argue that it would be impossible to send the wheat away in small crafts and transship it at some other port, because this is done in South Australia particularly from Spencer's Gulf ports. If Esperance is to be regarded as only a wheat-producing area, I do not feel very much concerned about the shipping facilities as transhipping arrangements might be made at no very great cost to the producer. If the district is capable of producing wheat the figures quoted by Mr. Colebatch prove that in the past it has not returned any decent yield. I recognise that the leader of the House is anxious to go to a division, and I will conclude my remarks by congratulating some of my friends on the very able support they have given the Bill, and some of the new converts to a measure they so biterly opposed in the days gone by upon their changed attitude towards it.

On motion by Hon. J. E. Dodd debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.45 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 20th January, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Minister for Lands: Report of the Board of Inquiry *re* poison eradication and settlement of poison lands—Additional return to order on motion by Mr. E. B. Johnston.

By the Minister for Works: 1, By-laws of Esperance, Kalgoorlie, Preston, and Victoria Plains Roads Boards. 2, By-laws of the Municipalities of Bunbury and North Perth.

By the Honorary Minister: Audit of accounts of Moola Bulla Station to the 30th June, 1913.

QUESTIONS—GAME ACT, ROYALTIES.

Mr. THOMSON asked the Honorary Minister: 1, Is he aware that the following royalties are being charged for the undermentioned skins:—opossum 3d. each, brush 1d. each, tamar ½d. each, kangaroo 2d. each. 2, Considering that the average prices for opossum skins are 7½d.; for brush, 3d.; for tamar, 3d.; and for kangaroo, 3s., will he consider the question of altering the scale of royalty to a percentage basis on the value of the skins, say, 10 per cent.?

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. R. H. Underwood) replied: 1, The scale of royalties on marsupial skins as prescribed by regulation under The Game Act, 1912-13, is as follows:—Opossum skins, 3d. per skin; grey kangaroo skins, 2d. per skin; wallaroo (Euro) skins, 1d. per skin; red kangaroo skins, 1d. per skin; brush or brush kangaroo skins, 1d. per skin: Others, ½d. per skin. 2, It is not considered advisable to alter the regulations so that royalties may be collected on an *ad valorem* percentage basis.

QUESTION—SWAN RIVER, PROPOSED BRIDGE.

Mr. CARPENTER asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has the site yet been fixed for the proposed bridge over the Swan river near Rocky Bay? 2, Is it the intention of the Government to have the new bridge constructed within the State?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, No. 2, When the designs are prepared the question will receive consideration.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, FREMANTLE, COST.

Mr. CARPENTER asked the Minister for Mines: What was the total capital cost of the Fremantle Water Supply undertaking on the 30th June, 1912, 1913, and 1914, respectively?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: At 30th June, 1912, £62,084 5s. 10d.; at 30th June, 1913, £103,632 6s. 5d.; at 30th June, 1914, £118,337 1s. 8d.

QUESTION—GAMBLING EVIL, POLICE REPORT.

Mr. SMITH asked the Attorney General: 1, Has he received a report by Detective-Sergt. Mann on the gambling evil? 2, Does he intend to lay the report on the Table of the House?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1, Yes. 2, If application for the papers is made in the usual way, the matter will be considered.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE.

Reports of Committee adopted.

BILL—GOVERNMENT ELECTRIC WORKS.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—DIVIDEND DUTIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending the Bill.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [4.43] in moving the second reading said: This Bill to further amend the Dividend Duties Act of 1902 is a small measure and contains only one principle. Those members who have looked through the Dividend Duties Act and its amendments will find that in 1902 a Bill was introduced by the then Colonial Treasurer—I think the present member for Irwin—in order to continue the payment by companies on their profits or dividends of duty to the Treasury of the State. There had been an Act previously in operation, but it was operative for only a specified period, and as that period was then falling due, the Colonial Treasurer introduced a Bill to take its place. Under that measure companies carrying on operations in Western Australia and not elsewhere were taxed on the dividends they declared and not otherwise, while companies carrying on operations in Western Australia and elsewhere were taxed on their profits whether they distributed them by way of dividends or not. The Bill now before us merely provides that the companies carrying on operations in Western Australia and not elsewhere as well as companies carrying on operations in Western Australia and elsewhere, shall pay duty on their profits, so that all companies shall be placed on exactly the same basis whether they distribute dividends or not. It seems to me that this is only fair and just in view of the fact that quite a number of people are carrying on trading operations in Western Australia and elsewhere. Those who are carrying on operations here and elsewhere are paying on their profits whether they are distributed subsequently in the form of dividends or not, while other companies carrying on similar operations side by side with them and under like conditions and complying with all the conditions imposed by the laws of the land on companies trading here and elsewhere, are paying only on dividends when such are declared. There is a number of companies which are not declaring dividends, because under our Companies Act it is a very simple matter for any concern to be registered as a company, and thereby obtain all the benefits of what is generally regarded as a company. That is to say, such a company obtains all the benefits which accrue to a company whose shares are available on the market and are held by a number of people. There is registered under the Companies Act a considerable number of companies of which the great bulk of the shares, indeed practically the whole of the shares, is held by one or two individuals.

I do not propose at this stage to deal at length with that aspect of the case, though I may say that in my opinion such concerns have been registered as companies largely for the purpose of evading the payment of dividend duty. The profits made by such companies, if they are retained in the books of the companies, pay no duty whatever; nor even is the person who obtains the benefit of the profit, as practically the sole owner of the company, called upon to pay income tax on such profits, because they have not gone to his personal credit. In the event of their going to his personal credit, he would of course pay dividend duty on them. The result of this has been that a person carrying on business in such a fashion as a company under our law—of course, it is done quite legally; I do not for a moment deny that it is done quite legally—is evading the payment of dividend duty, where other firms carrying on similar businesses have been paying dividend duty for years and years past.

Mr. S. Stubbs: To what fund are these profits put?

The PREMIER: Into a reserve fund, and thence back into the business. Of course the hon. member knows that this money representing profits is not locked up in the safe or put away somewhere and nothing done with it. Such profits are used as trading fund and are put back into the business. There is quite a large number of companies or individuals trading as companies—as must be well known to hon. members—that have made large profits in recent years, and put those profits to reserve, or allowed them to accumulate from year to year, while at the same time re-investing them in the business. Perhaps occasionally such a company may declare a dividend, but companies other than mining companies—and, by the way, mining companies have been treated as local companies, for which I think the member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) is responsible; at the request of local residents who were investing money in the mining industry, and because of a desire to encourage the investment of local money in our mining industry, mining companies have been placed exactly on the same basis as local companies—companies other than mining companies, carrying on business in Western Australia and not elsewhere, declared profits last year to the amount of £547,276, or over half a million of money, but distributed only £281,706 in the form of dividends, on which latter amount they paid duty. The balance of the money—the difference between the £547,276 and the £281,706—was allowed to accumulate and no-dividend duty was paid on it. Mining companies for last year declared their profits at £1,099,000, and declared dividends to the extent of £937,000, upon which latter amount they paid duty. The remainder of the profits was allowed to accumulate, or placed to reserve fund, and no duty was paid upon such balance. It appears, therefore, that local companies and mining companies last year declared profits to the extent of £1,646,000, and paid duty on an amount of £1,281,800, the balance being placed either to reserve or allowed to accumulate and no duty being paid thereon. During the 12 years of the operation of the principal Act companies which were either local companies or mining companies have placed to reserve or allowed to accumulate profits to the tune of £2,500,000. To that extent have they allowed profits to accumulate, or placed profits to their reserve funds. A total of £1,662,000 has been allowed to accumulate, and a total of £1,347,000 has been placed to reserve. Thus, I say, something like 2½ millions of money, representing profits made by these companies in the past 12 years, have not paid a single penny of duty to the State.

Mr. S. Stubbs: Is that an accurate return from which you are quoting?

The PREMIER: It is an accurate return. Under the Dividend Duty Act all these companies operating in the State are called upon to send annually to the Minister—that is myself, in the present instance—a return declaring their profits; and the return from which I am reading is compiled from the figures furnished by the companies themselves, and not from figures which we have gathered

by an audit of the companies' books or any proceeding of that nature.

Mr. James Gardiner: In most instances the companies send in their balance sheets.

The PREMIER: Yes; they send in their balance sheets, with a declaration that the balance sheet is a correct statement of the company's transactions for the year. That is the position which we have discovered. I know there are some companies which during recent years have made huge profits, companies owned practically by single individuals, in some cases almost the whole of the shares being held by a single person. I am not going to mention any names unless it is specially desired by hon. members; and I do not think it is.

Member: It would be interesting.

The PREMIER: No doubt it would be interesting. However, in one instance a company is registered in 37,500 shares, and all but 24 of those 37,500 shares are owned and controlled by one single individual. That company, to my knowledge, as Treasurer, has made huge profits during recent years; and, in my opinion, it is still continuing to make huge profits. With the exception, however, of satisfying the requirements of the 24 single shares that are not held by the one individual I refer to, no dividend has been declared. The company must of course distribute sufficient to satisfy the holders of the 24 shares. The balance of profits, however, has been allowed to accumulate, and no duty has been paid thereon—not even in the form of income tax, because the money has not gone to the personal use of the individual referred to, but has remained for his use as a company. I of course assert that is not fair. It is not fair to others carrying on trading operations of a similar nature side by side with that person or that company. I maintain that any firm making profits, particularly under existing conditions, whatever the conditions may have been in the past, whether the firm represents an individual or a company, should pay duty on those profits just the same as anyone else carrying on similar operations. That is the whole principle of this measure.

