

for myself. In respect to the officials of the Medical and Health Department, I think most of them endeavour to carry out their work to the best of their ability.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [11.16]: I am surprised at the remarks made by the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin). I wish to draw attention to the wide disparity between the voluntary subscriptions to the Perth and Fremantle public hospitals, on the one hand, and the country hospitals on the other. These two hospitals at Perth and Fremantle are not supported by the citizens as they ought to be, as compared with hospitals in the country districts. Something ought to be done by the public to more fully maintain the Perth and Fremantle hospitals, instead of our having these large and increasing grants on the Estimates.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Fremantle people have subscribed over £5,000.

Mr. HARRISON: We have on the Estimates these grants to the hospitals in Perth and Fremantle. We have 25 assisted hospitals, yet those on the goldfields and in country districts are almost solely maintained by public subscription. All that they get on the Estimates is £8,000.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Take the Government hospitals.

Mr. HARRISON: The money supplied under this vote should go increasingly to the country hospitals. To keep people in country districts, two things are supremely necessary, namely, the provision of educational facilities, and secondly the provision of hospital or medical facilities. The State contributions to country hospitals ought to be far more liberal than at present. I remember that the Ugly Men's Association took up this point long ago. Such a board would be a good thing for Western Australia, and I trust something in this direction will be done. I endorse the remarks made by other country members regarding the need for bush nursing. I am glad the Minister for Works recognises the utility and success of motor ambulances. It was pleasing to hear the leader of the Opposition express the opinion that the country districts should be better served in the matter of medical attention. I am surprised that the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) should put up a case that the country districts—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They do not contribute a shilling.

Mr. HARRISON: The country districts are contributing all the time, for, as taxpayers, the residents of the country have to help to find the money for this vote.

Mr. JONES (Fremantle) [11.21]: I move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and passed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.22 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 19th November, 1919.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:

- 1, Mining Act Amendment.
- 2, State Children Act Amendment.
- 3, Midland Railway Company.
- 4, Supply Bill (No. 2).

QUESTION—LAND SETTLEMENT, MANJIMUP.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON asked the Minister for Education: 1, What area of land has been surveyed and subdivided for settlement in the district of Manjimup? 2, How many blocks have been made so available? 3, How many blocks have been sold or taken up? 4, How many blocks have been forfeited? 5, How many blocks are now being worked? 6, What area in this district has been ring-barked by the Government? 7, What has been the cost of these activities?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: The answer to this question will involve the preparation of a return, which the hon. member can move for if he so desires.

BILL—POSTPONED DEBTS.

Read a third time and passed.

BILL—DROVING ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

MESSAGE—WHEAT PRODUCTION, PRICE GUARANTEE.

Message from the Assembly now considered requesting the concurrence of the Council in the following resolution:—

That in the opinion of this House it is in the best interests of Australia that a sum of 5s. per bushel at the various sidings should be guaranteed to growers of wheat by the Commonwealth Government for a term of five years.

Hon. J. A. GREIG (South-East) [4.37] in moving the adoption of the resolution said: This motion was moved in the Assembly by Sir Henry Lefroy, and as it is a private motion I have been asked to take charge of it in this House. The motion itself is explicit. Every hon. member will realise its significance. It may be said that the whole thing is simply a pious hope, as it is only a request to the Federal Government, over which we have no control. I will admit that such may be the case. This question of a guarantee has been discussed in the Federal Parliament, and if both Houses of Parliament in this State carry the motion and it is forwarded to the Prime Minister it will be, at any rate, an indication that Western Australia is in favour of the guarantee being given. Some may say it is not right that a Government should take a guarantee of this nature. For the past four or five years the various Governments, State and Federal, have guaranteed a certain price for wheat. When the war broke out the whole of the wheat was commandeered. That wheat has since been purchased at a fixed price. Considering the decreasing acreage under wheat in Australia each succeeding year, one is forced to the conclusion that something must be done to increase production. Every section of the community realises that the only way we can adjust our finances is by increased production. Our own State finances are in a deplorable condition. We have not been as fortunate as some other States in having war money spent in our midst. However, the whole of the States have gone back in wheat production. The area sown for wheat in the Commonwealth has decreased from 12 million odd acres in 1915 to eight million odd acres in 1919, or a decrease of one-third. The figures for this State have decreased just about proportionately. There must be some reasons for this decrease. One of them is that a great number of our farmers went to the war, and in consequence we had not the labour to put in and take off the crop. Another reason is that the cost of everything indispensable to farming has gone up, and so made wheat growing unprofitable. Until September, 1919, the average price paid to

the wheat growers of Australia over a period of four years was 3s. 8d. per bushel at sidings. Although we had a guarantee of 4s. and, later on, of 4s. 9d., and now have a guarantee of 5s. 6d., all that the farmers actually received up to September, 1919, was 3s. 8d. per bushel, and that was paid in dribs and drabs. The farmers of Australia have been growing wheat out of patriotism to their country. They realised that wheat was required, and did their best to grow as much as they could. Compare the Australian with the American grower. The American grower during the same period received 8s. 7d. per bushel out of the 9s. 2d. guaranteed to him by his Government. Canada, a British dependency like Australia, became very wealthy as the result of the enormous prices the Canadian farmers got for their wheat during war time.

