

only one who had the interests of the State at heart, but that our people took an active part from the outset. In regard to ship-building we have to bear in mind that while we have the skilled men and the facilities for building ships here, we have not the material for building other than wooden ships. I should like to see more wooden ships built here because possibly, when the war is over, we shall have to endure some hardships. If we could get a better deal than we have had, and a guarantee of continuity of essential supplies, I am satisfied the State could build ships equal to those turned out in any part of the British Dominions. I know a little about ship-building because I spent 14 years of my life in the Clyde shipyards.

I have only a few remarks to make about the Child Welfare Department. I cannot agree with the statement of the member for Subiaco when she described the department as a scandal. That was an unfortunate remark.

Mr. J. Hegney: It was a disgraceful thing to say.

Mr. NEEDHAM: She concluded her remarks by saying that the department was a disgrace to Western Australia. I have no desire to misrepresent the hon. member; nor am I here to hold a brief for the department. The Minister in charge is well able to defend the department. Without exception I have found the officers of the department courteous and helpful in every way. There is only one thing wrong to my knowledge and it is that this department, like other departments, is starved for money. If a little more money was provided, more liberal treatment could be meted out to the indigent section of our people. I do not know whether the Minister can assure the Committee that an increased amount will be granted by the department in order to make the assistance more effective, but I should be very pleased if he could do so.

The member for Victoria Park stressed the point that child endowment allowances would be considered as income by the Child Welfare Department when applications for relief are being considered. We know that the department never contemplated such a thing. Unquestionably child endowment has been granted for a specific purpose and no department could consider it as income.

I am somewhat doubtful about the increase in the invalid and old-age pensions. I do not know how that is going to be regarded, but I hope the increase granted to the invalids and old people of our State will not be considered by the Child Welfare Department as income. I know several people who are receiving invalid pensions and who are also in receipt of assistance from the Child Welfare Department for children and I hope that the increase in the pension will not affect the amount being granted by the department.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.55 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 11th November, 1911.

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

QUESTION—MAGISTERIAL DISTRICTS.

Betting Prosecutions.

Hon C. F. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary:—1, What is the total number of magisterial districts throughout the State? 2, By what title is each district known? 3,

What are the names of the permanent or acting magistrates officiating in each district? 4, Within the period 1/1/1940 to 30/6/1941, how many prosecutions have there been against persons for—(a) conducting, keeping, or using premises for betting purposes; (b) obstructing pedestrian traffic whilst in the act of street betting? 5, How many cases were heard during the period mentioned in question 4 within each magisterial district by—(a) a magistrate acting either alone, or with a Justice of the Peace; (b) a magistrate acting with two or more Justices of the Peace; (c) two or more justices?

The HONORARY MINISTER (for the Chief Secretary) replied: The information, which is not readily available, is being obtained and will be supplied to the hon. member.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Messages from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Income Tax.
- 2, Supply (No. 2), £1,200,000.
- 3, Distress for Rent Abolition Act Amendment.
- 4, Government Stock Saleyards.
- 5, Traffic Act Amendment.

MOTION—FARMERS' DEBTS ADJUSTMENT ACT.

As to Refund of Misappropriated Money.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [4.47]: I move—

That, in the opinion of this House, the decision of the Premier that he had approved of a refund to Mr. R. H. McClintock, as per his letter to that gentleman of the 25th February, 1941, of the moneys misappropriated by an officer of the Agricultural Bank, whilst the latter was acting as receiver under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, be adhered to.

I claim the indulgence of members while, as briefly as I can, I set out the facts connected with my motion. On the 18th July, 1940, W. C. Burns, who was an official of the Agricultural Bank in Geraldton, signed a statement admitting a misappropriation made by him. On the following day, the director under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act writes to the secretary of the Criminal Investigation Branch stating

that he has received a telephonic report from the accountant of the Geraldton branch of the bank indicating that W. C. Burns had admitted the misappropriation of funds coming into his hands as receiver under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. While not desiring to occupy more time than necessary, I wish to prove my point in order to commend the motion to the House. Therefore I shall read a report made by an audit inspector named Glaskin, dated the 31st January, 1941. As Mr. Glaskin's report is rather important, I ask members to bear with me while I quote it. The document is addressed to the Under Treasurer and reads—

The total defalcation was £532 5s. 1d., made up as follows:—

As I am dealing only with the one defalcation regarding Mr. McClintock I shall not quote all the particulars given by Mr. Glaskin. He mentions that the sum embezzled from Mr. R. H. McClintock is £290 5s. 5d. I continue to read the report—

Solicitor General advised that there was no legal liability on either the Agricultural Bank or the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Department, but that there is a moral obligation on the Crown, as the employer of Burns, to make good the money stolen by him, and that the Crown should and could properly pay to the Agricultural Bank the amount of the farmer mortgagor's debts which remain unpaid because Burns stole that farmer mortgagor's money.

I will miss a couple of paragraphs dealing with the legal action that Mr. McClintock endeavoured to take against the Crown and will read the paragraph which states—

The Bank has agreed to its staff acting as receivers—

That is the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Receivers of what?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Receivers under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. The report reads—

The Bank has agreed to its staff acting as receivers and (according to the Farmers' Debts Adjustment officer) in fact insisted on their officers being given the position in a large number of instances. Also the Bank has received into its revenue fees for its staff acting as receivers under Farmers' Debts Adjustment.

When public accountants were appointed receivers, the Farmers' Debts Adjustment had a bond of £2,000 on each where they held a number of receiverships and, of course, had any defalcations taken place in any of those instances, the bond would have been resorted to to recover the amount. No bond was taken out on Agricultural Bank officers by the Farmers' Debts Adjustment.

The Farmers' Debt Adjustment Department has no funds to meet any shortages.

Statement is attached showing how the shortages were made up.

If the legal obligation is considered paramount to the moral one, then no payments will be made and the farmers themselves will have to stand the loss; but if the opposite view is taken and the moral obligation accepted, then I suggest that the Agricultural Bank waive the receivership fees and grazing fees which are Consolidated Revenue items. The payments made by the State would then be:—

He then itemises the amounts belonging to the four farmers, Mr. R. H. McClintock's being £290 5s. 5d. That is the full amount, and it is important it should be remembered. He said that of this amount, £96 17s. 1d. was the farmer's own money and it should be ignored as he personally asked Burns to carry on the receivership after he could have been cleared up. If the £290 5s. 5d. is important, so is the £96 17s. 1d. I want to emphasise that.

Hon. A. Thomson: It is the old law; the Government first and the private citizen second.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I want to emphasise that because this inspector, a subordinate officer to the Under Treasurer—and I have no fault to find with this officer; he has his job to do—is drawing his chief's attention to this matter. I take it that he was instructed to go into this question and advise his chief how the matter stood. He mentions the full amount and says that of this, £96 17s. 1d. was the farmer's own money, and should be ignored; that is, ignored so far as the Government is concerned; it has nothing to do with the Government, and he draws attention to that. That was on the 31st January, 1941.

On the 19th February, the following month, his chief, the Under Treasurer of this State, wrote to the Treasurer, who is the Premier of Western Australia, and this is what he said. I propose to read the whole of this letter so that I shall not leave myself open to be told that I quoted only paragraphs that suited me. I resent that kind of thing very much. I try to be fair, as I think every member does when he gets up here to ventilate a matter of this sort. If he does not, he is courting trouble. Writing on the 19th February, the Under Treasurer stated—

These papers deal with a theft of moneys by a man named Burns, who was an employee of the Agricultural Bank.

Burns was the receiver of the estates of certain farmers whose affairs were in the hands of the Director of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Scheme. While acting as receiver, Burns misappropriated for his own use money which should have been paid to the credit of the estates he was administering.

In the early stages of the operations of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Scheme practising public accountants were appointed as receivers, but at the instigation of the Agricultural Bank it was agreed that the bank's officers, where available, should perform this work. The bank receives certain remuneration on account of its officers carrying out the duties of receiver.

When public accountants acted as receivers they had to enter into fidelity guarantee bonds for £2,000, but no guarantee was given by the Agricultural Bank when its officers were appointed.

The matter has been referred to the Crown Solicitor who advises that the Agricultural Bank is neither legally nor morally responsible for the defalcations perpetrated by Burns. Mr. Walker does consider, however, that a very strong moral obligation rests on the Crown to restore the money which Burns has stolen.

Might I just interpolate in order to emphasise the point? The letter does not refer merely to some of the money which Burns has stolen. The amount involved is £532. That is the total amount on behalf of the four farmers. The letter continues—

The amount involved is £532, and of that sum approximately £290 is due to the Crown, either to the Agricultural Bank for interest or remuneration as receiver, or to the Lands Department for rents. The balance of the amount—£242—is due to the farmers from whose funds the thefts were made.

Action has been taken by one of the farmers—a man named McClintock—through his solicitors, Messrs. Altorfer & Stow, for the recovery of the amount stolen from him—viz., £290 5s. 5d. It is unlikely that the action will succeed.

The matter is submitted for your decision, please, as to whether or not you will approve of the amount of the defalcation being provided out of Consolidated Revenue. I would strongly urge that you do approve, since the people who have been robbed are in poor circumstances and their position which was bad enough before their cases were taken over by the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Scheme has been made infinitely worse on account of Burns's defalcations.

Burns was prosecuted and sent to gaol.

At the bottom, in the Treasurer's own writing, appears the following, "Approved, J. Willecock, 21/2/41." The total amount is mentioned here as £532 belonging to the four farmers. The total amount due to McClintock is £290 5s. 5d. According to the file, which is all that I have—and in

fact, all the House has—to go on, Mr. Reid ignored the hairsplitting attitude taken up by his subordinate. He chose to ignore his subordinate's recommendation about this £96 17s. 1d. He mentions the full amount to the Treasurer, and strongly recommends that the full amount be paid out of Consolidated Revenue. There we have the recommendation of the Under Treasurer to the Treasurer and underneath it we have the Premier's note: "Approved." There is nothing else on the file to explain how a subordinate officer of the Treasury Department apparently over-rides the decisions of the Under Treasurer and the Treasurer himself, because on the 25th February the Premier wrote to Mr. McClintock as follows:—

In reply to your letter of the 6th instant, relative to the defalcations by an officer of the Agricultural Bank while he was acting as receiver for certain estates under the control of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Scheme, I have to advise you that after having had an investigation made I have approved of a refund of the money misappropriated by this officer while acting as receiver. Early steps will be taken by the Treasury to forward you the amount due to you.

There is nothing to indicate that any separating of the amounts was to take place until Mr. Glaskin reverts to the matter, and under date the 6th March, puts up a minute to the Under Treasurer in which he reiterates his opinion—I have already admitted that it is part of his work to give expression to such opinions as he may hold—an opinion which he had previously submitted in writing to the Under Treasurer. Both that officer and the Treasurer of the State himself had ignored that expression of opinion. On the 6th March in a communication to the Under Treasurer, dealing with the four accounts, Mr. Glaskin said—

The balance on McClintock's account, £96 17s. 1d., represents a private arrangement between McClintock and Burns and the Government should not be expected to meet this claim.

Well—I do not know! There is no minute following that communication, either from the Under Treasurer or from anyone else indicating the attitude to be adopted.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: When was Burns dismissed?

Hon. E. H. HALL: There is a ruling from the Solicitor General on the files which sets out that Burns ceased to be an officer

of the Agricultural Bank on the 9th December, 1940. I emphasise the point I made that in his later communication to the Under Treasurer the subordinate officer I have mentioned reiterates in exactly similar words the point he made in his first report, which was ignored. The Under Treasurer has no minute on the file indicating his attitude towards the point raised by Mr. Glaskin.

The next matter to which I draw the attention of the House is a letter on the file—I do not know who signed it, although I notice the words "Under Treasurer" appear under it—to the General Manager of the Agricultural Bank, which reads—

I have to advise that the Hon. the Treasurer has approved of the payment of an amount of £371 17s. 3d., as shown hereunder, on account of the defalcations of W. C. Burns, while acting as a receiver at Geraldton.