Mr. James Gardiner: There was an anomaly in that Bill of mine, which resulted rather peculiarly. Does that word "company" mean only a limited company? What course do you adopt in the case of companies which are not limited? Do they come within the scope of the Income Tax Act?

The PREMIER: No. They are treated exactly in the same way as other companies.

Mr. James Gardiner: D. & J. Fowler and G. Wood, Son, & Co. were anomalies, I remember. G. Wood, Son, & Co. went scot free.

The PREMIER: That is exactly the trouble to-day. There are firms carrying on operations side by side with others, not paying dividend duty, while the latter are paying dividend duty, although both sets of firms are operating under conditions precisely similar in every other respect. By reason of that anomaly, one house is getting off scot free while the other house has been taxed for the whole of the 12 years of the operation of the principal measure. Admitting that principle to be sound, naturally I desire to make safeguards for the protection of the interests of those who have paid in the past, and to ensure that anyone coming under the operation of this amending measure shall not also fall under the operation of the Dividend Duty Act. Therefore, the Government provide that under this Bill, if it is proved to the satisfaction of the Minister that any company carrying on business in Western Australia has during the year 1914, or during any subsequent year, distributed dividends out of profits made by the company during such year, and has paid duty thereon, the company shall receive credit for the duty so paid as a payment on account of the duty payable by such company in respect of profits for the year. That is to say, where a company has paid duty on any dividend declared, the amount of such duty shall be placed to its credit as against the amount payable under this measure, so that the company will not be called upon to pay a

second time. On the other hand, however, we do not wish by this Bill to do something that will add to the absurdities which have been in existence since the original Act was passed. We find, as I say, 2½ millions of money, representing accumulated profits or profits placed to reserve fund, which at some time or other will undoubtedly be distributed in the form of dividends if our present Act continues in operation—in the absence of the measure which I am now introducing. When such accumulated profits are distributed, dividend duty must be paid thereon; and if we are not careful as regards amendment of the principal Act we shall allow those profits to be distributed to-morrow—if the Bill becomes law to-morrow—without any dividend duty being payable or paid in respect of them. We now propose by this measure that duty shall be paid on the profits of the year previous, but nothing is said, so far, about profits accumulated or made during preceding years. I therefore provide here that any profits which have accumulated in the past or been placed to reserve fund, shall, whenever they are distributed, be treated under this amending measure as profits which have been earned in the year in which the distribution is made. That hon. members will at once recognise as being fair and just. For instance, let us take one company which has accumulated profits during the past 12 years, and has allowed those profits to remain undistributed by way of dividend. Let us assume the amount is £100,000. If I did not make this provision, but merely amended the principal Act by providing that in future the company shall pay duty on its profits, then the company could, after this measure became law, declare a dividend distributing the whole of the £100,000 to its shareholders, and not pay a single penny of dividend duty on those accumulated profits of £100,000. No one, I am sure, desires that: and the Government therefore propose to bring such profits into exactly the same position as the profits of what are known as foreign companies, or companies carrying on operations here and elsewhere, while at the same time continuing the operation of the Dividend Duty Act so far as to provide that profits accumulated in the past shall upon distribution be dutiable. That is the whole purpose of the measure. I have stripped it of all verbiage, with a view to avoiding the risk of causing disagreement between the two sides of the House, or disagreement between this Chamber and another place. I have restricted the measure to that one principle only. The two or three other clauses of the Bill are there merely for the purpose of safeguarding the interests of the State as regards past accumulations, and also for the purpose of safeguarding the interests of the taxpayer. Thus hon. members will find in this measure nothing more than the simple principle that the Government may call upon companies and persons carrying on trading operations in Western Australia to pay duty on the profits they make, whether or not they distribute such profits by way of dividend. I am sure that, having regard to the circumstances, this Bill will meet with the favourable consideration of both sides of the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Frank Wilson debate adjourned.

BILL—LUNACY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister—Pilbara) [4.58] in moving the second reading said: This Bill has been rendered necessary by the case of a man named Rudolph Hein, who was confined in the Hospital for the Insane at Claremont for some considerable time and eventually came before the Supreme Court on a writ of *Habeas Corpus* on the ground that the form on which he was committed to the Hospital for the Insane was not in order. The friends of Hein, I may say, sent out money for the purpose of testing this case. I am informed that the word was considered by one firm of solicitors who, deeming that Hein was insane, would not take the matter up or waste the money of Hein's

friends in fighting it. However, another solicitor was found willing to take the case into Court, on the ground not that Hein was sane, but that the warrant of committal was informal. The case was heard before Mr. Justice Burnside and decided absolutely on the technical point of the proper form of committing Hein to the asylum. It was never attempted to be shown that Hein was a fit person to be at large, but simply that the justices who heard the case had made a formal mistake. Therefore Hein was liberated only to be re-arrested and the State put to the cost of again bringing him before the court and sending him back to the hospital for insane. It has been found that there are many other cases, like Hein's, of persons who have been committed to the asylum and the justices have made mistakes in filling up the forms committing them, and it is thought advisable that these informalities should be validated. That is to say, we shall not in future hear cases on mere formalities. We desire to take away no right whatever from any inmate appealing against his retention in an asylum on the ground that he should not be kept there if he is sane and fit to be at large. We have taken particular care to preserve every right, as we should do, to the patients to have their cases heard, if they have a case, on their merits, but to release persons merely because there is an informality in their committal will be of no use to the patient and will put the State to a considerable amount of expense. There is another object in the Bill. Section 16 of the principal Act provides—

> Any order, request, medical certificate, or other document, by virtue of which any person has been received into a hospital for the insane, or licensed house, and which is incorrect or defective in any particular, may, with the approval of the Minister be amended by the person who has signed the same; and the order, request, medical certificate or other document so amended shall thereupon be deemed to have operated and to operate from its original date.

That power is given to the justices but not to the Supreme Court, and in this Bill it is proposed to give a similar power to the Supreme Court to amend forms or orders and commitments, because, as has been pointed out, it is difficult—and in Hein's case it was impossible—to refer the warrants back to the justices who heard the case. In Hein's case one of the justices is dead and the other has gone to a northern portion of the State. It is provided that if the Supreme Court is satisfied that there is an informality the Supreme Court shall have the power to amend the warrant, similar to what a justice has at the present time.

Mr. Robinson: What clause deals with that?

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): I will tell the hon. member later on. As I have just said, there is no desire to keep sane people in the hospital for the insane. As a matter of fact, I think it can be stated that no Government would have any desire to keep people at the expense of the country in a hospital when they are fit to be out of it, and that is to a certain extent—a very great extent—a protection against anybody being committed there unwarrantably. We have heard a great deal of what was done in private asylums in the past. We have heard of some very bad cases of people who were put in an asylum simply because some relative or other interested person desired to remove them. I may say that I am under the impression that those cases were greatly exaggerated, and a number of them existed only in the minds of novelists, romancers, the greatest of all being the author of *Valentine Vox*. This has become a theme for novelists; there are other themes. For instance Nat Gould and some others write about the high bred individual who, when he comes to Australia, goes up country and thrashes the first bullock driver he comes across. That is a stock theme of novelists, and I gave up bullock driving on that account. There are one or two members of this Chamber I believe who are of

opinion that Hein is perfectly sane or near enough to sanity to be at large. I know one or two members hold that opinion. Possibly, I may be allowed to state what I know personally of Hein's case. The delusion that Hein is under is that he has been robbed of a tin claim at Moolyella. The case was heard before Warden Ostlund. The leases were surveyed by the present warden, Mr. Riches, and Mr. Riches gave evidence in regard to the case. The claims were owned by a man named Jack McDonald and Hein claims that Sir Newton Moore and Mr. Gregory and the late Warden Ostlund and the present Warden Riches of the Pilbara goldfields were bribed by McDonald to give a wrong verdict on his claim. Most members know Sir Newton Moore and Mr. Gregory, and I may tell members that I know Warden Riches, I have known him for years, and I consider him to be one of the most honest and straightforward men who has acted on the bench in Western Australia. As far as Mr. McDonald is concerned, I can assure members that I know him personally. Mr. McDonald is considered one of the finest prospectors in the Pilbara district and I can claim, I think, that the prospectors in the Pilbara district are amongst the most honest on this planet. Mr. McDonald had 10 claims, and Hein claims that he held one of them. McDonald cleared about £20,000 out of the 10 claims so that one claim would be worth £2,000, and with that £2,000 he had to bribe Sir Newton Moore, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Riches, and Mr. Ostlund. That evidently on the face of it is an absurdity. Hein is one of the most unfortunate men confined in an asylum inasmuch as he is only sane on points. His memory is first class. His mind is such that he suffers from his imprisonment, but at the same time there is no shadow of doubt that Hein is suffering from delusions. It may be said if that is all that is the matter with him it might be possible to allow him to go at large, but he was at large for some time and he became a considerable pest, not to say a danger. I believe he was almost a source of danger to certain members of Parliament and to members of the Government. Therefore, I claim he is a fit person to be retained in the hospital for insane. I wish to say in conclusion that we should keep our lunacy laws well in order, because I am under the impression we shall have a considerable increase in our hospital inmates. I am of opinion that if the automatic telephone is not removed we shall have to make further provision for people in the asylum for insane. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (Perth) [5.10]: The Honorary Minister concluded with the words that we should keep our lunacy laws in good order. I quite agree with the Minister in that contention. The Lunacy Act was passed in 1903, and I know from outside experience that it has worked very well. Therefore, I think we should pause before amending so important an Act. I am fully alive to the case the Minister has mentioned. I had some slight acquaintance with the person mentioned and some of my late colleagues had a more intimate acquaintance with him. I do not agree that it is possible to make an Act of Parliament fit every case. The Lunacy Act was drafted to a great extent by the present Inspector General of Insane. We are extremely fortunate in having a gentleman of his experience. He had large experience before coming here, and the State was particularly fortunate in getting that gentleman at the time we did, for the reason that the hospital was then in its initial stage. The building had not been commenced at Claremont. He came on the scene at that time and was able to give sound advice from his past experience not only in the framing of the Act of 1903, but he had had knowledge of buildings from his position with the lunacy commissioners in England. That has been a great benefit to the State. I did not hear any complaint during my occupancy of ministerial office in regard to the Act. The case which has been mentioned is a very extraordinary one.

