Or amendment.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I would not have spoken but for the remarks of Mr. Craig. I was sorry to hear him say that because this was an agricultural and not an industrial Bill it was going to be put through without consideration. Had it been a measure affecting only Western Australia I would have been inclined to agree with the hon. member, but it has been brought down to assist in implementing Federal legislation designed to give a certain measure of consideration to the farming community of Australia.

Hon. L. Craig: Great powers are to be given to the Government in the appointment of officers, and that sort of thing we generally scrutinise very closely.

Hon. A. THOMSON: In effect, this is not a Western Australian Bill.

Hon. L. Craig: Agreed.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It has been discussed by the Premiers of the other States, and has been brought down so that the Federal Parliament may pass its own measure covering the whole question. I object to any member saying that because this is an agricultural Bill it is being rushed through without consideration.

Hon. L. Craig: I said that if it had been an industrial Bill it would have received more consideration.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The circumstances are not analogous. People allege that a great deal of assistance has been given to the farm-

ing community. They forget the enormous development that has occurred in this State as a result of the enterprise shown by the agricultural industry. The industrial legislation of Australia and the high tariffs that have been imposed upon the producers have materially increased costs for the agriculturists of Australia. When we pass industrial legislation in this House we impose additional burdens upon employers in industry, but in 99 cases out of a hundred, seeing that the employers work chiefly on a percentage basis, these increases are passed on to the general public. If wages go up the cost of living goes up. That is not so with the farmer, who has to pay all the additional costs. This is the first time any recognition has been given by the Federal Government to the wheatgrowers of Australia. It has not extended that recognition of its own volition, but it has been damned well forced to give it.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member must not use that word.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The language is justified, but I apologise if it is unparliamentary. The proposal has been forced upon the Federal Government, which at last has recognised the position of the farming community. In the Federal arena members appear to be opposed to placing additional imposts upon the consumer. I should like to know the cost to Australian consumers if the wheatgrowing industry went out of existence and they had to import wheat. They would certainly have to pay more for it than they do to-day. It is time recognition was given to the situation generally. I think we would be unwise to confuse the two issues that have been raised in this House and in another place, as well as in another State. We recognise that the farming community, in certain parts of Western Australia, is down and out on its cropping this year. Still, for years we have been urging that the wheatgrowers should receive recognition and that assistance should be granted on a bushel basis. Therefore I hope that the Government will provide ways and means to assist the farmers who have suffered through the bad season, but I suggest that the bushel basis be adhered to. When the time comes to distribute the money, payment should be based on the average yield for the State. If the average yield for the State is 10 bushels and the payment is 6d. per bushel, those farmers who have reaped

no crop should receive a grant of 6d. per bushel on the State average, and no strings should be attached to the grant.

Hon. J. Cornell: That could not happen under the Commonwealth Constitution.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I do not know how it can be arranged, but to apply the money on any other basis would be wrong. For years the primary producers have been fighting for the principle of a fixed price for their wheat. The Commonwealth Government should certainly assist the growers who have suffered through the drought, but if we may judge the Commonwealth from its attitude to previous requests of the kind, we cannot entertain much hope of receiving assistance from that source. Therefore the Government of the State will have to devise ways and means to assist the farmers who have received such a setback owing to the very dry season, and not through bad work or bad management on their part. The Commonwealth Government has been forced to take action by reason of the decline in the price of wheat. I have no desire to rush the Bill through. If members wish to have further time to consider it, if they consider it contains anything unfair or unjust, somebody should move the adjournment of the debate.

Hon. G. Fraser: We desire to get it through.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I had no wish to speak on the second reading until comparisons were drawn with industrial legislation. As I have indicated, no true comparison can be drawn along those lines.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. G. Fraser in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Wheat products prices committee:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to Sub-clause (2):—"one of whom shall be a wheat farmer and one of whom shall be appointed to represent the consumers."

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hope the amendment will not be accepted. Judging by remarks that have been made, a strong

suspicion exists that the Government may have some ulterior motive in including this clause. The personnel of the proposed committee is not known at present and whomever the Government decides to ask to act on the committee will be men capable of carrying out the duties, and will, I think, meet with the approval of members here. Surely the Government should be given some measure of control in a matter of this kind. We have been told that the members might be appointed for life. That is a ridiculous statement.