Then the amounts are set out—less the amount that was decided on by Mr. Glaskin, on the ground that the Crown was not responsible for payment. The matter was submitted to Executive Council, but the file has nothing to show what the Treasurer had to say about the alteration in the amount to be paid to McClintock. The payment was, of course, approved in accordance with an Executive Council minute under date the 22nd April. That amount is less the £96 17s. 1d. as mentioned by Mr. Glaskin. I know the point will be taken—there is no harm in my mentioning it and I do not wish the House to be misled, nor do I desire to be accused of misleading members—that according to a copy of a letter from the Premier to McClintock under date the 25th February, certain words are underlined in red ink. The letter contains the following words—

In reply to your letter of 6th instant, relative to the defalcations by an officer of the Agricultural Bank while he was acting as receiver for certain estates under the control of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Scheme . . .

The words underlined in red ink are—

While . . . under the control of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Scheme.

There is the whole thing in a nutshell. The claim has been rightly made that McClintock fought his way out of his financial troubles and paid 20s. in the pound to all his creditors. When he had done that, the amount of £96 17s. 1d. still remained to his credit. I shall tell the House what happened. The man who had been acting as

receiver for some time, having been appointed to act in that capacity by the director under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, was an officer of the Agricultural Bank. While still an officer of that institution, he had robbed the farmer. He went along and opened another account in the National Bank, with which bank the account had been all the time. While this man was in the employ of the Agricultural Bank at Geraldton, he set out to defraud the unfortunate farmer and drew 15 or 16 cheques for various people. He continued until he had robbed McClintock of every penny he had.

No one seems to have cared or worried about what this Government official was doing. I want members to recognise that fact in case anyone may think that the defalcations took place after Burns had gone on his long-service leave. They took place while he was still in his position with the bank and under the supervision of responsible officers. Despite that, he acted as I have set out. He robbed this man McClintock of his money. McClintock had been farming for 30 years near Yuna, 40 miles north of Geraldton. He has reared a family and has an honourable name in the district as a hard-working man. What happened was no fault of the Crown. Naturally the bank officials regarded Burns as an honest man. It was because of that belief that he was given the appointment; had he not been regarded as honest, he would not have had the opportunity to defraud McClintock.

On the other hand, what action did any of his superior officers take to ensure that Burns was honest and thereby protect the unfortunate man who was working hard out in the bush? It will be said that McClintock told Burns to carry on. What if he did? Is it to be wondered at that, having handled this man's affairs for so long, and in view of the faith reposed in him as an officer of the Agricultural Bank, McClintock should have asked him to carry on administering his affairs? At the same time is it too much to expect in times like the present that when McClintock's affairs had been removed from the application of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, some steps should have been taken to clean up the position so as to check up on what had been done? Is it any way to place a check on the conduct of such business that an

officer was allowed to sign cheques without any other officer being required to countersign them? Not only did Burns have every opportunity to become dishonest, but there does not seem to have been any check upon his actions. Burns saw the opportunity and took it. As a result McClintock has been victimised.

I am sure members have grasped the point I have made. The total amount of £290 5s. 5d. was mentioned by the Under Treasurer as the amount repayable—not less by £96 17s. 1d. He had already had his inspector's report on the position of the account and he ignored it. After payment had been strongly recommended by the Under Treasurer to his chief, the Treasurer, and after the Treasurer had approved of the payment, there is a reversion to the original idea that the amount should not be paid because McClintock was fool enough to carry on with this officer of the Agricultural Bank, and that therefore the moral claim which the Solicitor General and the Under Treasurer consider McClintock has to receive the full amount should not be met.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Was this man Burns an officer of the Agricultural Bank when he embezzled the £96?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: He was in the service of the bank the whole time. This matter, as I explained when moving for the tabling of the papers, came to light only when Burns was absent on long-service leave and the present accountant took charge. Burns's successor reported the discrepancies and an investigation was made. Had not Burns taken his long-service leave, I do not know how long these irregularities might have continued. There are members of this House who have had a long business experience. I was trained in the public service, and I am afraid there is a tendency to look down on public servants.

Hon. L. Craig: No, they are highly respected.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I realise that even after having spent almost a life-time in the service, I have much to learn, but there is one thing that public servants are taught; they are taught to be most careful when handling public money. The department with which I was associated handled large sums of money, and the regulations were so strict as to make it as difficult as possible for a man to go wrong.

I ask members to consider, also, the treatment that would be meted out by a private firm similarly situated. It would be expected to make good the loss occasioned by the defalcations of an employee. Had a private firm been acting in this case, McClintock would have received the whole of his money. Have not we a right to expect that, when the interests of a farmer are entrusted to an employee of the Crown, they will be protected in every possible way? Had that protection been afforded, McClintock would not have been in danger of losing this money, and the Crown would have had the satisfaction of feeling that it had done its duty by this man. I do not know the Under Treasurer personally, but I say that when he put up such a minute to the Treasurer, he must have had all these matters in mind, just as had the Solicitor General. The Solicitor General said that McClintock had no legal claim, but that he had a moral claim. Let me read that section of the Solicitor General's minute again—

It seems to me, however, that there is a moral obligation on the Crown as the ultimate employer of Burns to make good the moneys stolen by Burns—

The Solicitor General was not called upon to express an opinion, and when McClintock informed me that both the Solicitor General and the Under Treasurer said he had a strong moral claim, I could hardly believe it.

—in which case such money in the hands of the Director of Farmers' Debts Adjustment would be appropriated in the same way as the moneys stolen by Burns would have been appropriated.

Inasmuch as the Commissioners of the Bank are not in any way responsible for the wrongful act of Burns, I am of the opinion that the Commissioners cannot properly credit the farmer mortgagor with a payment of his debts to the bank except upon the authority of some express provision contained in the Agricultural Bank Act, 1934.

The concluding paragraph reads—

The farmer mortgagor, however, will suffer a very great hardship if he is held to be liable for his debts to the bank which could and would have been discharged out of the moneys stolen by Burns, and it seems to me that in its discharge of its moral obligation, the Crown could and should properly pay to the bank the amounts of the farmer mortgagor's debts which remain unpaid because Burns stole that farmer mortgagor's money.

There is no hair-splitting in the Solicitor General's communication; nor is there in

that of the Under Treasurer. I will leave the matter in the hands of members. This is the final court of appeal. If there is any doubt in the case, surely to goodness for the sake of £96 17s. 1d., which was stolen from McClintock, he should not be made to suffer, simply because some tiddly-winking point has been taken by somebody else that the money should not be paid. I do not think the Treasurer would contend that he meant the refund to apply only to the amount stolen while Burns was employed; I feel satisfied that he meant full restitution should be made of the money taken by Burns.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [5.6]: In seconding the motion, I feel that Mr. Hall is to be commended for having brought the matter before the House. In the circumstances explained by the hon. member, I believe the unanimous decision of the House will be that McClintock should not be made to suffer as a result of defalcations by an officer of the Crown. I do not propose to labour the question, but I do say that we should be jealous of the position Parliament occupies and that, while there may not be a strictly legal claim on the Crown to refund the money, there certainly is a strong moral obligation. It is the duty of the Crown to ensure that a citizen does not suffer as a result of embezzlement by one of its officers.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

BILL—WILLS (SOLDIERS, SAILORS AND AIRMEN).

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council.

BILL—FIRE BRIGADES ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had disagreed to the amendment made by the Council.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Hon. H. Seddon in charge).
- 2, Land Drainage Act Amendment.
- 3, Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment.

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—LOTTERIES (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.15] in moving the second reading said: This Bill provides for the continuance of the Lotteries (Control) Act for a further year, that is, until the 31st December, 1942. I propose to give members some information with respect to the activities of the Lotteries Commission, as it is my usual custom to do so when the continuance Bill is introduced. Members will realise that during the past 12 months it has not been so easy for the Lotteries Commission to get its consultations filled as quickly as on previous occasions. This is mainly due to the fact that people are contributing freely to the many patriotic funds now in existence. At the same time, members will doubtless agree that it is necessary for the Commission to continue the good work which it has been doing since it was established.

Six consultations have been finalised during the year ended the 31st October, 1941, the total amount subscribed by the public being £149,995. Prize money amounted to £76,199 17s. 6d., or 50.8 per cent., while expenses—which included 10 per cent. commission paid to agents—amounted to £27,171 3s. 9d., or 18.1 per cent. The profit realised was £46,623 18s. 9d., or 31.1 per cent., which, together with a balance of £26,822 4s. 3d. carried forward from 1940, bank interest to the 30th September, 1941,

£507 10s. 4d., and unclaimed prizes, unexpended grants, etc., £909 12s. 11d., brings the total amount available for distribution up to the sum of £74,863 6s. 3d. Of this amount £51,872 16s. 9d. was paid out in donations. This included the following donations:—Hospitals, £22,265 7s. 1d.; orphanages, £10,682 14s. 11d.; institutions, £16,939 1s. 6d.; blankets, £388 3s. 3d.; Christmas cheer for hospitals, etc., £1,597 10s. Commitments to the close of the No. 96 consultation, the last consultation finalised to date, amounted to £8,893 15s. 9d., leaving a balance of £14,096 13s. 9d. undistributed.

During the year an amount of £11,000 was set aside to meet interest and sinking fund charges on the loans made available by the Government towards the erection of the first section of the new Perth Hospital, estimated to cost £445,000. This amount, together with previous appropriations, brings the total sum placed to the credit of a Treasury trust account for this purpose to £56,000. A sum of £1,704 6s. 1d. was donated to the Hospital Social Service, which has been introduced with the help of the Lotteries Commission. This department of the Perth Hospital may be termed a necessary adjunct to ensure that the treatment and service given to patients are not wasted through lack of proper servicing, both before and after entry into hospital.

The following orphanages have received allocations amounting to £10,682 14s. 11d.:—Anglican Girls', Swan Boys', Castledare, Clontarf, Parkerville Homes, St. Joseph's, St. Vincent's Foundling Home, Roman Catholic Orphanage, Broome and the New Norcia Orphanage. Maintenance payment to orphanages is calculated upon the basis of 3s. per week per child.

Other substantial grants made for the year included the following:—

	£	s.	d.
W.A. Institute and Industrial School for the Blind of W.A.	3,750	0	0
Returned Soldiers' League ..	2,000	0	0
St. John Ambulance Association	1,390	0	0
Aborigines Department	1,459	2	1
Silver Chain Nursing Association	1,100	0	0
Infant Health Association ..	940	12	3
Christmas cheer for hospitals, etc.	1,597	10	0

The following table gives details of six the Lotteries Commission during the year consultations—Nos. 91 to 96—conducted by ended October, 1941:—

No.	Tickets Sold.	Amount Subscribed.		Prize Money.		Expenses.		Profit.	
		£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
91	200,000	25,000	0 0	12,700	0 0	4,532	2 8	7,767	17 4
92	200,000	25,000	0 0	12,700	0 0	4,386	6 1	7,913	13 11
93	200,000	25,000	0 0	12,700	0 0	4,404	18 10	7,895	1 2
94	200,000	25,000	0 0	12,700	0 0	4,446	6 10	7,853	13 2
95	200,000	25,000	0 0	12,700	0 0	4,609	15 10	7,690	4 2
96	199,960	24,995	0 0	12,699	17 6	4,791	13 6	7,503	9 0
		£149,995	0 0	£76,199	17 6	£27,171	3 9	£46,623	18 9

Hon. G. W. Miles: The expenses should be cut in half.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know how the hon. member could do that. I have a long list of various hospitals to which the Lotteries Commission has donated either sums of money or goods, together with a list of commitments amounting to the sum of £8,893 5s. 9d. I have a great deal of other detailed information which I think it hardly necessary to read to the House. The figures I have quoted are an indication of the excellent work that is being done by the Lotteries Commission. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch, debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th November.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [5.26]: I desire to offer a few observations on this Bill. It is not my intention to go through it piecemeal, as Mr. Baxter, when speaking to the second reading, dealt exhaustively with the measure. I feel inclined to vote for the second reading; but, unfortunately, the Bill appears to be another of those contentious measures which, in my opinion, should not have been brought down at this time. Members were given to understand early in the session that the intention of the Government was not to introduce contentious legislation; but it seems to me that the Government has done so and has used the war as an excuse to bring down legislation for which, under

ordinary conditions, it would not have obtained approval. Most of that legislation tended to add to the burden on industry. As I have said from time to time, if this State is to get anywhere with the expansion of its industries, we must continue to have not only industrial peace, but we must not confer too many benefits which are not enjoyed by the employees of our competitors. Recently we have had to consider an amendment of the Workers' Compensation Act and also a Bill to amend the Employment Brokers Act.