The Premier: There are about 400 cases of a similar nature.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not think even for a number of cases that we should interfere with our present Act. There are certain provisions laid down in the act that must be complied with before a person can be committed to the hospital for insane. These provisions have not been complied with, and I do not know that it is altogether wise to legalise the errors which have been made.

The Premier: Do you suggest that all the other 400 should be released?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: No; there is no danger of anyone being wrongfully kept in that hospital.

The Premier: They are being kept there illegally to-day.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Then perhaps it would be wise to legalise that, and the Act might be amended to that extent. But the Bill goes further. I notice an important departure in Clause 4, which the Minister did not touch upon. It is to amend Section 7 of the principal Act, which provides that before a person is committed to the Hospital for the Insane, there shall be certificates from at least two doctors, and that these medical men shall attend before a justice. That is a wise provision, but, under Clause 4, it is proposed that these doctors need not appear before the court. It may be said, of course, that the bringing of these medical men before a justice is putting the country to unnecessary expense, but I doubt if it will really entail any extra expense. The Minister knows that these men receive a special fee for their certificates—a fee which is higher than that paid for an ordinary certificate—on the ground that the doctors are liable to the person detained if they certify wrongly. I think the fee they already receive is sufficient to cover any expense entailed in their going to the court and verifying their certificates. When a medical man, having given a certificate, appears before the court, it may be necessary to cross-examine him, because it must be remembered that lunacy is a very special branch of medical study. It is not every medical man who is a good lunacy doctor. From my experience I would be loth to accept from the average medical man a certificate as to the sanity of any person. For these reasons the medical men who issue the certificates should appear before the court, as provided in Section 7 of the existing Act. Again, there is no certainty of the genuineness of the certificate unless the doctor appears in court to prove its authenticity. However, I rely rather on the other point, that the doctor should appear before the court so that the justice may judge of the extent of his knowledge of lunacy. The Premier asked would I liberate certain people already in the hospital. I say no. Once they are there it does not matter quite so much; the keeping of a person in the hospital is not nearly of so much importance as the placing in the hospital of a person who is not insane, for a certain stigma attaches to a person who is once committed to a hospital for the insane, and therefore we should not endeavour to effect a trifling saving at the risk of wrongfully committing a patient to such an institution. From my knowledge of the authorities at the Hospital for the Insane at Claremont I am sure that if a person was wrongfully committed, he would not remain there very long.

The Minister for Works: It is difficult to get out once you are in.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: I do not think so. It would not take the authorities long to detect whether or not a person was insane. Therefore I think it is a mistake to amend Section 7 of the existing Act.

Mr. Smith: It is quite possible to render a person insane by committing him to a hospital for the insane.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: That is so. The average person has very queer ideas as to what a hospital for the insane really is, and the mere fact of his being sent to a madhouse might have a very injurious effect on a nervous person. We cannot be too careful about committing any person to the Hospital for the Insane, and therefore I think Clause 4 is dangerous. I will not now refer to

other matters which must be considered in Committee, matters which go rather far in order to validate certain acts.

The Attorney General: Have you seen our amendments on the Notice Paper?

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Yes, and therefore I will say nothing further about this point just now. However, I cannot agree with the proposed amendment to be moved by the member for North Perth (Mr. Smith). Under Section 94 of the existing Act two official visitors are appointed, one of whom is a solicitor, and the other a medical practitioner. In the past we have been very fortunate in having such men as Mr. Darbyshire of Perth and Dr. Birmingham of Fremantle. They have to visit the institution once a quarter and see every patient. The proposed amendment seeks to alter the number from two to three, with the object of including a woman.

The Minister for Mines: We are not discussing the amendment just now.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: No; perhaps I am going beyond the scope of the second reading stage. I will deal with the amendment in Committee. I support the second reading.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [5.25]: As to the proposed three visitors to the asylum, I have been requested by the ladies that a woman visitor, with medical qualifications, should be appointed one of the three. This is done in the interests of the women patients, of whom there are some 300, together with a large number of children. It is asked that the additional visitor shall be appointed and remunerated on the same footing as the male visitors. They want the principle affirmed, and though not pressing for the immediate performance, they ask that it shall be given effect to at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Minister for Works: The choice will be very limited.

The Premier: Who made the request?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The women of Western Australia. I do not see what objection can be offered to a woman, having medical qualifications, being appointed a visitor to the hospital.

The Premier: Medical qualifications would not help her very much.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Still she would be well qualified to sympathise with the women and children who are there. I do not see where any objection can come in.

Mr. SPEAKER: May I suggest that the hon. member reserve his remarks till the Committee stage?

On motion by Mr. Robinson, debate adjourned.

BILL—VERMIN BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford) [5.27]: The Bill is introduced for the purpose of rectifying some omissions that have been discovered in the principal Act, passed in 1909, and also to enable the Government to come to the rescue of the vermin board appointed under that Act, and which has been administering the rabbit-proof fence in the Gascoyne district. In order to give hon. members a grasp of the matter I must take them back to the time when an agitation was created by the squatters and pastoralists in that part of the State for some protection against an invasion of rabbits which they then considered to be imminent. As a result of representations made, the then Minister for Lands (Sir Newton Moore), in reply to a deputation, stated that the Government were prepared, and indeed proposed, to introduce a Bill to give the local pastoralists an opportunity of appointing a board so that they could protect themselves against the invasion of rabbits or other vermin. That Bill was passed, and assented to in February, 1909. Immediately afterwards, in fact during the same month, the board was appointed. Under the Act the Government had power to appoint the first board. That board was appointed, and immediately approached the Government under the provisions of the Bill, and raised money for the purpose of the erection of a fence

running across from the coastline to connect with the fence which had been erected by the Government some time previously. They drew the sum of altogether—that is, speaking right up to date—£66,000. With this amount of money they have erected 327 miles of fences. Under the indenture by which they raised the money the board agreed to pay 5 per cent. interest on the money, and to repay the principal in 20 years on half-yearly instalments. They have paid in interest up to date a sum of £9,869, and have repaid the principal to the extent of £3,989, but they did that during the first years when the board came into existence, and before they began to suffer from the difficulties that were caused through the drought which took place immediately after the fence was erected, with the result that they have not, they say, been able to pay up as they did previously, and there is now something over £9,000, in fact close on £10,000, in arrears of their payments to the State. The board has been in existence for six years. They have suffered phenomenally bad seasons. For that reason they have had difficulty in collecting the rates. Those that were able to pay rates were no doubt influenced by the fact that some others did not pay, and so took up the attitude that they were not going to pay. The board as a consequence endeavoured to compel those who could pay to pay, but when they took the case to the court they found there was a difficulty under the principal Act, and that they had no power to compel payment. It is to overcome that difficulty that the Bill is introduced. There is another difficulty in connection with the administration of the board. Members of the board, of course, live long distances apart, and a number of them live a long way from Carnarvon, where the central office of the board is situated, and where the affairs of the board are administered. The result is that they have had difficulty in getting full meetings of the board, and whilst they have done certain things in the interests of the pastoralists those things have not been done legally in accordance with the Act inasmuch as it has been claimed that, while the board have met and carried certain resolutions, and determined to do certain things, those things have not been done legally, because it is claimed that the meetings were not correctly called, and that quorums were not present. Realising that they had some difficulty to contend with, my predecessor (Mr. Bath) extended some consideration to the board. In the first place he agreed to extend the terms, and to provide that instead of the principal being repaid in 20 years, it should be repaid in 30 years. Consequently the half-yearly payments would be reduced in proportion. He also agreed when they were starting to get into arrears, that, in order to avoid a constant pressure which was being put upon them to pay, he would give them an extension of time of 18 months, provided they gave him bills for the amount in arrears. That has not overcome the difficulty, of course. We still have the bills, but have had no payment. We are somewhat in the same position as the hon. member for Wagin (Mr. S. Stubbs) found himself. The position has been drifting from bad to worse. The board have got into arrears with the Government. The ratepayers or the pastoralists have got into arrears with the board, and owing to the non-payment of rates the board have had no money to carry on, and the fences have got into a bad state of repair. In some cases, indeed, the fences have fallen down altogether, and cannot be erected because there is no money to do that. They have appealed to the Government to advance a sum of money, but the Government cannot see their way clear to advance more money when we find that we have not been getting that which has already been advanced, and that the Act is deficient in the way of compelling the payment of arrears. Quite recently as the result of representations through the Government and the Government expressions of their inability to come to the rescue, the board decided to suspend all operations and went to the extent of stopping all the maintenance works. They had certain men out doing reconstructing on the fences which had fallen down, and they recalled those men, but when they arrived in Carnarvon they