Hon. H. Seddon: There is power to do it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Clause 7 provides that the members shall hold office for such terms as are fixed by the instrument of their appointments. That would probably be determined by the capabilities of the appointees. Whatever is done will be in the best interests of all concerned. The moving of amendments will have the effect of holding up the Bill and will not give any greater satisfaction to members. Other sections than wheatgrowers and consumers are interested, and to give them all representation would necessitate enlarging the committee. Members would be well advised to accept the Bill in its present form, so that it can be passed to-night. The measure is almost identical with the legislation that has been passed in other States.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Mr. Seddon should be commended for having directed attention to the matter. It has been a frequent cause for complaint that boards appointed under various measures have not been representative of the interests most concerned. Whether this committee should be enlarged to permit of the representation of other interests is a matter for consideration. The industry is an important one and therefore should be represented.

The Chief Secretary: Of what value would that be?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The wheatgrowers should have a voice in a matter of such importance, particularly as another Bill is to emanate from Canberra.

The Honorary Minister: What could the committee do?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Clause 15 gives the committee power to fix maximum and minimum prices.

The CHAIRMAN: Clause 15 can be discussed when we reach it.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No doubt the consumers should be represented. If they refrained from using flour, where would we end?

Hon. J. CORNELL: I hope the amendment will get the noble order of the boot. There is nothing in it. All that the grower is concerned about is what he will get for his wheat. The price of wheat in the market does not concern him. The Bill does not authorise the fixing of the price of bread. Poultry-farmers should have representation on the board. No question of distribution of money is involved here. The money will be levied by the Federal Parliament, and will be handed out in proportion to what wheatgrowers in each State have produced. I know of one man in this country who is fit to go on the board but I do not think he would go on it—the former Director of Agriculture, Dr. Sutton. If a section of the people is entitled to representation on the board, it is entitled to select its own representative.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The wheatgrower's main concern is to get the Bill through as quickly as possible, without tiddlywinking amendments. If Mr. Nicholson looks at the powers contained in Clause 15, he will see that those powers are confined within certain limits. I oppose the amendment.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I also oppose the amendment, being prepared to trust the Government, the Chief Secretary having told us that Cabinet will appoint men of experience, able to deal with the position. If wheat farmers and wheat consumers are to be represented on the board, millers especially should be represented.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: There is extreme need for meeting the Eastern States. Many wheatgrowers here have not been fortunate enough to get eight or nine bushels to the acre. Those men and their families are starving. They want to get credit from the storekeeper, and they are anxious to learn whether they will receive some little return for the small crop they have had. There is no time to spare.

Hon. H. SEDDON: My amendment has evoked certain comments—firstly, from the Minister, secondly from representatives of the farmers. There is nothing to be objected to in the amendment, for one section vitally concerned is the wheat farmer and another equally concerned is the consumer. I have attained my objective of drawing attention

to the fact that the committee is to be appointed, because of the so-called urgency of the matter, while in the appointment of the committee consideration should be given to the sections concerned.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 7—Tenure of office:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That after the word "terms," in line 2, the words "not exceeding three years" be inserted.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I hope the Committee will reject the amendment. "Three years" would mean, so to speak, in perpetuity. Exception can be taken to the clause only on the ground that incompetent men might be appointed, and that three years would be long enough for them.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Make it one year.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Would any self-respecting Government keep nominees on the board if they were not doing a reasonable job? Let us take the broad view. If a member of the board was not doing his duty, the Government would remove him and put another man in his place. The corollary to Mr. Seddon's amendment is provision for removal of members of the board and for their reappointment.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Having raised the query in regard to this clause, I withdraw any opposition I might have had in mind, because I believe that the Chief Secretary honestly explained the position and that the Government will deal with the matter as indicated by the Minister.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not doubt the Chief Secretary's statement as to the Government's intentions, but I do object to an open cheque being given to any Government to make appointments for an unlimited period. We have recognised the principle of limitation of powers in this very Bill—in Clause 15, which fixes minimum and maximum prices. Similarly, a definite period should be fixed beyond which appointments to the board should not be made. The only power to terminate an appointment is that contained in Clause 8. The making of appointments for some lengthy period would be unwise. Therefore the amendment is worthy of support.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I support the amendment. In most other measures of this kind a period has been fixed or some machinery

provided for the appointment of members otherwise than by the action of the Governor. Three years seems to me a fair period. If at the end of that time the measure is still in operation, and if the members of the board are giving satisfaction, there will be no reason against their re-appointment. However, I agree with Mr. Nicholson that the principle laid down in other Bills should be adopted here.