This measure is another attempt to interfere with our industrial conditions. The great objection I have to it is that it will, if passed, interfere with the authority of the Arbitration Court, which was created to fix and adjust wages and working conditions. I still echo the old sentiment of "Hands off the Arbitration Court." Except where some amendment for the benefit of the community generally is necessary, I consider there should be no interference by Parliament with labour or industrial conditions. That should be left entirely to the Arbitration Court. Under the conditions operating today, there is not the necessity for so much interference in industry as the Government has proposed. Such a demand for labour, both male and female, exists today that even without the additional benefits being sought, labour can be assured of receiving a wage worthy of its hire. In fact, in almost every industry today, as mentioned by a previous speaker on this measure, labour virtually writes its own ticket.

The danger I see is that conditions may be such as will not only prevent this State from getting its fair share of development, but will make the position such that we

will be unable to compete. After all, it is necessary for us when we do get these contracts to be able to compete with the other States. If we amend our labour conditions too extensively, the effect will be disastrous to our industries. Unless we take the opportunity of creating as many new industries as possible, and of further developing those we already have, it will be a sorry outlook for this State when our men return from the front, because many skilled operatives have gone away and we should, when they return, be in a position to place them in the industries to which they are best fitted.

I would like to place on record my satisfaction at the action of the Federal Government in appointing the Western Australian Industry Expansion Commission, which will, we hope, secure the rapid extension of industry within this State. I desire to offer a few comments on that commission, connecting it with the measure before the House. In doing so I desire clearly to state that I am casting no reflection whatever on its personnel. The men appointed are excellent in their various positions. Unfortunately, however, they are all Government representatives, and private enterprise views with alarm the fact that it has no representative. Today I attended a meeting of delegates from 40 industrial associations which are very perturbed because so much money is to be spent in this State, and they will not be represented in connection with any of the works undertaken. Surely some outside assistance and advice would have been of advantage to the commission.

The State Government, assisted by representatives of the various industries, is to be congratulated upon the excellent case put before the commission, but it would appear, from the figures published of the amounts to be expended, that most of the assistance may develop in one direction, and one direction only—that of further fostering State trading. Here again I cast no reflection whatever on either the management or the personnel, but I do think that in the interests of the State it is entirely wrong that the obsolete State Implement Works should be provided with a huge sum of money—no less than £64,195—for the purchase of plant and equipment. It is admitted that the works are entirely out of date. It would have been much better, if it were intended to spend this sum, that a new start

should have been made. To spend the money in this way is certainly not fair either to the management, to the State or to the taxpayer. If reference is made to the Auditor General's report, which was placed on the Table of the House a few days ago, it will be seen that already the accumulated loss on the implement works is £343,334 9s. 4d.

The PRESIDENT: I remind Mr. Bolton that we are discussing the amendment of the Arbitration Act, and not State trading concerns. I hope he will connect his remarks with the Bill before the House.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I intend to connect my remarks with the industrial measure before the House, but I thought I would be in order in drawing attention to this matter now.

The PRESIDENT: Incidental references are, of course, quite allowable.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I take the opportunity, briefly, of voicing the opinion of the manufacturers of this State when I say there is a danger of the Government, under this measure, receiving preference not only in the supply of plant and equipment, but also so far as labour is concerned.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Parliament passed a Bill in 1932 to exclude the implement works from the application of the State Trading Concerns Act.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: It may have passed that legislation—but nothing was done. On one occasion, an attempt was made to sell them, but unfortunately conditions at the time were such that no offer was received.

Hon. J. Cornell: In other words, you cannot make a good omelette out of a bad egg!

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: That is probably what I am trying to observe. In the interests of the industries of this State, it would have been much better had the commission, when it decided to spend that amount of money here, started new works and not attempted to reconstruct the old State Implement Works which are in such bad odour, and which will never make a profit as long as they exist. I was going to suggest, and I hope I am not out of order in doing so, that it would have been better had the Government, in the interests of industry generally, induced the Commonwealth Government fully to equip the annexes at present in the State and endeavour

to get into operation and production those that we already have, instead of voting money for new buildings.

Hon. J. Cornell: The annexe at Midland Junction is not a war annexe but a permanent one.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: The suggestion is that an additional £25,000 is to be spent in extending the annexe at Midland Junction, as well as another £35,000 for the erection of a tool-room. I admit the tool-room is necessary, but whether it is wise for it to be erected at Midland Junction is a matter of opinion.

The PRESIDENT: I must remind the hon. member that he has not yet connected his remarks with the Arbitration Act Amendment Bill.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I will refer to the measure if I am at present out of order, and say that I will vote for its second reading, because one or two of the amendments meet with my approval, but I am definitely opposed to several clauses, to which I will refer in Committee.

On motion by Hon. J. A. Dimmitt, debate adjourned.

BILL—POTATO GROWERS LICENSING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th November.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [542]: This is one of the most extraordinary Bills that has ever come under my notice. I cannot understand its purpose. I have read it very carefully and listened to the speeches of members, including the Minister and Mr. Piesse. It seems to me that they are not quite satisfied with the measure and intend in Committee, if the second reading is passed, which I hope will not be the position, to give it some sort of character and meaning. What possible advantage can the potato grower derive from this measure? It introduces the elements of Government control. I would suggest to Mr. Piesse and others that whilst it is very easy to start Government control, it is a difficult matter to check it, stop it or get rid of it. I do not know whether previous speakers have contemplated where this Government control may end. There is a suggestion for the creation of another board. I think I would be quite in order in making

passing reference to the performances of other boards which have been established for somewhat similar purposes.

First of all we have the Apple and Pear Board. I believe the big producers have been fairly well satisfied. I freely admit the necessity for maintaining the industry during the war period when it is impossible to ship apples as usual, but I can say very little in praise of the past performances of this board. It has cost the taxpayer an enormous amount of money. It has meant that apples have been dearer to the consumer than in a normal year when a very large percentage of the crop is exported. It has meant that people in the country districts have had more difficulty than ever before in obtaining cheap fruit. It has meant that millions of bushels of apples have been allowed to rot under the trees. I understand now that the board itself recognises the defects in its present procedure and is trying to cut down the waste and is endeavouring to make available cheaper apples to charitable institutions. Apparently it sees that what has happened in the past has not been satisfactory to the community.

Then we have egg marketing. I believe that the voluntary stabilisation committee has done very good work. Its aim has been to prevent violent fluctuations in prices, but all the good it may have done has, I think, been undone by Government regulations, particularly in regard to the candling of eggs, something which is essential in the case of eggs that are exported, but so far as local sales are concerned, has an effect which has been merely that the consumer has had to pay a higher price for inferior eggs.

The Honorary Minister: I do not think that is right.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Is it not? Last week-end I spent in the country, and also the week-end before, and I made inquiries in many directions. I found that the consumer, the producer, and the dealer all said the same thing, namely, that it meant a greater cost and inferior eggs. What do we want to know about an egg that is required for immediate home consumption beyond the fact that it is new laid? All we want to know is when the egg was laid. We do not want eggs to be scrutinised because there may be some defect in them. I do not know that hens frequently offend in that direction. When we buy eggs that are

stamped as having been candled, we do not know when they were candled.

Dealers in the country towns have told me that in the past producers of eggs brought their supplies in every day. They knew the producers and because of that, they could depend upon the eggs being fresh. The customer in turn also knew that the eggs would be fresh. Eggs now go to the candler. The storekeeper can get them in three or four days or even a longer period, with the result that by the time the eggs reach him they are stale, and the consumer has to pay an increased price for stale eggs. As a consequence, the dealer is unable to give to his clients the same satisfaction as heretofore. Some of the small producers, indeed, have gone out of the business. They say that the extra cost, and more than that, the trouble and the delay, have made the business unprofitable for them. I daresay this may suit the people in a large way of business. Many of these things, it seems to me, are designed to secure the survival of the fittest, and to let the smaller man go.

What is this Potato Growers Licensing Bill going to do? Why cannot the potato growers embark upon a genuine co-operative movement? I do not think any legislation would be required for the purpose. If it were required, I imagine that Parliament would be quite ready to pass it. Why do they not follow the example of some Continental countries? Take Denmark, for instance! When the collapse occurred in the price of agricultural products some 12 years ago, no country suffered so acutely as did Denmark. How did it pull itself together? Merely by co-operation. Every industry there has its own separate co-operative enterprise, and the aim of that enterprise is primarily to reduce costs by means of co-operative effort. Those concerned were able to reduce costs on all supplies everywhere. They could also have something in the nature of orderly marketing. By these means not only did Denmark recover more quickly than did any other producing country, but co-operation became, and remained so until war broke out, the basis of the production of Danish agriculture. That was all done by the producers themselves in each industry, not by legislation or public support. Why cannot our producers here do something of the same sort?

Hon. A. Thomson: Will they not have the opportunity to get together as a result of the passing of this Bill?

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: It is suggested, that although this Bill does not mean anything if it is passed something will be done as a result of enacting it. To me that is quite an improper way to go about things. If legislation is required in connection with potato growing, a considered and complete scheme should be submitted to us. The Bill intends to give to the Government power to make regulations, which may not be in accordance with the desires of this House. If we are to have a Bill to regulate the growing of potatoes, let us have it in proper form; let us know what it is and what we are asked to pass. Mr. Thomson suggests that the growers will do this or that if the Bill is passed. All those things can be done without this Bill. Should any legislation be necessary to enable the growers to co-operate, if they take my advice they will cut out the element of Government regulation which is the principal feature of this Bill.

I wish to dissociate myself completely from the remarks of Mr. Mann. I see that he has on the notice paper an amendment that the growing of potatoes shall be restricted to British subjects. He is not referring to enemy aliens, but to nationals of the countries who are fighting with us at present. I admit it is not in order for me to refer to amendments that are on the notice paper, but those remarks were made by Mr. Mann in the course of his speech and I think I am entitled to say I dissociate myself from them. If foreigners come to this country—unless they do, I fail to see how we can increase our population—they have to live during the period that must elapse before they become naturalised. Why should they not be allowed to grow potatoes and other things? Mr. Mann referred to foreigners having driven Australians out of the tobacco-growing business. That is not the position. The tobacco-growing business has, in my view, been built up by foreigners, and but for them I do not know that we would ever have had such a business. Not one foreigner could carry on for a single season if he had to abide by the conditions laid down through the Arbitration Court, conditions that have been prescribed for many favoured classes of industry. I hope the Bill will not pass

the second reading. If the growers find difficulty in building up a genuine co-operative scheme without legislation, let them arrange for the bringing down of a Bill to that effect, and it will have my support.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.52]: I view the Bill with a certain amount of suspicion. During the past few years many measures connected with marketing have come before this Chamber. If my memory serves me aright we have had a Bill dealing with dairying, and another with onions, another with eggs, and another with margarine. All those Bills had one redeeming feature, namely, that they were self-contained. Two were Bills introduced by private members. They had a qualification that is not found in the Bill now before us; they were self-contained. They set out the definitions of "producer," "grower" and so forth. In the case of eggs, the producer was declared to be a man who kept 75 hens and hoped to market his eggs. Under the Bill dealing with onions a grower was a person who worked more than quarter of an acre for the growing of that commodity. The Bill dealing with margarine was brought down by the Government and the legislation is being administered by the Department of Agriculture. It contains all the machinery necessary for a measure of that description. The Legislature had an opportunity to amend the machinery, and the same consideration applied to the Bill dealing with dairy products. I could go back a great deal further, and say that that applied also to the dried fruits legislation. With all those provisions in front of the potato grower, he failed to do what the egg people and the onion people did, namely, bring down a Bill off their own bat.