found that there was no money by which they could be paid. The men approached the Government, and whilst the Government were sympathetic to the extent of recognising that the men should receive payment, on investigating the matter closely we found that we could not accept the responsibility of paying the wages because we had no idea where it was going to end. The result was that we were compelled reluctantly to refuse to pay the wages that the men claimed were due to them. The men, of course, naturally took out summonses against the board and issued writs. They got judgment and seizures were made on certain plant and camels. Representations were then made to us, and it was pointed out that there was no great demand for camels in that district, or for the plant which had been purchased for the purpose of maintaining the rabbit-proof fences, and that it was more than likely that the plant would be absolutely sacrificed, and that there might not be sufficient money realised with which to pay the wages. I instructed the Government officer up there, without making the matter public, to attend the sale and to purchase these things on behalf of the Government. We therefore have purchased a fair amount of plant, and that plant is in Carnarvon now, and is the property of the Crown. We simply paid the board for the plant that we purchased, and I understand the men have received their payments in that way. The advances of the board are not limited to that. I understand that most of the claims of the men have been satisfied, but that there are one or two who are taking out writs against the board. Other creditors have also taken action, with the result that several writs have been issued. Some of these have been satisfied, and others are still pending. Generally speaking, therefore, the board are in a particularly bad way. The Government realised that something must be done, but were not prepared to do that something under a measure which is defective. We are not prepared, although we have £66,000 at stake, to put more money into it when already we have a difficulty in getting back that £66,000. We think we had better make a first loss rather than rush into it without first ensuring that by Act of Parliament we have a reasonable opportunity of recovering those amounts which it was intended the Government should be able to recover. Those are, briefly, the general reasons for the introduction of the Bill. As I have said, there are certain difficulties about the present measure that are being put right, and other powers are given to the Crown to get the funds in that are outstanding to enable them to go on and put the thing on a proper and sound basis. The Bill is essentially one for Committee. It is a machinery Bill. I do not think it is necessary to take up more time of the Chamber in going into further details. Hon. members will see from a perusal of the Bill that it is essentially one the clauses of which will require to be explained in Committee. I shall be prepared to do that to the best of my ability and to make the position perfectly clear in Committee if I have not already done so in the few remarks that I have made. I beg to move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Gilchrist, debate adjourned.

BILL—LOAN ACTS AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [5.42] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is required to overcome a technical difficulty which occurred in connection with the loan of two millions which was issued in London during April of 1913. The sum of £650,000 was required to redeem Treasury Bills which at the time were current in London and which became due on the 1st July, 1913, and specific provision was made in the prospectus of the two million loan accordingly. The full amount of the loan (two millions) was issued under the authority of the Loan Act, 1912, whereas the money originally received from Treasury Bills was

utilised for the schedules of works under the Supplementary Loan Act, 1904, and the Loan Act, 1906, under which Acts Treasury Bills were issued. Therefore as the Loan Act, 1912, had no application to the £650,000, the Bill which is now before the House is required to admit of the money being applied to the redemption of the Treasury Bills and also to bring the raising of that loan within the scope of the Loan Act, 1904, to the extent of £500,000 and the Supplementary Loan Act, 1906, to the extent of £150,000. We issued the prospectus correctly, that is the term was correct, but unfortunately we omitted to provide that the money was being raised under the Loan Act, 1912, the Loan Act, 1904, and the Loan Act, 1906, the latter two Acts being necessary because we included in the prospectus the sum of £650,000 of the two millions that were being raised to pay off the amount which was falling due under the Treasury Bills which were then current in London. This is merely an oversight. I think this actually occurred at this end in cabling to the Agent General authority to raise the two millions. We merely cabled the authority under the Loan Act, 1912, whereas we should have included the Acts of 1906 and 1904, which would have covered the provision of £650,000 that was raised to redeem these Treasury Bills. The whole thing was completed except to the extent I have mentioned and in order to do what is legal and right from the point of view of our Acts and also from the point of view of those who subscribed to the loan, it is necessary that we should put the matter right by passing this small measure. The only other provision in the Bill is in dealing with the sinking fund. Under the Loan Act of 1904 and the Supplementary Loan Act of 1906, provision for a sinking fund is made at one per cent., whereas under the General Loan Act and Subscribed Stock Act, the minimum rate of one half per cent. is provided for and therefore for the purpose of uniformity, it is desired to bring the £650,000 within the provision of the latter Act, so that when the sinking fund for the whole issue of the two millions commences to accrue, the Treasurer shall not be required to contribute more than one half per cent. annually on the whole amount. It is a rate that has been adopted for the sinking fund of recent years. I may mention that the financial advisers in London were approached with regard to the whole matter and raised the question in regard to the sinking fund. We are simply rectifying the mistake which was made. The Loan was raised at the same time and under the same conditions, and to make any difference in the payments of the sinking fund would mean extra expense in the way of keeping different accounts in the Treasury. Thus, we consider it would be better to place the whole two millions loan under the same conditions as the others. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [5.47]: I do not see any reason to oppose this measure. It seems only a technical matter that requires to be set right, and the amount of the sinking fund fixed seems to be quite reasonable. At the time the Treasury Bills matured a sinking fund as provided had been paid. I do not see any objection to the Bill and it might be allowed to pass.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etcetera.

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

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [5.50] in moving the second reading said: It had always been considered that the local authorities were given power to approve of the class of building that should be erected within their boundaries. No exception was ever taken to the decisions of the local authorities in regard to

plans which had been submitted to them, and in many instances alterations have been carried into effect at the request of the authorities. Therefore, it has been the generally accepted opinion, so far as the local authorities are concerned, that they had full power to approve or disapprove of any plans submitted to them relating to buildings. The Act as it stands at the present time makes it clear that the plans have to be deposited and have to be approved and acted upon. In the past the local authorities, as I have informed the House, have exercised the provisions of that measure in a manner which they thought best in the interests of their respective districts, but during the last month or two the action of one municipality has been questioned. I refer to Subiaco. An individual there who went in for speculative building, purchased a small area of ground and he desired to cram a number of buildings on that area, far and above the number the land was able to carry. He deposited the plans with the Subiaco Council for their approval. The Council decided that the buildings were not suitable and that the land was not large enough to carry the number of buildings the individual wished to erect. In some instances the desire of this person was to erect two habitations on a block having a 33ft. frontage with a depth of 99ft. The local authority considered that the powers conferred upon them by the Act enabled them to refuse the request to erect those buildings on such a small area. The individual began working on the land and action was taken against him for commencing operations contrary to the by-laws of the municipal council. The council were successful against the man in the local court. The man, however, appealed under Section 333 of the Municipalities Act to the Supreme Court, and the decision was given in his favour. Mr. Justice Rooth decided that so long as there was 20ft. of air space at the rear of the proposed building the local authority had no say whatever in the matter. The position, therefore, to-day is that anyone can erect on such a small area any kind of building that he may deem necessary, provided there is such an air space at the rear. I do not think that was ever the intention of Parliament. The intention of Parliament was that the local authorities should approve at their discretion of the size and the class of building which should be erected on a given area of land. Mr. Justice Rooth's decision was that he thought if the requirements of the section had been properly applied, the council had no option but to approve of the application for the erection of these buildings, provided there was over 20ft. of air space for each house at the rear of the premises. The council was involved over this litigation in an expenditure of £65. The Bill before the House provides that the council shall have discretion in the approval of buildings to be erected, with the right of appeal to the Minister for Works, who at all times will have the architectural branch of his department to give advice in respect to any building any person may wish to erect. I am confident that so far as the Minister is concerned he will see that no undue advantage is taken by a local authority of an intending builder in imposing on him conditions which might be unreasonable. As a rule, in a large number of local districts, the various governing bodies are anxious to see buildings erected, but they are not desirous of having small pieces of ground crammed with structures in such a way as to prove detrimental to the district and to the health of the people residing in the area. The Bill removes entirely the right of appeal to the Supreme Court or to the local court and it also removes the provision of the 20ft. of air space as allowed in the present Municipalities Act. Provision is made for an appeal to the Minister in the event of an intending builder feeling himself aggrieved. I trust hon. members will pass the Bill because I am quite confident it was the intention of Parliament that the local authorities should have discretion in the matter of deciding whether the buildings to be erected should be up to a certain standard and suitable for habitation. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Have the local authorities been consulted in connection with the Bill?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Some of them. I have brought this measure in at the request of the Subiaco Council.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: It might be better to submit it to the other municipal councils.