Hon. J. CORNELL: If the Committee would agree to a period of three years, the amendment should be phrased properly.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Make a suggestion.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It is not for me to suggest. If the amendment is carried, the clause will not be phrased properly. I hope the Committee will stick to the Bill.

Hon. H. SEDDON: If Mr. Cornell is not satisfied, he can move a further amendment. When the Lotteries (Control) Bill has been before us in the past we have always insisted on the right to review it every year. When the Agricultural Bank Commissioners were appointed, they were given a definite term of office. We are, therefore, quite in order in asking for a definite term of office to be specified in the case of the officials referred to in this clause. Otherwise, once they are appointed, they cannot be dismissed from office except under the conditions specified in Clause 8.

Hon. E. H. ANGELO: I support the amendment. The Bill should not be passed without a specified time being laid down for the appointment of these officers. We ought to be consistent. A telegram can still be sent to the Minister for Lands notifying him that we have passed the Bill with this small amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Normally, I would have no objection to the amendment, but on this occasion my remarks on the preceding clause should satisfy the Committee. The Government has no intention but to appoint the best men available for the position.

Hon. J. Nicholson: We believe that, but think the principle is wrong.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not prepared to admit that, but will not argue the point any further.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	4
Noes	..	..	..	..	18
Majority against	..	..	..	..	14

AYES.

Hon. E. H. Angelo
Hon. J. Nicholson

Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. W. J. Maun
(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. L. B. Beiton
Hon. J. Cornell
Hon. L. Craig
Hon. J. A. Dittmitt
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. J. T. Franklin
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. E. H. Hall

Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
(Teller.)

PAIR.

AYE.

Hon. H. Tuckey

NO.

Hon. T. Moore

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 8—Dismissal of members:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (b) the word "other" be struck out.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This, after all, is largely a question of verbiage. If the Committee deletes the word, the Bill cannot be finalised.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Whether or not the Bill is finalised to-night is immaterial. We should consider the phraseology of the Bill. In view of the absence of any limitation of appointment, this clause should be altered in the way I have indicated.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Mr. Nicholson has been accused of being redundant, but on this occasion he wishes to delete a redundant word from the clause. "Other conduct" might mean that a member of the Committee might get drunk occasionally.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It does not mean that.

Hon. G. B. Wood: He might become a member of Parliament.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That would not be a crime. It would be "other conduct."

Hon. V. Hamersley: Would not the whole difficulty be overcome by placing a comma after the word "crime"?

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 9, 10—agreed to.

Clause 11—Quorum and voting:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I point out that the committee proposed by the Bill will, in reality, be a committee of one. Should one member of the committee be absent, two

may form a quorum, but the chairman has a casting vote.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 12 to 21, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

House adjourned at 11.18 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 15th November, 1938.

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

QUESTION—RAILWAYS.

All-steel Boilers.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What is the number of all-steel boilers constructed by the Railway Department since the 1st January, 1932? 2, What has been the average cost of repairs to these boilers for stay and tube renewals during the first three years of service? 3, How would this cost compare with that of boilers constructed with copper fire boxes, tubes,

etc., over a similar period? 4, Does the department intend to continue the policy of all-steel boiler construction?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, 32. 2, £94. 3, £37. 4, Not with the old type of boilers, but probably with more modern designs.

QUESTION—BOOKMAKERS BILL.

Mr. Wolff's Report.

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Premier: 1, As a Bill to authorise, regulate, and control bookmaking is now under consideration by Parliament, will he make available to members a copy of the report of Mr. Wolff (now Mr. Justice Wolff) to the Government on the operation of betting laws in the Eastern States? 2, If unable to supply copies, will he lay the report on the Table for the information of members?

The PREMIER replied: 1 and 2, Mr. Wolff was not asked to make a comprehensive report on this matter. While he was in the Eastern States he was requested to obtain some information which might have been of use in the event of his being called upon to prepare a Bill in his capacity of Parliamentary draftsman.

QUESTION—BETTING.

Starting Price—Suppression or Registration.

Mr. HEGNEY asked the Premier: Having refused requests that he should meet representative deputations which desired to submit reasons why starting-price betting should be suppressed, can he give the House an assurance that he has not discussed starting-price betting matters with those urging registration?

The PREMIER replied: Yes.

QUESTION—TRAFFIC ACT.

New Parking Regulations.

Mr. NORTH (without notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Police: In view of the new parking regulations affecting the central portion of the City of Perth, will he inform the House of the reasons underlying the change?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: In order to obtain better control of the traffic in the central city block, it has