Hon. L. Craig: Those were marketing Bills. This is not a marketing Bill.

Hon. J. CORNELL: We do not know what it is. I am endeavouring to sort out what it may lead to. I would say the Bill constitutes an open cheque to the potato grower, which cannot be said concerning the other measures to which I have referred. Those Bills contained all the machinery and paraphernalia for control, for a petition for the formation of a board, for the election of a board, and for the framing of regulations. The provision for the candling of eggs was not a Government regulation, but a regulation which the producers' board

had power to frame, and which had to be, through the Government, laid on the Table of the House.

Hon. L. Craig: The candling of eggs was provided for in the Bill.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It was a regulation that arose out of the proviso in the Bill. There is nothing about the boiling of potatoes in the measure now before us. The regulation arose out of the Bill and that measure gave the necessary power to the board. The Bill before us was brought down by the Government. It provides for the licensing of all potato growers except those who are cultivating less than half an acre of ground. It also sets out the scale of license fees, which run from 10s. for half an acre to five acres, to £3 for 20 acres but not exceeding 30 acres, and £1 extra per annum for every ten acres in excess of 30 acres. That is the only definite thing I see in the Bill. The charges cannot be altered by the Government or by regulation, but remain static. They can only be altered by the Legislature through an amending Bill. The measure itself is to come into operation by proclamation. After the expiration of three months from its commencement, no person, unless he is licensed, can grow potatoes on any area in excess of half an acre. That may be all right. If we followed the procedure laid down in the egg and onion legislation, the logical sequence would be the machinery.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: A person cannot be refused a license.

Hon. J. CORNELL: In the two pieces of legislation to which I referred, the whole of the machinery is set out. In connection with this Bill, we find that the money derived from the license fees shall be paid to a potato growers' advisory committee.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: To a special account in the Treasury.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That is the "guts" of the Bill, to use an extreme expression. Of whom will the advisory committee consist? Its members are to be appointed by the Government. Two will comprise licensed growers. I see that Mr. Piesse wants by an amendment on the notice paper to make certain alterations to the Bill, but he will have to go a long way further than that before he brings the measure up to the standard of the legislation dealing with eggs and onions. As I have said, two members of the committee are to be licensed

growers, and another member is to be an officer of the Agricultural Department, all three persons being appointed by the Government. That in itself might be all right, but in the Acts mentioned machinery is provided for the growers to elect by vote or poll their two representatives; and the Government has the right to nominate three members.

Under the Bill, the growers, however, have no direct right whatever. That might be passed, but what do we find? Do we note any more machinery in the Bill? None at all. The Bill provides that anyone working over half an acre of land for growing potatoes shall be licensed. I am not concerned about the granting of the license, but the Bill starts off with charging the man for a license to grow potatoes. Who is going to recommend the growers' representatives? The Government will do the job. What are the powers of the proposed board? Where are those powers stated? The Bill makes no provision whatever in that respect. If my memory serves me correctly, this is the first time that an attempt has been made in this Chamber to make producers pay for the right to produce and to make them subject to a board which will police them without any Parliamentary sanction whatever.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: The board will not police them at all.

Hon. J. CORNELL: All boards of a like character that have been agreed to by this Chamber have statutory powers conferred upon them by the Legislature—not by departmental regulations. I admit that Mr. Piesse always does good work, but what I protest against is the Legislature being asked to give an absolutely open cheque to any Government—not this Government in particular; this Government may go where other Governments have gone, and a new Government may come in. If the industry is worth considering and protecting—and this Bill aims at its protection—then I submit in all humility that the Legislature should go the whole way and provide some machinery. Parliament should have some knowledge of what is to be done for the potato grower after he has paid his license fee.

Hon. A. Thomson: Why not pass the second reading and amend the Bill in Committee on the lines you suggest?

Hon. J. CORNELL: It is a Government Bill, and the prerogative of shaping a Bill introduced by the Government does not vest in a private member.

Hon. A. Thomson: We have endeavoured to shape other Government Bills.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: This Bill was introduced at the request of the Potato Growers' Association.

Hon. J. CORNELL: If that is the case, the potato growers are a most confiding body. If this Bill represents their best attempt, they are a super-confiding body. Now let me point out to Mr. Piesse what position we are in. The Bill is one of the hon. member's foster children. If the measure is passed as it stands and is given effect to—let us say—before the next session of Parliament, regulations will have to be laid on the Table of the House constituting the board and giving it some authority. Under the Bill it has no authority. Members know what will happen then. If in the opinion of this Chamber any regulation is working wrongly or is likely to injure or adversely affect the potato growers, the House can disallow such regulation.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: That is all right.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The House, I repeat, can disallow it.

Hon. A. Thomson: That applies to all regulations.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It does not apply to regulations constituting machinery. The personnel and the operation of the board are provided for by statute. The dupe whom the confidence man takes down is of a highly confiding character. There is a good deal of the confidence man about this Bill.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: We have confidence in Parliament, have we not?

Hon. J. CORNELL: All Parliament can do, if we pass the Bill, is to disallow regulations. We cannot amend them.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: The Bill may be in operation six months before Parliament meets.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes, and disallowance in those circumstances might do incalculable harm. My advice is that even at this stage the Bill should either be withdrawn, or deferred long enough to allow the Agricultural Department to frame adequate machinery to implement the Bill and let this House and another place have an opportunity to approve of that machinery. The price of potatoes has nothing to do with the case. I read in the Press recently that

the price of Western Australian potatoes was pegged in New South Wales at £17 per ton. The potato grower wants a better price than that.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: That is the maximum, and the grower does not always receive the maximum price. I graded potatoes when I was 16 years of age.

Hon. J. CORNELL: And I grew them when I was 10 years old. However, I agree with Mr. Craig that the price has nothing to do with the case. If the grower needs no protection and is confiding enough to accept what is offered him, then I say, speaking on behalf of a large potato-eating community but one which grows no potatoes except a few at Esperance, that I agree with Mr. Williams. If the Bill is not properly implemented, we should vote against it.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

MOTION—GERALDTON—MOONYOONOOKA BUS SERVICE.

Debate resumed from the 4th November on the following motion by Hon F. H. H. Hall (Central):—

That this House disapproves of the action of the State Transport Board in granting a monopoly to D. J. McVea, of Geraldton, to conduct omnibus services between Geraldton and the R.A.A.F. Training Camp at Moonyoonooka, without first calling tenders for such services and is of the opinion that such licenses should be waived and that tenders should be called for same as provided for in Section 10 of the State Transport Co-ordination Act.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [6.12]: I have studied the contributions of Mr. Hall and the Chief Secretary to the debate, and the conclusion I have arrived at is that the position is quite plain. The Chief Secretary pointed out that had it not been for the establishment of an aerodrome in the vicinity of Geraldton, probably this matter would never have been brought forward. From a study of the files asked for by Mr. Hall, it appears that what happened was this: An attempt was made to establish a bus service within the Geraldton area; but the attempt proved unsuccessful until, with the erection of the aerodrome, one man saw an opportunity to develop a service. He submitted to the board an application to start such a service to the aerodrome and also to provide a bus service

within the town boundaries. The matter was being considered by the board when, as I read the files, someone else seized the opportunity to send in his application, but sent it in too late.

I do not like the motion in its present form. To me it seems too drastic, for it really resolves itself into a motion of censure upon the board. From that angle I do not feel disposed to go as far as Mr. Hall wishes, because I am quite positive that the board acted from the best of motives and as its members believed to be in accordance with the practice of dealing with such applications. This case had been hanging over for a long time, and they sought to bring it to a conclusion in the best interests of the people concerned. I am sure Mr. Hall will absolve them from having acted with any other motive than that of deciding the question in the best interests of the general public.

The remarks of the Chief Secretary, however definitely show that the board has not taken what is, after all, the wisest course, namely, that of calling for tenders. The Chief Secretary has pointed out that in a number of cases the board did not call for tenders. In my opinion this House might well suggest to the board that in dealing with future applications, and indeed when dealing with this application, it would follow the best and wisest course by calling for tenders.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Has the board power under the Act to grant licenses without calling for tenders?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes; but I do consider the best practice would be to call for tenders prior to granting any application. Because I hold that view I desire to move an amendment to Mr. Hall's motion.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Before tea I was about to outline the amendment I propose to move to the motion. I move an amendment—

That in lines 7 and 8 of the motion the words "that such licenses should be waived and." be struck out; and that in line 8 the word "be" be struck out, and the words "have been" inserted in lieu.

If the amendment is carried, the motion will read—

That this House disapproves of the action of the State Transport Board in granting a monopoly to D. J. McVea, of Geraldton, to conduct

omnibus services between Geraldton and the R.A.A.F. Training Camp at Moonyoonooka without first calling tenders for such services, and is of the opinion that tenders should have been called for same as provided for in Section 10 of the State Transport Co-ordination Act.

The object of the amendment is to take away from the motion the suggestion of censure, and to indicate that in the opinion of the House it is desirable, in cases where omnibus services are to be established, that tenders should be called.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central—on amendment) [7.33]: I have no objection to the amendment, the reason being that I tried to express in my remarks that I did not think this business was any fault of Mr. McVea and therefore to penalise him after he had gone to the necessary expense of providing three buses, which I think he now has on the run, would be to inflict hardship on him for something for which he is not to blame. If anybody is to be blamed I incline to the belief that such blame should be apportioned where it properly belongs, namely, to the board. It is not my wish to inflict any punishment on Mr. McVea, who only did what any other person has a right to do.

The **PRESIDENT**: If no other member has any objection to the amendment, perhaps it will be as well to deal with it first and then deal with the motion as amended. Has any member any objection?

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—on amendment) [7.35]: I have the same objection to the amendment that I have to the motion. Mr. Hall has made rather a remarkable statement. He now says he does not wish under any circumstances to penalise Mr. McVea. He thinks that Mr. McVea is not to blame in any shape or form and that he is entitled to some protection on account of the expense to which he has been put. In his original motion the hon. member asked the House to disapprove of the action of the State Transport Board in granting a monopoly to Mr. McVea without first calling tenders, and to state that in its opinion such licenses should be waived. What is the meaning of those words? If the licenses are to be waived, I presume that the hon. member desires fresh tenders to be called, notwithstanding that Mr. McVea apparently complied with all the regulations under the State Transport

Co-ordination Act and with the desires of the State Transport Board.

If the House accepts the amendment, it could not be claimed to amount to anything but censure on the Transport Board for having carried out certain powers which we have given to it under the State Transport Co-ordination Act. I feel I have made the position particularly clear by pointing out that when Mr. McVea was granted this license there was no knowledge that the aerodrome was going to be the big concern it has turned out to be. I am assured by the chairman of the State Transport Board that he had no knowledge that it was going to be any different from a number of other aerodromes established in this State. The board had no knowledge that there would be as many men established there as there have been since the aerodrome was completed. Having tried for so long to secure a satisfactory service for the district of Geraldton, the board was only too pleased to accept the offer made at that particular time. Having given the Transport Board that authority, surely we are not going to say now that because of certain later developments the board should have adopted some different attitude, that it should have taken some different action!

Every member who has spoken to the motion has been good enough to say that the board has done a real good job, and there is not one member who has not given praise to the chairman of the board. The board in this instance acted, as it thought, in the best interests of the public and of all concerned; and now because as a result of the decision of the board, some individual has been placed in a position in which he is envied by somebody else, it is suggested that we should say to the board, "You should not have done that; you should have done something different." If we have confidence in the board we cannot very well agree to this amendment. I have pointed out that on most occasions on which the State Transport Board deals with matters of this kind, it calls for tenders, but there have been one or two instances in which it has not done so, but has used its discretion. This is the only instance in which there has been any complaint. That being so, we should hesitate before we pass a motion which will, in effect, be one of censure on the State Transport Board for its action in

this case. I have nothing more to add. The case seems to be so clear-cut that I think the House cannot possibly carry a motion that will amount to a vote of censure on the State Transport Board for its action in this matter.