Mr. HEITMANN (Geraldton) [5.57]: I desire to support the Bill. It is going a little way in the direction I have advocated on several occasions in this House. Members and the public generally must have often felt that the conditions under which many of our people live in the cities, and possibly there may be some excuse in cities where land might be said to be scarce, have not conduced to good health. But there is no excuse for the crowding which we notice taking place in some of our agricultural towns. Not only would I give the council the power proposed in this Bill, but I would protect the health of the people against the councils themselves. I have noticed the tendency on more than one occasion in different places on the part of local authorities to grant permission to build on areas which certainly, from a hygienic standpoint, are not sufficiently large.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: This covers more than dwelling houses; it covers all buildings.

Mr. HEITMANN: I am dealing now with dwelling houses. I have noticed several times that members who belong to municipal or other governing bodies are to some extent not free agents when they come to discuss a matter of this description. In small towns, and this has been remarked upon by the Principal Medical Officer, council officials themselves are not always free to express an opinion. Very often a friend of a member asks permission to do a certain thing, and influence is brought to bear so that considerations of friendship prevent these officials from doing what they should? I would advocate the provision of models as directions to municipal bodies as regards private dwellings. I would also stipulate that a certain surface area should be provided, because, in cities, the 20 feet of space stipulated means nothing if there is an abnormal amount of room space on a small block. For every cubic foot of air space, there should be a certain amount of surface space. I hope the time will come when the Minister will be able to go further than this measure and provide that in all new buildings there must be ample breathing space. This question has a great bearing on the health of the people. In some parts of the metropolitan area new areas have been cut up with frontages of 66 feet. In my opinion this is little enough. In some of the towns in agricultural districts, holders of small estates, in order to make as much as possible out of their land, have cut it into blocks with frontages as limited as 33 feet. This is positively disgraceful and it is harmful to the residents and to the public health generally. It is time that Parliament considered the advisableness of making provision in the directions I have indicated.

On motion by Hon. J. D. Connolly debate adjourned.

BILL—POSTPONEMENT OF DEBTS AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [6.3] in moving the second reading said: This measure is necesssary to provide that the present Act shall continue in operation until the 31st December next. We have a Postponement of Debts Act on the statute-book which has not yet been put into operation. It is lying dormant, but it is desirable to have it ready to be used if such a course is found necessary. It has been urged by some members, and from outside quarters, that we should appoint a commission under this Act, and thus allow those who consider they are suffering from the effects of the war, and through other causes, to obtain a postponement of the payment of their debts.

Mr. S. Stubbs: It opens up a big question.

The PREMIER: Yes, and until the matter becomes very serious, I think it will be inadvisable to take any action under that law. All will admit that we require the powers, and as the Act expires on the 30th June, and Parliament is not likely to meet before that date, it is desirable that its operations should be extended until the end of the year. We also embody in this Bill an amendment which gives discretion to the Governor to direct whether the interest on a debt should be payable or not during the postponement. Under the present Act, if a debt is postponed, there is no discretion to permit of the postponement of interest, and members, I think, will admit that the exercise of such discretion should be provided for. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [6.5]: I agree with the Premier that we should extend the period of this Act, and I also agree that the Bill confers powers which may be, but I hope will not have to be, exercised. Up to the present I confess I have seen no need to exercise the powers conferred under the principal Act passed in September last. At that time, owing to the disturbed conditions of finances at the first outbreak of the war, we deemed it necessary to provide these extraordinary powers. All of us were under the impression that the powers would not be exercised unless it was found absolutely necessary to bring them into operation in order to maintain public and private credit. I am not quite sure about the proposed amendment to Section 2. Does it mean that interest on mortgages can also be postponed?

The Premier: Yes, it being left to the discretion of the Governor whether interest, as well as principal, should be postponed.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Will this be done only on the advice of the Commission?

The Premier: Yes.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I see no objection to the Bill and I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE (TEMPORARY).

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [6.10] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is of great importance, and yet I am hopeful that we will not find it necessary to put it into operation. The purpose is to enable the Governor-in-Council, if necessary, to dispense with the services of any public servant during the period of the present war. The only object and reason why the measure should be put into operation, would be if the Governor-in-Council was satisfied, after inquiry, that any person was disloyal, or likely, in consequence of being in the public service, to obtain information which he could, or might, transfer to the enemies of His Majesty the King and of the Empire.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Have not you the necessary power already?

The PREMIER: No. The Public Service Act at present provides certain means to dispense with the services of public servants but these means do not include such provisions as are embodied in this Bill. The Public Service Act provides that a person, before joining the public service, shall be a natural born or a naturalised British subject; but it must be remembered that quite a number of persons enter the public service immediately after becoming naturalised, and in some cases they have been naturalised after acceptance. If any person is out to do an injury to the Empire, he will not worry about becoming naturalised.

Mr. S. Stubbs: You ought to provide against uttering disloyal sentiments.

The PREMIER: It might be a difficult matter to decide what constitutes disloyal sentiments, but such a person should not utter damaging, disloyal statements, or hold a position in the service which would give him access to information liable, or likely, to be used to the detriment of the Empire. We have had two cases under consideration. I admit it is pretty serious to ask a person to stand down during the period of the war because the war may last one, two or three years, or even longer, though we hope it will be of shorter duration. Regarding the two cases, after consulting the Public Service Commissioner, we submitted them to the military authorities. In one case the authorities asserted that they saw no reason at present to compel the person concerned to leave the service. They were not aware that we had no means to compel him to leave the service except by laying a charge as provided under the Public Service Act. In the other case the military authorities, after considering all the evidence available, stated they were of opinion it was not desirable that the person concerned should hold his present position in the public service. Notwithstanding that finding, we are helpless and I am certain no member desires that we should remain helpless in regard to such a case. When such a report is made we should be able to do what is essential from a military point of view. The person concerned is a naturalised British subject, but the military authorities could not touch him unless he were guilty of some overt act. There are certain positions in the public service where such a person might obtain information which would be of tremendous value to the enemies of the Empire. When in Melbourne I heard of instances which would astonish hon. members in regard to the actions of people in different parts of Australia, and even in this State. Just at the outbreak of war information was intercepted, which was being sent from Western Australia, as well as from other parts of the Commonwealth, for the benefit of the enemies of our country. The people concerned, when caught in the act, explained that the information was for scientific purposes. Well, war is a science, and that was the scientific purpose they had in mind. I recognise the seriousness of passing a measure of this character, because it will place every public servant in the State absolutely under the control of the Governor-in-Council for the time being. We will not be able to dispense with a man's services entirely, but we can call upon any public servant, without assigning any reasons, to stand down as long as the Governor-in-Council desires.

Hon. F. Wilson: Not any public servant.

The PREMIER: Any of the persons described in the Bill, a naturalised British subject, or the child of a subject of one of the enemies' countries. There are a number of the latter who are as loyal, probably, as I am. We respect them for it because one must remember that they still retain feelings of respect and love for their own nationality. If I were in a foreign country at war with the Empire, I would find it difficult to submerge my nationality, although I would feel it incumbent upon me, while under the protection of the flag of that country, to do nothing detrimental or even make disloyal utterances to influence the people against me or my own country. Any natural-born subject of any power now at war with us, who is now naturalised, and who, prior to the war, enjoyed the protection of the British flag, has no reason to give utterance to disloyal statements, although he may think it cruel to hear some of the remarks uttered regarding his country.

Mr. S. Stubbs: Such a man would get short shrift in Germany.

The PREMIER: There are good and bad in all people, and it must be difficult for some people to keep quiet when they hear remarks that all the people of enemy powers are bloodthirsty scoundrels. It is essential that they should keep quiet. Our object is not to issue a warning to them to refrain from uttering disloyal sentiments, but if we suspect

any public servant of obtaining information which might be used to the detriment of the Empire, we can ask him to stand aside until the war is over. The House will appreciate the intention of the measure, and my assurance that this is the only object we have in view. I repeat the hope that it will not be necessary to put it into operation against any public servant and that anyone likely to be affected by it will recognise that he is obtaining the protection of the British flag, and that, being a naturalised British subject, he must stand or fall with us; that he will put aside his nationality for the time being, and be loyal to the country which is giving him protection, and to the people with whom he is now residing. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Sitting suspended from 6.19 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [7.34]: I consider that the Bill which the Premier introduced prior to the adjournment, is a very proper measure to pass. We are, of course, all agreed that we want to do the fair and right thing by natural born subjects of any power at war with the British Empire at the present time, or even by such subjects as may happen to be in the service of the State; but, still, we have a duty to perform to the Empire, and it is only right that the Government should have absolute power to dispense with the services of any public servant who may be reported to be in any degree disloyal. Indeed, I would go rather further than this measure contemplates. I should like to see Clause 3 of the measure deleted entirely, so as to make this a permanent Act. In my opinion, this is proper legislation to have permanently upon our statute book. In case of any subsequent war in which the Empire may be engaged, the Government should have the powers comprised in this small Bill. It is unnecessary to labour the point further. I merely wish to say that the measure receives my hearty commendation.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clause 1—Short title:

Hon. FRANK WILSON: May I suggest to the Premier that we amend this Clause and so make the Bill a permanent measure? I would strike out the word "temporary" in the short title, omit the word "now" in paragraphs (a) and (b), and delete the third clause.

The Premier: It would be sufficient to strike out the word "now" in those two paragraphs.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes; but also delete the word "temporary" in this clause.

Mr. Robinson: If the word "temporary" were struck out the other amendments would be consequential.

The PREMIER: I have no objection to the hon. member's suggestion, with which, indeed, I entirely agree. Even if this measure is placed on the statute book permanently, it will be operative only when the Empire is at war. I really do not think, however, that the word "temporary" in the short title has any bearing on the point. The omission of Clause 3 would make the measure permanent. The word "temporary" refers to the removal of such a civil servant from office, and not to the operation of the measure.

The Attorney General: The title might be the "Certain Public Servants Act."

The PREMIER: The word "temporary" means merely that such a public servant may be asked to stand down temporarily.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But Clause 2 provides that such a public servant shall hold his office at the will of the Crown.

The PREMIER: Of course the Crown may tell him to stand down temporarily for good. I concur entirely in the desire of the leader of the Opposition to have this a permanent measure, ready to be put into operation when any country is at war with the British Empire.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I want the Government to have absolute power of dismissal in such cases, and I think this measure gives them that power.

The Attorney General: It does.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If the Government have evidence that a public servant is disloyal, they ought to get rid of him on the spot, without any consideration such as retiring allowance or pension. A disloyal public servant should be simply fired out. In accordance with our British principles, we have been too lenient in this respect.

The Minister for Mines: And we are suffering for it now.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No other nation would give such freedom to foreigners to enter the public service.

The Minister for Mines: In that respect we have gone even to the length of foolishness, in some cases.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Exactly. This measure applies especially to positions of responsibility, the holders of which have at their disposal information which would be valuable to foreign powers.

The PREMIER: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 the words "Service (Temporary)" be struck out and "Servants" inserted in lieu.

Hon. H. B. Lefroy: Why not call this the "Public Service Amendment Act"?

Mr. Willmott: Are all civil servants public servants?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. Willmott: I do not think so.

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

Clause 2—Tenure of Office:

The PREMIER: I move an amendment—

That the word "now" in line 2 of paragraph (a) be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

On motions by the PREMIER the word "now" in line 2 of paragraph (b); also the words "during the continuance of this Act and" in line 9 were struck out.

Clause as amended put and passed.

Clause 3—negatived.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Church of England Lands.

2, Licensing Act Amendment Continuance.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

RESOLUTION—MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE, JOINT STANDING ORDERS.

Message from the Council received and read asking concurrence in the following resolution:—"That in order to maintain the harmonious relations between the two Houses necessary in the interests of public business it is in the opinion of this House advisable that the Standing Orders Committees of both Houses should meet and confer with a view to framing joint Standing Orders to assist in overcoming the present differences between the two Houses in regard to money Bills, and if necessary to recommend an amendment of the Constitution with that object."

BILL—CONTROL OF TRADE IN WAR TIME ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [7.55]: Hon. members will recollect that when we passed the Control of Trade in War Time Act last session it was done hurriedly for the purpose of meeting possible contingencies, and also because of the fact that we proposed to have only a short session. We had no other case of any importance to guide us; it was an emergency measure, and we had to do the best we could. Since the Act has been in operation we have discovered certain defects. The principal object of the legislation is to control trade during war time. The control of trade can only be effective so long as any commission that may be appointed has power to enforce its decisions. Setting aside for the moment the question of the correctness of any decision arrived at by the Commission, the one desire of Parliament in passing the measure was to enable the

Commission to fix the maximum price. The meaning of that is that the Governor in Council, on the advice of the Commission, fixes the maximum price. But we discovered that, owing to the manner in which the Bill was framed, while the maximum price can be fixed it does not prevent people from selling above that price, and, as a matter of fact, it is of no effect. We have discovered that while we have in one or two instances fixed a price which under the Act is the maximum price, a person may voluntarily purchase from another, and by that act some other person may sell the article, at a price above the maximum price fixed by the Governor in Council, and so the whole object we had in view is defeated. We fixed the price for wheat.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That was the only price fixed, was it not?

The PREMIER: Yes, for on that we learned certain things, with the result that we have not fixed other maximum prices, largely because of the ineffectiveness of the action we took in regard to wheat. We fixed the maximum price of wheat at 4s. 6d. But there were different grades of wheat. The 4s. 6d. was largely fixed on the basis of old wheat, and on a milling basis of fair average quality. But there was seed wheat to be purchased, and some of the old wheat was being sold for seed, with the result that there was not, nor could there be under the conditions, any control in regard to the fixing of the maximum price for the sale of seed wheat. Again, we were faced with the position that people were buying ahead, notwithstanding that the Act was in operation, when a price might have been fixed for new season's wheat. They were really speculating. The object of the Bill was largely to prevent speculation which would permit a few people to become enriched at the expense of the many. We knew that war and other conditions would encourage speculation. Unfortunately that speculation has been indulged in. If it is desirable that we should fix the maximum price, we should do as the Board of Trade has done in England, and provide a penalty for any person who sells above the maximum. The Board of Trade has fixed the price for various commodities, as, for instance, Australian butter, and that maximum is less than we have been paying for our own butter out here. They fixed the price of Australian butter in any part of Great Britain at less than we were buying it for on our own shores. Further, advertisements have appeared, and I am sorry I have not them with me, in the newspapers, circulating in the United Kingdom, drawing the attention of the householder to the fact that these are the prices fixed by the Board of Trade. If a person has been charged anything above this amount he is to make the fact known, and the Board of Trade will see that the amount is refunded and the person penalised for having done this thing. We here, however, are in a totally different position. We fix the maximum price, but, under the conditions prevailing, when there is less supply than demand, a person has to sit down and wait until someone offers more than the price fixed. There is, in fact, no control. The result is that the whole thing is undermined and of no value at all. We know that there are difficulties in a State like Western Australia of being able to fix a maximum price that will be satisfactory to all parts of the State. It would, in fact, be impossible to do it. We provide, in Clause 2 of this measure, that the Governor may—

> (a) Fix and declare different maximum prices according to differences in quality or description of the necessaries of life, or in the quantity sold; (b) fix and declare different maximum prices for different parts of the State; (c) vary any price previously fixed; but so as to apply only to future transactions; (d) in fixing any price, do so relatively to such standards of measurement, weight, capacity, or otherwise, as the Governor, on the recommendation of the Commissioner, may think proper.

It is not to be expected that this will meet all the difficulties that may arise in Western Australia. To fix the price that

would prevail say at Peak Hill, or at Wyndham, and at the same time would prevail in Perth, would be absurd. In some cases the prices may be even less than they are in Perth, but, in the majority of cases, the prices would, of course, be higher. The Commissioner, or the Governor on the recommendation of the Commissioner, will have power to vary the price in the different parts of the State, according to the conditions prevailing there. We make provision that if any person sells, or offers for sale, any necessary of life at a price higher than the maximum price fixed under this measure he shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a penalty not exceeding one hundred pounds, and in case of sale shall be liable to refund to the purchaser the difference between the fixed price and the price at which the necessary of life was sold. That is merely taking the powers already operating in Great Britain, where the price has been fixed. It is the only way of making it effectual. It is a way of telling the purchaser that it is the price fixed for the article. If it is on sale the purchaser knows that he can have it for that price.

Mr. James Gardiner: Was not that the original intention of the Bill?

The PREMIER: Yes, but it did not prove effective. We have avoided fixing the price of everything except of wheat.

Mr. James Gardiner: And you have not fixed the price of flour?

The PREMIER: No: what was the use? Immediately we fixed the price at 4s. 6d. as a maximum for wheat it became the minimum. We fixed it as the maximum, but, as I have said, it became the minimum. No one sold wheat after that date at less than 4s. 6d. It gradually rose even above that. We, ourselves, as a Ministry, had to purchase wheat above that price. We were, indeed, one of the first offenders.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You were.

The PREMIER: I am prepared to admit that. There was nothing to prevent the merchant from purchasing wheat at a price above 4s. 6d., and we would have been left out in the cold altogether, so far as the question of seed wheat is concerned, if we had not taken steps to secure it.

Mr. Wansbrough: Because you did not fix a fair price.

The PREMIER: The hon. member may have his opinion on that, and I may have mine. The price of 4s. 6d. was fixed for the previous season's wheat, and did not apply to the new wheat at all. We fixed no price for new season's wheat and I think in that we failed in our duty. The wheat market was in such a state of chaos that it was difficult to get anything out of it. Some of our best seed to-day is actually going into the mills because there are only two competetive markets in the State, the Government setting up in a co-operative way on behalf of the farmers for the purchase of seed wheat for next year, and the millers who want the wheat for the purpose of gristing it into flour. They are getting such a good price for flour at the present time that they are prepared to pay almost any price for the wheat because they can fix any price they like for the flour which they sell, and no one can say them nay. We have now purchased so much wheat at a high price that it is doubtful whether we can get the necessary wheat for next year.

Mr. S. Stubbs: It is not in the State.

The PREMIER: I do not think it is. Would the hon. member be prepared to accept imported wheat for his next season's crop? The first consideration, under existing conditions, is seed. We can import wheat for flour purposes. If anyone requires to have an advantage under the existing conditions, it is the Farmers' Assistance Board who require this advantage for the purpose of securing the best wheat procurable at a price most satisfactory to the seller and to the buyer.

Mr. S. Stubbs: The samples of wheat this year are of a very poor quality indeed.

The PREMIER: There are good samples of wheat going.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What is the price for wheat in New South Wales?

The PREMIER: That is not much of a guide. They are just at this moment in a worse state of chaos than we are with regard to their transactions in wheat.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They have legislation there, I believe.