The PRESIDENT: I must ask hon. members to confine themselves to the amendment.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South West—on amendment) [7.40]: If the amendment is carried I consider it will be a reflection on the State Transport Board, because no doubt if it is agreed to the motion will also be passed.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Not necessarily.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: If the motion is carried, it will be a very serious reflection on the board. I understand that when this license was granted there was very little likelihood of getting anyone to apply for a license for the district concerned. As a matter of fact, when Mr. McVea wrote to the board applying for the license, he drew attention to that fact. He said in effect that he was prepared to give it a trial. If the licensee has spent a couple of thousand pounds in plant and the business has turned out to be a good one, I consider it would be only a fair thing for him to be protected to the extent of the capital invested. That is the usual thing.

This is not an isolated case. I know of other instances in which the board has not called for tenders. It has charged what it considered to be a fair rate for a license and that has been amended from time to time according to the business done. That is to say that if in one year the business was considered very poor, a fee of £1 might be charged. In the following year business might be good and the board would perhaps consider a fee of £10 to be quite reasonable. As a rule, the inauguration of one of these services involves considerable expenditure. The cost of a bus is as much as that of a house. For that reason the State Transport Board has adopted a policy of protecting people who put money into such ventures. Generally speaking, the board has done very good work indeed. I do not think Mr. Hall disputes that.

The Chief Secretary: He admits that.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Yes. He is in accord with that. If the board did wrong in this instance, then it did wrong in other

similar cases. On this occasion it happens that, on account of the aerodrome being established at Geraldton, business has been rather better than in some of the other instances to which I have referred. In the circumstances the House would not be justified in carrying the motion. If it was brought forward for the purpose of ventilating a real or imaginary grievance, that is a different matter; but for the House to carry the motion would be to go too far. I am of the opinion that the State Transport Board has endeavoured to be fair and in this case I do not think it has done any different from what it has done in other instances. I do not think the amendment should be agreed to.

HON. J. CORNELL (South—on amendment) [7.44]: I suggest to the movers of the motion and the amendment that they rest content and ask leave to withdraw both. The position as I see it is that Mr. Hall has fully ventilated his case and has had it discussed. That being so, he has vindicated himself in the eyes of his constituents. This is what the motion and the amendment may amount to: Out of loyalty to Mr. Hall and more or less following a procedure that is very often adopted in this House, members may vote in favour of the motion, but unwillingly. What will happen if the motion is agreed to? Nothing. No more will result than would be the position if the motion were withdrawn. Then again, if the motion or even the amendment in its present form were not agreed to, Mr. Hall would be judged as having ventilated his case and lost it. I think that hon. member has done all that is humanly possible and I hope he will ask leave to withdraw his motion.

Amendment put and negatived.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [7.46]: Frankly, I cannot see my way clear to support the motion. Parliament in its wisdom passed the State Transport Co-ordination Act to make provision for the appointment of a Transport Board and in doing so gave that body discretionary power either to call for tenders or to deal privately with those engaged in this particular class of work. For this House to pass a motion condemning a board because it had exercised the power vested in it by Parliament and had granted a license without calling for tenders, would be quite wrong.

If the Act is not working satisfactorily and Parliament thinks that the board should not possess discretionary power, let Parliament amend the Act, and decree that tenders must be called for in every instance. On the other hand, to agree to legislation giving the board discretionary power and then bring forward a motion condemning the board for exercising that power is simply not cricket. As I understand Parliamentary procedure, members attack the responsible Minister and not an individual public servant who is not in a position to defend himself. That is what the motion proposes to do. So far as I can remember—I followed the debate closely—the board called for tenders for a bus service at Geraldton and there was no response. Then the board made arrangements with Mr. McVea to carry on the service. When it was announced that an aerodrome was to be established near Geraldton, the port woke up. That was not the fault of the board nor of Mr. McVea, but Geraldton woke up. Someone thought he should have received the contract instead of Mr. McVea. So far as I know, at the time the contract was given to Mr. McVea, no others were available to undertake the service. The board had no option but to give the right to Mr. McVea.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is not correct.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Is that so? Then perhaps I am not correct in saying that had it not been for the establishment of an aerodrome at Geraldton, we would never have heard of this matter, nor would the motion have been moved.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is correct.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Because someone got the bus and someone else missed the bus, there is all this commotion! First we had a motion for the production of papers, and there was a full-dress debate on that subject. Now we have the present motion with another full-dress debate.

What if the motion be agreed to? We will not get anywhere with it. It will simply add to the tremendous amount of money spent in printing "Hansard." One of these days I shall endeavour to find out what it costs to print "Hansard" per page. It must be costing a tremendous amount of money, first for paper and then for printing. In this instance, the motion is merely abstract. If we agree to it it will get us nowhere, beyond representing a vote of censure on a board that has acted in accordance with the provisions of legislation that

this House passed. I shall say no more, except that I shall vote against the motion.

HON. G. W. MILES (North) [7.50]: I have listened with interest to the debate and to the reply furnished by the Minister. I entirely disagree with the suggestion by Mr. Cornell that Mr. Hall should withdraw his motion. In my opinion, the House should not allow him to adopt that course, as it represents a vote of censure on the Transport Board. It is the duty of members to vote on the motion as it stands and to treat it as it deserves. I oppose the motion.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central—in reply) [7.51]: It is suggested that it does not matter what we do respecting this motion. I think it does. A very important principle is at stake. Despite what the Chief Secretary said, I think I can prove to any impartial tribunal or to any individual or number of individuals who have not already made up his or their minds without waiting for my reply—it seems some members have made up their minds already—that the Chief Secretary has definitely made—perhaps I ought to be careful in the words I use—a statement that shows he was in error in that he said the motion had been brought forward to ventilate matters on behalf of one or two people. If that were so, I would not dream of taking up the very valuable time of this House, or be a party to causing to be expended the enormous amount of money that it will cost to print a few pages of "Hansard."

My mind goes back to the past when I have frequently sat listening to Mr. Holmes expounding his views at great length, as he has done in this House for over a quarter of a century. Far be it for me as a new member or even as an old member to challenge the hon. member's inalienable and undoubted right to get up and state his views, irrespective of the enormous cost occasioned to the country in printing "Hansard." What is the country coming to when an old member of the standing of Mr. Holmes can get up and talk stuff like that?

However, let me get back to the subject. The Chief Secretary in his remarks said that under Section 10 of the Act the board "may" call for tenders. That is why I myself quoted the provision in the Act. If Parliament has passed a measure authorising the appointment of a board of the type under discussion and is not to give that board one

little bit of discretion, why appoint the board? The board must of necessity be allowed some discretion. That was what the Chief Secretary contended. My reply to that is that the board must of necessity exercise that discretion as it should be exercised. I am not criticising the actions of the board by and large. The conduct of the board generally is not under examination. It is this one specific act of the board that I ask members to consider.

I put to the House a pertinent question. If members view it in the impartial manner they should adopt on such a matter, they must answer the question satisfactorily. It is: Why did the board go to such considerable trouble—the Chief Secretary said that the board members travelled to Geraldton and made inquiries personally—to investigate the position and afterwards advertise for tenders for a service that everyone knew would be unpayable? That fact was borne out in that no tenders were received. As I pointed out when I replied to earlier remarks by the Chief Secretary, the provision for the Geraldton service to Bluff Point and the beach had nothing whatever to do with the service to the aerodrome, which is under consideration. That disposes of that phase. Why did the board call tenders for a service that it was generally recognised would be unpayable? When the opportunity arose that would make the service payable, that was what those interested in the project were waiting for. It was expected that tenders would be called, but the board did not call for them.

Then there was the other point which we have heard repeated this evening. Members trust to their memory, and so they say that somebody woke up. When Mr. Holmes was speaking, I said that his contention was not correct. I can prove my claim. The Chief Secretary replied on behalf of these ill-used members of a board of whom it has been said that they have no right to stand here and defend themselves. I maintain that those board members have been very ably defended by the Chief Secretary, whose duty it is to do so. Nevertheless he has not contradicted the statement made by me that on the 10th January Mr. Waldeck telephoned to the board about the position and was told that no decision had been arrived at. He straightaway journeyed to Perth and when he called at the Transport Board's office on the 14th January he was

informed that the matter had not been finalised.

The file shows that his application was dated the 16th January, one day after Mr. McVea's offer to conduct a service to the aerodrome had been accepted. Mr. McVea's tender was to convey the men at 1s. 6d. a head return, whereas Mr. Waldeck's was for a fee of 1s. To say that after Mr. McVea secured the contract someone else woke up, is to state what is not correct. On the other hand, the Transport Board gave Mr. McVea the right to run the bus, then a second bus and then a third bus, notwithstanding that he was charging 6d. per head more than someone else had suggested if he were given the right to conduct the service. Moreover he was allowed to continue levying that charge for six months.

Then there is the question about the service not being payable. It is suggested that there was some doubt on that point. Mr. Tuckey made that remark. Even Mr. McVea made that statement, but that applied to the service to the beach and Mr. McVea has already found that that service was unpayable and has asked to be relieved of the necessity to provide it. Everyone in Geraldton knew what the strength of the Air Force was to be when the aerodrome was established. By the methods adopted by the Transport Board the present holder of the contract has been allowed to charge 6d. per head to 1,000 or 1,200 men for six months over and above what would have been paid if the individual who had offered to provide the service at the cheaper rate had been granted a license.

Many of the members of the Air Force are married and travel daily by bus to and from their homes in Geraldton. That is nice encouragement to men who have given up positions in which they received £8 or £10 a week in order to link up with the Air Force ground staff at 5s. or 6s. a day. That is a nice incentive to recruiting, is it not? That is in answer to the astounding statement made by the Chief Secretary when he said that assuming I had not moved the motion with the object of satisfying one or two individuals at the expense of the community, what I sought would ignore the rights of the rest of the people of Geraldton. The Chief Secretary could not quote anything to warrant his making any such assertion. The Minister went on to say that he could find no fault with the action of the

board in granting licenses to Mr. MeVeal for the second and third omnibuses. The Minister could make that statement notwithstanding that an application had been received from another man to provide a service at 6d. per head cheaper! If members are prepared to accept that sort of explanation, they can do so.

I have no intention of withdrawing the motion. I am not built that way. I have not canvassed any member for his vote, and as for withdrawing the motion, that suggestion was made to me previously. All I can say is that the members who made the suggestion do not know me. They do not remember the attitude I adopted after I had been in this Chamber only a short period and moved a motion relating to Ministerial travelling expenses. Any member who thinks he will not have to vote on this motion is making a big mistake.

I have been told—and the statement has been made in the House—that members of the Transport Board have done a good job. Of course they have, but the Chief Secretary's remarks have tended to stampede the House into a belief that the general administration of the board is being criticised. There is no need for members to swallow that statement hook, line and sinker, as Mr. Cornell would say. I am merely asking the House to say whether it approves of the board using its discretion in this particular matter. Is it right to allow a man to operate a bus service for six months and charge 6d. per head more than another man would have asked?

The Chief Secretary: On a point of order, I should like to ask whether the hon. member is in order in introducing new matter. He did not give me an opportunity to reply to the charges he is making now.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member ought to confine his reply to the remarks made by the Chief Secretary or members who have opposed the motion without introducing new matter other than what may be necessary to reply to their remarks.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I was not aware that I had offended in that respect. I take it that I am quite in order in emphasising the point that the Transport Board continued to allow this man to operate the bus service and granted him additional licenses for more buses, during which time the board knew that another man was willing to operate the service at 6d. per head less

than the fare that had been charged for six months. When the six months had elapsed, the man running the service brought his fares down. The Chief Secretary remarked in a superior sort of way—

There was some reference to the fact that the board had not acted on the advice of the Air Force commanding officer when he suggested that any increase in the omnibus service should be arranged on a competitive basis. With all due respect to the commanding officer, he apparently made that statement merely as an expression of his own opinion. There is nothing to indicate that he had any special qualifications or experience in the running or arrangement of omnibus services.