The PREMIER: They have some legislation, but they also have litigation, which is worse than legislation. I do not think we need worry much about New South Wales.

Hon. Frank Wilson: How is it going on elsewhere? The whole thing is experimental, we must remember.

The PREMIER: It is experimental to a certain extent. The conditions are such that these powers are warranted so long as they are exercised with caution. At this moment there are certain transactions taking place which require certain consideration before they can be re-adjusted. Take for instance the question of bran and pollard, the by-products of wheat. The other day they went up to a very high figure, almost, in fact, a prohibitive figure. Certain persons, I believe the Poultry Farmers' Association or something of that kind, had occasion to look around for the purpose of obtaining this essential to their industry from some other quarter, at a price less than they could obtain it in the State. They did obtain this essential, but, as soon as they did so, the local people reduced the price to one which was less than that which the Association had paid for it elsewhere. The result was that the persons who had dared to go outside the State for the food for their stock had to suffer a loss on their bargain. So the whole thing is fluctuating. The miller is all right; his interests are safeguarded. If he has a loss on bran and pollard it is made up on the price that he charges for flour. He can make his market all right so far as flour is concerned. We have permitted the millers to fix almost any price they like for bran and pollard so long as they guarantee a fair price for flour. The interests of the human being, however, are greater than the interests of the flocks held by the poultry farmers.

Hon. Frank Wilson: These are food stuffs, you know.

The PREMIER: Not in the same respect as bread is. We have done a lot which we have not made public for reasons which hon. members will appreciate. There is a time, I think, when these matters should be spoken about, and other times when they should be left unsaid. The fact remains that that is what has happened. Under these conditions the price of almost every commodity, or at least a great number of them, is adjusted on the price of wheat, flour, bran, pollard, and so on. The cost of the milling of these necessities of life controls the price of many other products. There is a general, steady and gradual shifting up of prices. In many cases this shifting up is certainly unwarranted. If one permits a man to purchase an article for the purpose of reselling—and there are numbers of people who are doing this, that is purchasing for the purpose of reselling—one is always up against the difficulty of fixing a price that will be just. Take the case of a baker. If we fix the price of bread, we must fix it on the basis of the price that he has paid to the miller for his flour. The miller, on the other hand, says that if we fix the price of flour we must fix it on the price that he has paid for the wheat he has turned into flour. It is a tremendously difficult proposition, and one which cannot be dealt with unless proper safeguards are provided. The problem, in fact, is so difficult as to be almost impossible to solve satisfactorily.

Mr. James Gardiner: Then the present Bill is inoperative?

The PREMIER: Yes. It is inoperative because, though the price was fixed it ended there. As I have already pointed out, this price has become the minimum and not the maximum price.

Mr. Munsie: It will have a steadying effect so far as some articles are concerned.

The PREMIER: The last few weeks have shown how much the measure is

steadying them. My baker, for instance, may tell me that he cannot supply me with bread at the price which has been fixed by the Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Commissioner. Thereupon, I may say to him—"If you cannot supply me at that price, I will give you another penny per loaf." Under the Act he is entitled to get that extra penny; so it is that they will all charge a penny more if the public are prepared to pay it. The whole intention of the Act is undermined at once.

Mr. James Gardiner: Under this Bill, five or six persons, holding one commodity, can get any price they like for it.

The PREMIER: They can sit down on it, because they know that there are certain commodities for which there is a greater demand than there is a supply. If the holders of those commodities merely sit down, the public must eventually pay the price demanded.

Mr. James Gardiner: The object of the Bill, then, is defeated?

The PREMIER: The object of the Act which is in operation to-day, was defeated. It does not, in fact, operate at all. What we are doing under this Bill is to provide that once the price has been fixed for a commodity everybody will know what that price is, and that if the commodity is on sale it can be purchased at that price. In fact, the purchaser can demand it at that price. We take further power under Clause 4 of this measure to provide that if the Commission are satisfied that a person is with-holding from sale any commodity or necessary of life, simply because he is dissatisfied with the price, or for the purpose of obtaining a higher price later on, the Commission can purchase that commodity or necessary and distribute it. So that if the bakers were to combine—and they are very vitally concerned, as are the millers—and say they will not supply us, or say, at all events, "we will with-hold the flour, until the Commission see the error of their ways and fix a price which will suit our purposes; otherwise we will not consent to sell," the Government can come in under this measure, and buy that flour and distribute it to the people at the price fixed. In these circumstances, we take such powers that the Commission will have to be very careful that they obtain all the evidence possible, and go into each question thoroughly, before they recommend the fixing of a price for any particular commodity. We must keep in mind the fact that the person in business must expect to get some profit and to be paid for his labour. Once the price is fixed the holder should not then have the power to set aside such action as I have mentioned. Thus we are taking the necessary powers, for fixing a price according to the quantity or quality of the supplies that are being sold, and for imposing a penalty on the person who sells above the price fixed, and also the right to seize supplies if withheld from sale for the purpose of defeating the object of the Bill. This is an amendment to the Control of Trade in War Time Act. I beg to move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [8.15]: I do not intend to oppose the second reading of this measure, but what the Premier has told us goes to show how very difficult it is to administer legislation of this description. It certainly has brought home to us emphatically that the law of supply and demand with regard to commodities does exist and that it regulates prices. The illustration the Premier gave us that as soon as some consumers in Western Australia imported bran and pollard ino the State, the price was affected. That is the natural law which always has affected the markets throughout the world. I have always been doubtful as to the absolute necessity of having legislation of this character. It is true I supported it during the last session of Parliament, because I was convinced there was a danger of the time coming when legislation would be necessary in the interests of the people of the State, and therefore I agreed that the powers asked for by the Government should be given. At the same time I felt we would have to be extremely cautious as to how we gave

effect to the powers we were passing. Notwithstanding that this legislation exists in South Australia and in New South Wales, in which States too it goes much further than our principal Act, we are now seeking to amend our Act, and I notice that the amendments in the measure are all culled from the New South Wales Act. The prices of these commodities in the other States is just as high as it is in this State, and I hear to-day that the quotations for flour in New South Wales are higher than in Western Australia. If the legislation is effective, how is it that the prices in all the States have jumped up?

Mr. Green: All the more reason why we should amend the Act.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It is of no value passing useless legislation.

Mr. James Gardiner: There are certain commodities that are common to all.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Take flour in New South Wales. I understand it is £2 or £3 higher than it is in Western Australia.

Mr. James Gardiner: It is higher in Victoria.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Someone told me it was up to £18 per ton in New South Wales. Wheat in New South Wales and South Australia I am informed is higher than it is in Western Australia to-day. Therefore we may ask whether the legislation in those States is effective; is it any good at all? I think that we should be fully informed of the result of the legislation in the neighbouring States before we proceed to amend our own Act. We have given drastic powers and we are asked to give even more drastic powers. Hon. members will see that the Government on the advice of the Commission can do anything they like. They can fix prices anywhere within the State. That is reasonable. I pointed out when discussing the original measure that we could not have one price for the whole of the State; prices must vary according to the different parts of the State, and the cost of getting it to those centres. The Commission also are going to fix on quality and description. Where are the Commission to get expert knowledge of all the commodities? They may vary the prices; that would be reasonable, but we cannot make the prices stand for all time; they must vary according to the market. The last two clauses of the Bill contain very drastic provisions. I admit it is not a bit of use passing legislation unless we can enforce it, and apparently our previous measure has lacked in this respect. A person might not offer to sell at increased prices, yet while refraining from selling, he may induce the consumer to offer a higher price. To the last clause particularly, hon. members should give close attention; it gives power to seize and to take away. I am not going to oppose the second reading of the Bill, but I must say that up to the present time I have not seen any urgent necessity for fixing the price of wheat in Western Australia. I believe that the action taken in fixing the price at 4s. 6d. caused a considerable amount of confusion throughout the State. The Government are undoubtedly responsible to a large extent for the present position, for whereas the Commissioners were attempting to maintain the price of 4s. 6d. per bushel for ordinary wheat, the Agricultural Department were offering up to 5s. 6d. for the same wheat for seed purposes. How can we expect to keep the price at 4s. 6d. when the department is offering up to 1s. per bushel more for seed purposes.

Mr. Carpenter: They were compelled to do it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The position seems to me to be relieved considerably by the action of the Federal Government. Some time back they took the duty off wheat; that opened the door of Australia to the markets of the world, and it was possible then to bring wheat here and land it in the State at the market value from the wheat centres of Canada and the United States plus the cost of carriage to our shores. I think that is about the biggest safeguard we can have as to our future supplies.

The Premier: From a milling point of view.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I think it would have been a good move on the

part of the Government if they had secured a cargo of wheat. By that means they would have done more to steady the market here. The wheat could have been landed here at a little over 6s. a bushel, and that, too, would have prevented the state of chaos to which the Premier has referred.

The Premier: That wheat would have been no good to us; we would have had to dispose of it to the millers because it could not have been used for seed.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: We got our original seed largely from America.

Mr. James Gardiner: You cannot import wheat in 24 hours.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: But we have had three or four months in which to do it.

The Premier: Suppose there had not been a shortage here? The general opinion until about a month ago was that we should have a slight surplus.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Are we not going to have a surplus now?

The Premier: No; a deficiency.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Mr. Grasby predicts a surplus.