I have not the pleasure of the acquaintance of the commanding officer, but as one who has had some military training, I say that this officer was only doing his duty in safeguarding the interests of his men. By this time two or three other people had intimated their willingness to operate a service at 1s. per head return, and the commanding officer merely asked that action be taken to put the matter on a competitive basis, a principle that Mr. Holmes repeatedly urges in this Chamber. What response did the commanding officer receive? None at all. He was told that the chairman of the Transport Board would be visiting Geraldton and would take an opportunity of conferring with him. As I told the House previously, the chairman did not visit Geraldton because, I understand, he was too busy attending to matters concerning petrol supplies. The Chief Secretary also stated—

Again the hon. member has confused the issue with petrol rationing. He stated that Mr. MeVeal's buses consume between 500 and 600 gallons of petrol monthly, and raised the question of gas producers. I will neither confirm nor dispute those figures; firstly, because I cannot see how they would affect the board's decision under the Transport Act, and secondly, because they are the concern of the Commonwealth and not of the State Government. Nor do I propose to enter into any discussion as to the methods which might be adopted to save petrol.

What an astounding statement for a Minister of the Crown to make! He does not propose to enter into any discussion as to the methods which might be adopted to save petrol: in short, it is no concern of any member of the State Government whether petrol is saved or not! Are we, as a branch of the Legislature, to subscribe to an attitude of that sort? I do not think so. Is it no concern of the

State Transport Board whether petrol is saved or not? Had the board been seized with the responsibility of its position, it could easily have stipulated that this service be operated by buses fitted with gas producers. That would have resulted in a large saving of petrol. The Chief Secretary said he was not in a position to confirm or deny my statement about the quantity of petrol consumed by the buses. As a matter of fact, my information is that Mr. McVea receives 750 gallons a month to run the service, and almost the whole of that quantity could have been saved, and that saving would have been a contribution to the war effort.

Mr. McVea has a taxi on the Geraldton rank, together with Mr. Pomeroy, a one-legged returned soldier and other men. Is there any check on the quantity of petrol used by McVea for his taxi car? I am informed that there is no check on the petrol he may use or on the mileage he may cover, whereas other men on the taxi rank are allowed only a limited supply of petrol.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Do you suggest that he uses for his taxi some of the petrol provided for the buses?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: That is my information. The board is generally correct and in the main is doing a good job, but its general administration is not under review. On this occasion I maintain that the board made a mistake in that it did not invite applications for this service, and it is for this House to declare whether the board on this occasion was justified in its action in not calling tenders as was done previously and is done generally.

Despite the Chief Secretary's suggestion, the fact remains that the board made a present of the service to McVea—a service that was a very profitable undertaking—and should have realised that in the interests of all concerned, it would have been much better to invite applications or call for tenders. Then the board could have exercised its undoubted right and authority to decide to whom or to how many it would grant licenses. Had that been done, I am certain that the fares would have been 1s. return for airmen from the commencement of the service till the 30th June. This would have saved the men who had enlisted for active service a sum of 6d. every time they travelled by the bus, which, in the case of married men with homes and wives

in Geraldton, was a daily occurrence. I leave the matter in the hands of the House. Whether the motion is carried or rejected does not matter twopence to me. The motion was not moved with any desire to ventilate a grievance entertained by one or two people. There is a principle of policy at stake, and that was my reason for bringing the motion before the House.

Question put and declared negatived.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Divide.

The PRESIDENT: I thought I heard only one voice for the ayes.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Apart from the mover's, there was one voice behind me.

The PRESIDENT: Was there only one voice?

Hon. J. Cornell: I claim that there was only one voice.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: There were two voices, one behind me and that of the mover.

The PRESIDENT: Members who were nearer than is Mr. Cornell assure me that there were two voices. Therefore I shall divide the House.

Division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	5
Noes .. .	16
Majority against .. .	11

AYES.	
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. H. V. Flesse
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. V. Hamersley	(Teller.)
NOES.	
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. W. H. Kilsdonk
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. J. M. Macfarlane
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. W. R. Hall
	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council.

BILL—METROPOLITAN MARKET ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th November.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North): [8.17]: First of all, I hope the representatives of

the Metropolitan Province will excuse me for speaking to this measure at this early stage, but before I resume my seat I think I shall be able to show that the Bill deals principally with the marketing of fish. The North Province has an extremely large fishing industry, which is capable of still further development.

The Bill is an attempt to solve an exceedingly difficult problem. It may be one step forward if the Bill passes, but much will remain to be done to put our fishing industry on a satisfactory footing. Presumably, the Bill is attempting to concentrate the auctioning of fish in the Metropolitan Market, with the object of controlling prices and distribution. We can force the trade into the market, but how we are by legislation to control prices, either wholesale or retail, is a problem to me. I hope the combined intelligence of this House will find a solution. It may be that the Bill will have an opposite effect to what is intended. I understand that at present auctions may be held at several places. I am also told that at each of those places there is only one bidder, to whom the fish is knocked down. He, in turn, distributes it among his own shops, or among those of his fellow countrymen. These dictate the prices at which the fish is to be sold.

Hon. H. Tuckey: This Bill will not stop that.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am aware of that. I do not know how that position can be overcome. The retail fishing business at Fremantle, Perth, Merredin, Boulder, Kalgoorlie, and other places is today under the control of two companies. I do know that these companies are controlled by Greeks, but do not know whether I can quote the names of the companies correctly. I think one is called National Fisheries Company and the other the International Fisheries Company. They are owned by Greeks, who work together, while the public has to pay. Why, may I ask, has this business been allowed to drift into the hands of these foreigners?

Hon. J. Cornell: Because the Britisher will not undertake it.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: No. Britishers are not likely to undertake this business while we have State trading concerns where jobs can be found for them. I am sorry to say that in some instances these men working on State trading concerns do not even earn their money. They will not undertake

the fishing business, with the result that it has drifted into the hands of foreigners, while the public pays.

We have heard much about the school tie, but I think the menace to this State is the Trades Hall tie. The Government and the Trades Hall find jobs for their own men; whether they earn their wages or not is exceedingly doubtful. But they must be found "coat-on" jobs, whereas the foreigner is prepared to take off his coat, work hard and make a success of the fish business. Fresh fish are sent from all parts of the State to the Metropolitan Market. The Shark Bay quota is, I think, the most important of all. As far as I can learn, between 3,000 and 4,000 cases of frozen fish were sent south last year from Shark Bay.

The Chief Secretary: To this market?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That is the trouble. Three-quarters of those cases were sent to the Eastern States. If we are not careful, presently we shall find that our whole fish supply will be shipped there, especially if these foreigners are permitted to pay their own price for the fish sold in our market. In addition, between 2,000 and 3,000 bags—and when I say bags, I mean wheat-bags—of frozen schnapper were sent south within the last 12 months. Some of that quantity also went to the Eastern States. What was sold locally was bought by these foreigners at their own price and sold at their own price. That is my apology to the members for the Metropolitan Province for butting in at this early stage.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: We did not know you were in the fish business.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am not. The Bill contains one good point, with which I shall deal later. The fish that remains in the State is, as I have already indicated, sold in several markets, principally, I think, at Perth and Fremantle; but I am told the representative of the two companies I have mentioned turns up and bids for it. It is knocked down to him and he proceeds to distribute it amongst the shops of the two companies, which range from Fremantle to Boulder. Further the companies dictate the price at which the fish shall be sold. One can imagine what is going on if one looks in the shop windows and notes the prices charged for the fish and compares them with the wholesale prices.

Hon. J. Cornell: They must keep a large quantity of the fish for a long while, judging by the smell in Barrack-street.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That may be; this is a very fishy subject. As I said, the Bill contains one point to recommend it. It is that a man who catches fish or is instrumental in catching them can sell them how, when and where he likes, that is, if I interpret the Bill correctly. That is something in favour of the fisherman. It is favourable to my Shark Bay friends living in that isolated community and working hard to catch and market fish. Quantities of the fish caught are placed in cold storage in Perth. There is nothing to prevent the fisherman from selling his fish, provided they are his own, in the markets at Perth, Fremantle or Kalgoorlie. The trouble is that the retail shops are owned by one or other of the companies I have mentioned and so members will know what the fisherman may expect.

The definition of "owner" is worthy of consideration, because I think it puts the owner in the position I have indicated. Any person desiring to purchase fish at auction will, if the Bill passes, have to purchase it in the market, either at Fremantle or Perth. But the purchaser will still be the same person; he will still be on the box seat. He will buy at his own price and pass the fish on to the National Fisheries Company and the International Fisheries Company, which will distribute it for sale in their retail shops. This has become a menace to the community.

I have been told by my friends that we ought to have a doctor in the Legislative Council. I think my doctor friend who was recently elected will tell members that fish is a wholesome and desirable food, and yet we have two combinations standing between the public and its fish supply. The position is serious and the way out I cannot see. True, it has been suggested that the Price-Fixing Commissioner should deal with the matter. But fish are perishable. Once they have been put into cold storage, they cannot be taken out and put back too often, otherwise they will deteriorate. Imagine a quantity of fish taken out of cold storage and put into one of the markets for sale: the buyer of either the National Fisheries Company or the International Fisheries Company would turn up. If the price were too high, he would not buy. If the price to be charged to the public is fixed at too low an amount,

then the representative of those companies will not buy, and the fish will go back into cold storage. I wish I could find a way out, but price-fixing does not seem to me a satisfactory solution.

The Chief Secretary: It will help.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Only to this extent, so far as I can see, that it will force all the auctions into one market, instead of sales proceeding at two or three markets at the same time. I do not know whether that will happen. The only protection this Bill will give, that I can see, is that it will allow the man who catches the fish to sell it when, how and where he likes.

Hon. J. Cornell: How is he to get it to Perth?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: He can send it by the State steamers. All these consignments I have referred to have been brought south by the State steamers and held in cold storage. It is still the property of the man who caught the fish.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Will not the open market permit anybody to buy?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes, of course, but nobody will buy. The two fishing companies own all the retail shops and buy and sell at their own prices, and the public pays.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Will not the open market help that?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There are several open markets now.

The Honorary Minister: Is not that an argument for a State fish shop?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Government tried that. I would like to recite a verse about the Government fish shops. I have tried to make a difficult position clear to the House. The Bill does take us one step further, but not very far. One way out of the difficulty would be created if we did not have so much preference to unionists, basic wage and soft jobs in the Government. Some Britishers might then be inclined to go fishing and so solve the problem. I am afraid, however, it is no use looking at the problem from that angle.

I do not think members know much about fishing, except as a pastime. No member of this Chamber would go fishing in order to sell fish, especially to either of these two companies, if he could get a Government job necessitating a stiff collar and the wearing of his coat. I have little more to say. The Bill may do some good. If we are

to get cheap fish made available to the public, the position will have to be tackled in a more drastic way than is proposed in this measure. I support the second reading.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [8.33]: I have not very much to say on this measure. I intend to vote for the second reading. It will bring more dues to the market and give the authorities more control. I do not think it will give us cheaper fish. There is a definite move on the part of the department to exercise control and in so doing to improve the industry. It would be a step in the right direction to have all the sales of fish at the one market. Some time ago I spoke on the sale of blue shark as schnapper. I thought it was a matter for the Government to see that that practice did not continue. The Chief Secretary on that occasion said it was a matter for the Health Department and not one for the Government. If all fish were sold at the one market there would be some check on that practice because, I understand, sharks do not come to the market.

Hon. J. Cornell: Where do they go, down the Terrace?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: If people pay 1s. a lb. for shark, thinking it is schnapper, it is not right. By making their purchases at the market, they will know what they are buying. Today shark is being sold in different ways and the public has no chance of distinguishing between it and schnapper. That is not right. If a butcher is found guilty of selling horse flesh for steak or beef, he is punished. The same principle should apply to retailers of fish.

A great deal has to be said for fishing in this State, but this Bill does not provide an opportunity to mention those matters. Something could be said about the sale of whiting from Shark Bay. They are sent to the Eastern States because there is no market for them here. A high price is received for those fish in Melbourne and I understand there is no chance of selling them on the Western Australian market. I agree with Mr. Holmes that Shark Bay is a great fishing centre and that in time to come schemes started down here will be organised up there. It is entirely wrong to spend money to commence fishing industries in Perth when the fish are hundreds of miles away. One might as well start at Southern Cross.