The Premier: Almost all the latest reports show that we are likely to get less than was anticipated.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Well, I was rather of that opinion myself.

The Premier: It would have been a big gamble for the Government to have done what you suggest.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Government might have lost a few pounds, but they would have been justified in speculating in a cargo of wheat.

The Premier: No one suggested it to us.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I think we were electioneering at that time, and we were not thinking of advising the Government to speculate. As a rule we adopt the opposite course, that is, to restrain the Government from speculating.

Mr. Munsie: Do you not think there would have been a big howl if we tried to prevent the farmers getting a fair price?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Not half so big a howl as when the price was fixed at 4s. 6d. The farmer is always satisfied to get the full market value, but he does hate to think that he is losing 3d. or 6d. per bushel, which he ought to have. After all said and done the object of our legislation was to prevent cornering. We want to prevent anything in the semblance of a combine, and not to prevent the farmer getting full value for his product, because that would be a foolish step. I hope the Commission will never act in that direction.

Mr. James Gardiner interjected.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If we are exporting, we have a surplus and we have to send the wheat out at London parity. If we are short we must bring it in at market value.

The Premier: That is the world's market value.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If it is based on the world's market value, why quibble about the term? It would be the value of what was held here and it would be based on the price at which the shortage could be landed at our own port. This is a technical question and I have expressed my views on it previously in this House. I suppose we shall have to pass the measure. The Government are entitled to have power to enforce their decrees rightly or wrongly under the previous legislation. I am not quite so sure about breaking into premises and seizing stocks, but other members will perhaps give us the benefit of their views, especially those who more particularly represent the farming interests, because foodstuffs apply more to the farmers than to any other section of the community. This measure, however, covers any commodity and, strange though it may appear, the influence of the Commission has been brought to bear on the price of galvanised iron as a necessary of life.

The Premier: We did not fix a price.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Commission threatened to have it proclaimed and the result was that the then quoted price was brought down to a lower figure. I take no exception to that, but it shows that the Commission may go too far in the exercise of their duties. I hope we shall not have any complaints against

individual commissioners such as occurred on a previous occasion. I feel sure the members of the Commission are doing their best under the powers of this Act and I would be very sorry indeed to have their responsibility at the remuneration they receive. I will not oppose the second reading.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER (Irwin) [8.32]: I think the Premier will recollect that a few days after the war was declared flour soared up 15s. or £1 a ton. I think I was one of those who wrote to him and said that the ordinary every day commodity was to advance like that, there would be a run on the banks by the people. There was a run on the banks by the people who concluded that war time would make every food commodity so dear that they would have to lay in supplies straight away.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That happened slightly here and in the old country and elsewhere.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: Yes. My position is that this House previously passed a measure of this kind and is now asking for power to have the right to do what the existing Act purposed to do. I was not responsible for that measure as I was not then in the House, but I was thoroughly in accord with the action this House took on that occasion.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Broadly, that is the situation.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: In this House wheat comes under discussion so often that one would think this is a place where even the mills of God grind slowly. I do not always intend to consider wheat. The farmer to-day is consuming every other commodity. Any rise in the price of the ordinary necessaries of life is felt probably more keenly by the farmer than by the people in the cities.

The Premier: We talk about wheat and forget other things.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: Yes, and this is getting me into considerable trouble. The man who has any commodity to sell at present is entitled to a fair price. Plenty of farmers desired that the price of wheat should be fixed under the existing Act. It is obvious that if we are not going to control the price of flour and bran and pollard, wheat can soar up to any figure. The object of the Act was to take the whole of the supply of wheat and to allocate it, giving sufficient to the mills to keep them going to supply food for this community. The capacity of the mills is infinitely more than is required to produce sufficient food for the community. Consequently, if there is one class of the community who can afford to give a big price for wheat, it is the miller, but any tendency in that direction would be counteracted if we imported from America, because that wheat is good milling wheat. Speaking generally for the farmers, we do not want the wheat which is to be apportioned to us to go into the mills first of all, because we will not then know what class of seed is being distributed to us. It will be possible to have Early Gluyas, Burbanks and Federation in one lot and later on maturing at different times. Outside of that there is a different principle. If we say we are to protect the consumer against the rings spoken of, it is idle to fix the price if such price can be raised indiscriminately. In New South Wales the other day, when the increased excise on beer was announced, the publicans raised the price and every one of them was summoned and had to appear before the commission and obtain permission to increase the price of beer. I presume the Commission here would have the same right. If a general commodity were increased in price, the Commission could revert to the price previously in force. This measure will be administered as any sensible man in this House would administer it. As the original measure was introduced for a certain set purpose, and it is now found to be faulty in effecting that purpose, we have a right to give the necessary power to make it effective. Right through it affects the general commodity, whatever we in this House might say or think to the contrary. There are people to-day who are deriving the greatest possible advantage from the necessities of this State and I say unhesitatingly this measure should put a check on them.

Mr. WANSBROUGH (Beverley) [8.38]: I do not object to giving the Government the power they seek under this Bill, provided the maximum intended to be fixed is a fair one. I am inclined to agree with the leader of the Opposition that the position brought about by the operations of the present Commission in the early stages of the trouble was due to the unfair price they fixed. Possibly I may be wrong, but that is my opinion. When they fixed the price of wheat, the value of old wheat in the country districts was 3d. or 6d. a bushel above it. We have had an example of what to expect from the Commission, but so long as we have the assurance of the Government that the market price will be taken into consideration when the price is being fixed, I think no harm will arise. Referring to the difficulty of the department in securing wheat, the fault lies with the Commission more than with the Government. Last year when they wanted 20,000 bags of wheat for a special purpose they gave the Producers' Union a buying commission on the quiet and obtained the wheat required in very quick time. This year they gave the union a similar buying commission, but at the same time agents were sent out broadcast proclaiming that they were buying in opposition to the union. The result was the millers found out that the Government were giving more than they and then it became a matter of competition between them. In my own district there were eight or nine buyers and some of them, in negotiating for purchases, offered 1d. more than the Government had offered.

Mr. Bolton: It was a good thing for the farmer.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: Yes, and the result to-day is that the bulk of the wheat which the Government could have secured at a fair price is in the hands of the mills.

The Premier: So it was a good thing for only a few of the farmers.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—NAVAL AND MILITARY ABSENTEES' RELIEF.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [8.43] in moving the second reading said: This is a very small measure but from the point of view of those who have joined and who intend to join the expeditionary forces, and are going to Europe and other distant places for the defence of the Empire, it is an important one. The object of the Bill is merely to provide that, while they serve in the expeditionary forces, they shall be treated from the point of view of our laws as if they were still residents of the State. The Bill also provides that where a person is subject to a law in Western Australia and is a resident elsewhere in the Commonwealth, and becomes a member of an expeditionary force, he will be treated as if he still resided in this particular portion of the Commonwealth, so far as the application of our laws is concerned. The Bill has been introduced at the request of the Federal Government who asked that, under the circumstances, those leaving us temporarily to do battle on our behalf and for the Empire should not be treated as absentees in regard to our laws. They are still Australian citizens although doing service abroad for the Empire. Our laws provide that if a person is absent from the State for six months he becomes an absentee and has to pay a special impost under the land and income tax laws. This Bill will remove such disabilities and will treat members of expeditionary forces as if they were still residents of the State.

Mr. Smith: Would the measure apply to men joining British regiments, not necessarily Australian forces?

The PREMIER: Any resident of Western Australia who joins the naval or military forces either of the Common-

wealth or of His Majesty anywhere will, under this Bill, still be treated as a resident of this State so far as the application of our laws is concerned.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 8.48 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 21st January, 1915.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Balance Sheet and audit of accounts of the Moola Bulla station to the 30th June, 1913. 2, By-law 54a of the Municipality of Bunbury.

QUESTION — TREE-PULLING MACHINES.

Hon. R. J. LYNN asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, What amounts have the Government advanced up to date for the purchase of tree-pulling machines? 2, To whom have such advances been made, and does each advance represent the exact cost of the machine? 3, What are the names of the manufacturers of the machines?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, No advances have been made for tree-pulling machines properly so-called, but assistance towards the purchase of traction engines for tree-pulling purposes by private individuals has been afforded as follows:—October, 1911, £150; November, 1911, £642 8s. 7d.; May, 1912, £430 16s. 6d. 2, A. F. Horwood, Denmark; Ray Bros., Wongan Hills; E. W. Steere, Broomehill. Horwood's assistance represents half cost; Ray Bros.' represents full cost; E. W. Steere's represents cost less £25. 3, Mr. Offord, Albany; International Harvester Coy.; J. C. Allen and Co., Glasgow.

QUESTION—RAILWAY SUPERINTENDENT, GERALDTON.

Hon. R. J. LYNN asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Has leave of absence been granted to the District Railway Superintendent at Geraldton? 2, If so, for what period? 3, Is it the intention of the Government to fill the position during his absence by appointing an officer of similar grade?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, Mr. W. C. Robinson, District Superintendent, Geraldton, has been granted leave to join the Expeditionary Forces. 2, No period has been fixed. 3, This is under consideration.

QUESTION—RABBIT ACT AMENDMENT.

Hon. H. CARSON asked the Colonial Secretary: Do the Government intend introducing a Bill to amend the Rabbit Act this session?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: No.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Land Act Amendment Bill.