As a rule the law of supply and demand regulates the price of fish. I do not think the fishing ring is altogether responsible. During recent months fish have been a fabulous price; even cobbleries have been bringing 5s. and 6s. a dozen. Then, again, some point has been made of the industry being in the hands of the foreigner. Years ago, when fishermen could go to Safety Bay, start fishing at daylight and hoist their sails with the sea breeze at 11 a.m. and sail for Fremantle with a boatload of schnapper, Britishers were on the job. When these supplies became depleted, and fishermen had to go further along the coastline, it seemed then to be more a job for the foreigner. It became necessary to go further afield and instead of going out over-night and returning with a boatload of fish by midday the following day, they had to remain out for two or three days to obtain such a haul. The Britisher did not care for that kind of life. It is not very nice to be tossed about by the sea for two or three days in a 25 ft. or 30 ft. boat and fish with a line in order to obtain a catch for the market. That is one reason why the white man, as we call him, is not now engaged in this particular industry. It has fallen largely into the hands of the Italians.

Reference was made by Mr. Holmes to other instances where it is difficult to get labour. We find it is not only in the fishing industry that we are unable to get Britishers to work. In some cases we cannot get them to work on the land. Foreigners are doing most of the work owing to the shortage of labour. The Bill will be some help to the department. The Chief Inspector of Fisheries is endeavouring to gain more control over the industry and this measure will be a step in the right direction. It means that all fish will be sent to the central market, where inspectors are provided. The fish will be properly inspected before being sold to the retailers for distribution to the consumers. No one could find fault with that. The Bill does not in any way regulate prices. It is still open for the buyers to so organise as to enable them to distribute the fish at their own prices.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [8.40]: I commend the Government for bringing down this Bill. It will not go very far, but it is a step in the right direction. I would not have risen but for the fact that two

very important points have been overlooked in this debate, and in another place. The Government is directly responsible for one matter, and it might easily provide for the other. I refer again, as I have on other occasions, to the exorbitant rate charged on the railways for the carriage of fish. To my mind there is no excuse for that. The rate is £5 per ton.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: From where?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: From anywhere. Every ton of fish sent from Geraldton must be sent with half a ton of ice. It comes down over the Midland railway, but the same conditions obtain on the Government line from Albany. Half a ton of ice could be sent for 30s., but because it is despatched so that the fish will arrive in an edible state, the charge is at the rate of £5 a ton. One ton of fish, together with half a ton of ice, costs £7 10s. Ordinary rates apply to anything else except rabbits, which come at a slightly higher rate, but they are sent in a specially insulated van, which is not the case with fish. Fish are sent in any old truck. They would not arrive in a fit state for consumption were they not packed with ice. The freight charged is about the highest in connection with the Government railways.

Why then should we wonder at the exorbitant prices charged for fish? It is very easy for members to talk about the reason. We have heard from a member who knows something about meat but nothing about fish—except when it is on a plate. The fact that hundreds of tons of fish come from the waters around the province he has the honour to represent does not necessarily give him a knowledge of fish. Together with a member in another place, I, unfortunately, invested money in the fishing industry.

Hon. G. Fraser: And so you know a lot about it!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I have the same complaint as that member, that the money is put into the boat, the fish are caught and sent to Perth, but nothing happens. Without the capital to erect refrigerating works instead of selling them at the fish markets and taking whatever price is offered, the fisherman is at the mercy of the world. I saw the Minister for Agriculture, who sponsored this Bill, and asked whether there were any Government-owned refrigerating places in Perth, and he verified my

opinion that there were not. The Government has refrigerating space at Fremantle but not in Perth.

I suggest, with all due respect to those members who have a horror of anything approaching State-owned businesses, that instead of starting, as a Labour Government did some years ago, fish shops and entering the retail business, the Government should provide the men who own individual boats with the means of storing their fish and thus enable them to receive reasonable prices. That might represent one step further in ensuring a cheaper supply of fish to residents of the metropolitan area. Reduced freights would—no matter what some members may think—cheapen fish. With lower freights and such refrigerating works as I have suggested, the price could be reduced considerably. I support the Bill.

On motion by Hon. L. B. Bolton, debate adjourned.

BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East) [8.47] in moving the second reading said: When speaking on the second reading of the Public Trustee Bill I expressed myself as not convinced that the measure would meet all requirements of people resident outside the metropolitan area. Therefore I am now introducing this Bill, which proposes to amend several sections of the Administration Act with a view to clarifying the position.

At the time of the third reading of the Public Trustee Bill here, Mr. Seddon asked the Chief Secretary whether anyone could apply in the country for probate under that measure, and the Chief Secretary said he could not answer the question without first making further inquiries. The main point I wish to impress on Mr. Seddon is that anyone could apply through the public trustee in country centres, but he would be subject to the usual fees to be charged by that officer; whereas my desire is to give country people the same rights as are now enjoyed by residents of the metropolitan area. A reference to the principal Act shows that in the metropolitan area anyone can apply for probate without cost to himself—by personal application—and I desire that

the same conditions should be applicable to people in rural districts and the goldfields areas.

When an executor takes charge of a deceased person's estate, he must manage the assets, deal with claims, debts, taxes and so forth, arrange payment of estate duties, and generally substitute his business judgment for that of the deceased person. The executor has to administer the estate as the will directs or the law provides, and must account for his administration to the beneficiaries, and to the court for its approval. When the deceased person has not made a will, bondsmen have to guarantee that these duties will be carried out by the executor.

Clause 2 proposes amendments in Section 26 of the Act. The object of the first amendment is to avoid confusion, as Subsection 1 now provides that every person is to execute a bond with sureties and so forth in the case of an application for administration. My first amendment proposes to clarify that position. The second amendment proposes to correct a discrepancy between Sections 26 and 27. The former speaks of "one or more sureties," whereas Section 27 speaks of "two sureties." In practice not more than two sureties are required; and in view of the difficulty in many cases of obtaining even one surety, it is desirable to limit the number which may be required by the court.

As to Clause 3, proposed new Section 27A provides that where a person dies intestate leaving a husband or wife surviving, the estate of the deceased is to be divided thus—(a) where the net value of the property does not exceed £500, the whole of the property goes to the surviving husband or wife; (b) where there is no issue and the value of the estate exceeds £500, the husband or wife is entitled to £500 and half the balance; but (c) where there is issue and the value of the estate exceeds £500, the husband or wife is entitled to £500 and one-third of the balance. Section 14 of the Act fully explains this. To give an example: If a person dies leaving a property not exceeding £1,000 in value, the greater part of the property goes to the husband or wife; and in view of this, in estates not exceeding £1,000 it is not unreasonable to dispense with any surety to the bond. That is my reason for asking the House to agree to the amendment. In other cases, three-quarters or even more of the assets would go to the husband or wife.

Subsection 2 of proposed new Section 27A makes provision for limiting the liability of a surety or sureties to an administration bond of the gross value of the property of the deceased, less the amount, if any, secured to a creditor by mortgage on real estate. That is to say, if any portion of the property is secured by mortgage, no surety will be required for this amount. The Master of the Court states that this is the usual practice of the court at present under the powers given to it by Section 27 of the Act, but that difficulty is sometimes met with in having this reduction made. The object of the amendment is to give statutory authority for the reduction of the liability of the sureties instead of leaving the matter to the discretion of the Master of the Court or a judge. I submit that if the claim of a creditor is secured by a mortgage, there is no reason to require additional security by demanding sureties, and that the position of an administrator would be rendered much easier if he had to obtain sureties only for a smaller amount.

As regards reduction of bond where necessary, Section 28 of the original Act provides for the obtaining of additional sureties if the position of the estate increases in value and requires it. The amendment I propose is designed to meet the reverse case. Should the value of the estate decrease and the administration possibly take years to complete, provision should be made for the reduction of the liability of a surety to a bond. Accordingly my amendment provides that the court at any time may reduce the liability of a surety to a bond if the position of the estate warrants such a step and the assets remaining in the administrator's hands are less in value than the assets in his hands at the time when the sureties were originally required. If, on one hand, the court insist on an increase as under Section 27, and an increase in value of the bond as in Section 28, surely where an estate shows a decrease and has been administered, similar provision should be made for this purpose.

I fully admit that proposed new Section 27A gives power to the court to reduce the bond required to the net value of the estate; but that power is not always exercised by the court. My reason for moving the amendment is to make the matter more definite than it is now in the Act. Further, the section provides that in place of a surety an incorporated company or guaran-

tee society approved by the court will be accepted in lieu of a surety; but I would point out that where an insurance company agrees to act as surety the cost is far greater, and small estates cannot always stand up to this cost. In many instances it is difficult to obtain bonds for this purpose.

I know of an estate valued at about £5,000, on which there was a mortgage to a financial institution of about £4,000. Members will agree that if the court only asked for a surety for the equity of the estate, namely, £1,000, there would be a reasonable chance of obtaining it, but that if a surety for £5,000 were required, it would be very difficult to secure. As an example I mention that I was connected with a small estate—a widow was left with five children—and became a surety in connection with the estate, which was situated in a country town. Under the will left by the husband, a trustee company was appointed executor. The estate was heavily involved with a financial institution and a stock firm.

After examining the balance sheet and valuations, the trustee company decided not to apply for administration, as the conditions under the will were such that no realisation could take place of the real estate until the youngest child, then about four years old, attained the age of 21. There was very little money available to carry on the estate. This meant that the widow had to make application to administer the estate with the will annexed; and on making inquiries of an insurance company I ascertained that the cost would be £24 per annum. There was barely sufficient income derived from the estate to pay any reasonable maintenance to the widow and her children. In this particular instance the widow's careful management, together with low cost of administration, has resulted in placing her in a sound financial position today. The sureties had to sign as guarantors, but the widow would administer the estate to its full gross value, whereas the gross value at that period was about £3,000 or £4,000 and its net value only about £700. Through careful management the value, as I have mentioned, has since increased considerably.

Clause 5 proposes to amend Subsection 1 of Section 53 of the Act. That section gives the court power to appoint district agents for the Master of the Court in any town beyond 30 miles from Perth where a local court is held. At present there are no dis-

trict agents. My amendment proposes to appoint magistrates of local courts situated more than 50 miles from Perth as district agents. It is considered that magistrates are the proper persons to be appointed for this purpose, because of their knowledge of legal procedure. A further object of the amendment is to give to country people the same facilities as at present are enjoyed by persons residing in the metropolitan area.

Sections 54 to 57, inclusive, provide that personal application may be made for probate or administration where the gross value of the property of the deceased does not exceed £500. At present these provisions are of value only in the Supreme Court. If magistrates in country towns were appointed district agents, then personal applications—where an estate did not exceed £500 in value—could be made direct to them. May I point out that I have known many cases of men dying intestate, and also of men dying in the country with wills made, and as a district agent I have known personal applicants from the country to have to journey to Perth at considerable expense, but by the appointment of local court magistrates as district local agents this would be avoided. In all cases dealt with by local magistrates the actual grant of administration and probate will be left to the jurisdiction of the Master as it is at present. The fees, duties, etc., will be collected by the district agent and forwarded to the Master.

By Clause 6 an amendment is proposed to Section 54 in which the distance from Perth is altered from 30 to 50 miles to bring this section into accord with Section 53 in its proposed amended form. Clause 7 provides for an amendment to Section 57A, and my object is to provide that where an estate does not exceed £1,000 gross value, application for probate or administration may be made by a country solicitor to a district agent, thus avoiding the necessity of employing a city agent of the solicitor. This must result in the saving of expense to the administrator or executor, and is most necessary in dealing with estates in the country under £1,000 in value. The district agent is not required, as in the case of a personal application, to provide any assistance in the preparation of the application, and the amendment provides the machinery whereby the application is transmitted by the dis-

trict agent, who will be the magistrate, to the Master of the Supreme Court.

In effect the district agent or local magistrate is really an agent of the Master for receiving applications and forwarding them to the Master and he is the channel through which the solicitor deals with the court. Under the present procedure a local solicitor in the country, employed in any case of application for probate, prepares the papers, obtains the valuations, advertises for debts due to the estate and, when the papers are completed, forwards them to his Perth agent who tenders the returns to the Master of the Supreme Court. Considerable expense will be avoided by permitting the country solicitors to apply to the magistrate, as already suggested.

I would like to draw the attention of the Chief Secretary to Clauses 5, 6, and 7. I do not anticipate that the amendments will entail any additional expense to the Government. No new officers are suggested to carry out the duties of district agents. The amendments would entail additional work for country magistrates, but not a great deal. The magistrates would be called upon to render assistance in the preparation of documents where the estate did not exceed £500 and in the case of estates not exceeding £1,000 his duties would be confined to receiving applications and forwarding them to the Master. Some correspondence between the district agent and the Master would result, but this should not involve the Government in extra expense. Where any queries were made in connection with estates under £1,000 the country solicitor would deal directly with the correspondence. Further rules could be made giving the clerk of courts certain duties to carry out.

It was first thought that a clause would be needed to amend the rules in the Third Schedule of the Act, but Section 141 provides that the schedule can be amended by the judges if they so desire and these powers are therefore not needed. I commend the Bill to members and sincerely hope the Government will support it. The people in the country and on the goldfields should be placed on the same footing as are people in the metropolitan area. The measure seeks to accomplish the following objectives:—

- (a) To permit personal application to be made by administrators of estates not exceeding £500 over 50 miles from the city of Perth;

- (b) to permit the reduction of the value of bonds in connection with estates being administered when the assets have been realised upon;
- (c) to make it more definite for the Master to agree to a bond being furnished only for the net value of an estate after allowing for mortgages, etc.; and
- (d) to permit country solicitors to make direct application in connection with estates under the gross value of £1,000 to the local court magistrate.

I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

PAPERS—LIQUID FRUIT COMPANY.

Debate resumed from the 28th October, on the following motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter (East):—

That all papers in connection with the financial assistance given by the Government to the Liquid Fruit Company be laid on the Table of the House.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East—in reply) [9.6]: Owing to certain happenings it became necessary for me to become acquainted with what financial assistance had been given to the Liquid Fruit Co. of West Perth. Naturally I went to the right sources from which to get information and I received a regular shock when I was told it was not Government policy to disclose such information. I would like to refresh members' minds on the matter. On the 7th October I asked the Chief Secretary certain questions regarding assistance to this company. One question was—

If any advance, guarantee, or financial assistance has been given, what is—(a) The value of such.

The reply given was—

It is the policy of the Government to treat such matters as confidential.

I have never been so staggered in this House as I was on that occasion because three weeks before I had asked for the very same information about the Manjimup butter factory and I was given full details about the advances that had been made. When the Chief Secretary replied to my remarks he said—

I am surprised that Mr. Baxter in placing the motion before the House, did not indicate

that he had any knowledge of the fact that the procedure usually obtains in matters of this kind. If Mr. Baxter cares to turn up the "Trade Gazette" of the appropriate date, he will find published the usual type of notice. He will find there the actual amount of the loan.

In the first place, the Government concerned stopped providing me with the "Government Gazette" in the early part of this year. It was probably right in doing so. The point is that the "Gazette" was not available to me. The Bible of most commercial men is the "Trade Protection Gazette." I had no opportunity of seeing the "Government Gazette" and would not have looked there for the information if I had had that opportunity. If the information had appeared in the "Government Gazette," why was I given the answer that the Government considered it confidential?

The Chief Secretary: I said the "Trade Gazette."

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The "Trade Gazette" then! Why should the Government refuse to give me the information stating that it was considered confidential, and then tell me when I asked for these papers to be tabled that the information has already been published? Why keep this information from me? The Chief Secretary further said—

The hon. member is probably aware, though he does not say so, that the completion of this transaction occurred after the publication of the Auditor General's Report—too late for inclusion in the report.

However, that has been dealt with in reply to Mr. Holmes.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What was that?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Chief Secretary told the hon. member that the figures appeared in the Public Accounts. That is right; they could not have appeared in the Auditor General's report. The Chief Secretary further stated—

It may be of interest to the House to know that the shareholders are mainly fruit and vegetable growers. Many of them, I understand, are located in the province represented by Mr. Baxter who moved the motion.

Of course! That was the very reason for my moving the motion. What influenced me was the fact that these poor unfortunate people are now being forced by law to pay up what they have committed themselves to pay and the price of their produce has been at so low an ebb that they cannot find the money. They have been placed in a

very inconvenient position and have been worried almost to death. That was why I asked what amount had been advanced.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is not the Government fully secured?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I do not propose to deal with that; I do not know. There are several buildings and machinery. The Chief Secretary also used these words—

—in view of the fact that he said he could see no reason for the department's action except that the company's manager was a friend of the Minister.

There are other mistakes in the Chief Secretary's speech which was no doubt supplied to him by the department, but this is a mistake I do not propose to overlook because the Minister was taking notes of my speech and should have been more careful. I refer the Chief Secretary to my speech. I never mentioned the name of the Minister.

The Chief Secretary: You said a responsible authority.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No; I said a responsible person. Those were the words I used.

The Chief Secretary: There is only one person they could refer to.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Oh no! There are other responsible persons.

The Chief Secretary: Look at your speech.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: As a matter of fact, some of the Minister's remarks came close to vilification which was quite unjustified. At any rate, I regard them as such. He said—

It does not seem to me to be right that a member of this Chamber should take the opportunity, when discussing a matter of this kind, to cast reflections on a number of very fine officers who are giving of their best and who have been successful in rendering great services to more than one secondary industry in this State.

I did not refer to the officers at all. From the experience I have had in Parliament and as a Minister, I would not refer to them in a derogatory manner. The officers of the Department of Industrial Development are very fine in their own particular avenue, and are good and competent persons; but not one has had any commercial training, which is necessary when business propositions are being dealt with. That is where the department fails. I have nothing but the best to say of the officers from

Mr. Fernie downwards, although I think that Mr. Fernie is in the wrong sphere because he is one of our best engineers. The Chief Secretary continued—

It seems to me that probably Mr. Baxter had more information than he cared to admit when moving this motion. I can hardly imagine he would have presented it without having first fortified himself with the actual facts of the case in the ordinary way.

All that guided me in doing what I did were the complaints of the people being forced to provide money. I do not know what is the trend of the Minister's innuendo. Since then I have seen the balance sheet of the company, but I am not dealing with that at all. All I was concerned about was the people who were suffering. I do not know what knowledge I could have had, to which the Minister referred. I was taken to task for inquiring, as I have done time and again, about the success of this wonderful department. We all remember that the Minister for Industrial Development (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke) and some of his officers paid a visit to the Eastern States and they made inquiries from captains of industry there about establishing industries in this State. But the cost was so great as to be prohibitive and they would not agree for one moment to establish industries of any importance here. The Minister returned and made a glowing statement to the "West Australian" indicating that he expected big industries to be established in Western Australia. People who knew best smiled since they realised that men in the Eastern States would not care to establish industries here because it would be impossible to do so successfully.

At long last I have information with regard to what the department has done. And what an inglorious record it has for a special department, this department that was expected to establish industries and give employment to large numbers of men! All these industries are most welcome as far as they go, but they are merely small concerns and do not represent big undertakings that will provide much employment. The Chief Secretary started off by referring to the meatworks at Broome. I shall not say anything about that undertaking except that, in my opinion, Broome is not the proper place for such works to be established. That undertaking should be located at Derby which is the proper cattle centre. Then

there was the reference to the re-establishment of the crayfish canning industry at Geraldton. That was inaugurated in 1931 and has been further advanced during war-time. I hope the industry will be established on a firm basis, but it is merely a small undertaking. We want big industries.

Next the Chief Secretary mentioned the establishment in the metropolitan area of the industry for the canning of Perth herring. Here again the concern is small, and surely it is not necessary for an expensive department to be created to engage in work of that description. Surely that is not all it can achieve. Then there was a reference to the establishment of a factory at Geraldton for processing tomatoes. The Minister also mentioned the establishment of a new clothing factory at Bunbury and the expansion of existing clothing factories at Albany and in the metropolitan area. Of course there has been that expansion, but that has not been because of any activities on the part of the Department of Industrial Development but merely because of war-time requirements. The Minister said the work was expanding. Of course it is. Those engaged in the industry cannot secure enough machines or employees, but that is in connection with war work.

What will happen when hostilities cease? That is what I am concerned about. That is what should be the concern of the Department of Industrial Development. How does it propose to deal with those people when the war terminates? That is the difficulty; that is what is worrying me. Again the Minister referred to the expansion of the blue asbestos industry in the Hamersley Ranges. I certainly hope those associated with the undertaking will be able to market their product, but that business has been in existence for about 10 years. Then the Chief Secretary referred to the production of felspar for export to the Eastern States. The felspar industry has been operating for about 15 years.

Hon. J. Cornell: Two years ago that concern was sold to Consolidated Industries of Sydney.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: At any rate, it has been operating for a long time. The Minister also referred to the establishment of an industry for the production of potash from alunite. The company concerned has

spent about £6,000 and I give the department every credit for extending encouragement to that undertaking.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Was money advanced in respect of all these industries?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No, not in all instances.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: But the department has rendered assistance.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is so. Small as these industries are for the most part, all are justified. The point I make is that when the Minister for Industrial Development spoke about the new industries that were to be established, we had every right to believe that he referred to industries of some magnitude. Those enumerated are all small. What we want established in this State are industries that will continue after the war period. For my part I am satisfied that if the Minister for Industrial Development really seeks to endeavour to secure the establishment of big industries here, he will have to achieve that end by adopting other means. He must cut out many of the obligations imposed upon firms by our industrial legislation so as to reduce the cost of production.

Hon. J. Cornell: Treble our population and industries will right themselves.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Chief Secretary during the course of his speech also said that when the Liquid Fruit Company was established representatives of the Fresh Fruit Drink Company were present. They deny that statement. No representative of the Fresh Fruit Drink Company was present. Inaccurate information was provided in that respect. The Minister explained that the reason why the Fresh Fruit Drink Company's three applications for financial assistance had been refused, was that the concern could not provide the necessary security. Naturally I accepted that explanation when it was made, as I know the Minister himself did. I am informed that the information conveyed to the House was wrong. I then referred this matter to those directly concerned and pointed out that the reason why the company had not received financial assistance was, according to the explanation furnished, that adequate security was not forthcoming. The reply I received was—

When Messrs. McMannus and Schmidt approached the Industries Assistance Board there

was no discussion of the question of security, and no security of any kind was asked for, neither was any amount of any advance mentioned, our proposition being turned down with little discussion.

That puts a different complexion on what the Minister stated. It shows he was wrongly informed. It was not a matter of security at all. If the department could advance £1,700 to a newly established concern, why could not some assistance have been given to a firm that had been operating for years? What reason can be advanced for that attitude? That is a phase that has risen since my inquiries were first instituted.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Can you tell us the reason?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No. How could I? I claim this House has a perfect right to know what advances have been made by the Government of public funds.

The Chief Secretary: No one denies that.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Minister did so. He refused to give information on the ground that it was confidential. He refused to give the figures. I admit that subsequently he gave the particulars required. Why not answer the question and thus save the necessity for a motion?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Taking up all this valuable time of the House and spending thousands of pounds on the production of "Hansard"!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Minister has since informed the House that the advance to the company totalled £1,700. Now I have that information I have no desire that the papers be laid on the Table. I do not wish the interests of the company to be hampered. I now know what advance of public funds has been made and the effect that will have on some of my constituents. In the circumstances I ask leave to withdraw my motion.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Members should not allow the hon. member to do so.

The PRESIDENT: Is it the wish of members that leave be given?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: No.

The PRESIDENT: There being one dissentient voice, leave is refused and the motion must be put.

Question put and negatived.

House adjourned at 9.25 p.m.