Hon. J. Cornell: Some Canadians, but not all.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: Mr. Hoover, the food controller of America, has said the world's shortage of wheat is so great that unless people stop squabbling and get down to production we shall be on the verge of a world's famine within 12 months. There is no one who should know more about the position than Mr. Hoover. I think the Federal Government and the general taxpayer would be running no risk if they gave this guarantee of 5s. a bushel for wheat for five years. From the point of view of statesmanship the Federal Government would be justified in offering a guarantee to increase the production of wheat.

Hon. J. Duffell: Do you think existing conditions will last for five years?

Hon. J. A. GREIG: It is hard to say how long they will last. It is 12 months since the Armistice was signed and yet the cost of commodities has not come down; in fact the price is ever increasing; and it seems to me that the whole world is forming into combinations in order to keep prices up. The price of things in every part of the world is abnormal and wages have gone up everywhere, and I do not think it is possible for anyone to grow wheat for less than 5s. a bushel for five years to come. If I were a millionaire, I would be prepared to buy at 5s. a bushel all the wheat grown in Australia during the next five years.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Then what is the need for a guarantee?

Hon. J. A. GREIG: There are many people who are not experienced in wheat growing, and have not as much knowledge of the world in general as many other people have. There are some farmers who do not read the newspapers and know nothing of what is going on, and this guarantee will, therefore, inspire them with confidence to pursue their task of producing wheat. They would be assured of 5s. a bushel for the next five years. They would then be enabled to make contracts for the further clearing of their holdings, and be able to

increase their machinery and plant to meet the necessities arising from an increased production. The guarantee would show that the Government of the country realised the necessity for production. It may be argued that if the wheat does not realise within 1s. or 2s. a bushel of the guarantee the general taxpayer will have to foot the bill. That would be the case. The general taxpayer would have to make good some portion of what is represented in this guarantee. The public through having backed the guarantee for the last four years has benefited as much by it as the farmer. If the Government can give this guarantee for another five years the consumer will also benefit to some extent.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: What about the poultry farmer?

Hon. J. A. GREIG: The Honorary Minister said that the wheat board are selling wheat in this State to local millers at 8s. 3d. per bushel for flour for export to Java, and the Malay States.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is the fowl feed.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: The same wheat is being sold to the same millers to be gristed into flour for local consumption at 5s. 6d. per bushel.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: If they were not a monopoly they could not do it.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: Probably not. If anyone is being penalised in respect to the price the consumer has to pay for his bread, it is the wheat grower.

Hon. J. Cornell: He gets a little of the 8s. 3d.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: The grower gets 8s. 3d. for the wheat that is sold for turning into flour for export. The people of this country would have to buy that wheat on import rates if the Pool dealt with the matter on strictly business lines, and wished to penalise the people. It is realised that the taxpayer took a certain amount of risk when the Government agreed to give 4s. as a guarantee in the first case and later on 4s. 9d.

Hon. J. Duffell: A loaf is as dear in Western Australia as it is in any other part of the Commonwealth.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: Flour that is sold for export to foreign countries has realised as high a price as 10s. a bushel on the wheat value. The guarantee that is suggested in the motion will inspire confidence not only in the grower but in the merchant and the financial institutions of the State.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What will the Price Fixing Bill do?

Hon. J. A. GREIG: These merchants and financial institutions will assist the farmer to make good. If they do make good every other section of the community will also be doing well. When the farmers are prosperous all other sections of the people are also prosperous.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: Except the pig man.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: As production is so essential, the Government and the people should take this risk of guaranteeing 5s. a bushel. The only risk they take is as to the price, whereas the farmer has to risk bad seasons, too much or too little rain, hailstorms, rabbits, rust, septoria, takeall, die-back, bush fires, and other things which come along.

Hon. J. Duffell: It is not a bad business with the guarantee.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: The taxpayer and the Government will only have to guarantee on the wheat that is produced, when it is bagged and arrives at the siding. The grower takes all other risks and does the work. Wheat-growing should be one of the chief aims of the State for the next few years. We must clear our land and grow wheat before the land will grow grass. Many hon. members recently saw some of the finest wheat-growing country in Australia, and noticed that in its virgin state it would not grow enough grass to feed a sheep to 50 acres. If this guarantee of 5s. were given by the Government, inside five years I am of opinion that Western Australia will be producing 40,000,000 bushels of wheat per annum. Previous to the war we very nearly reached the 20,000,000 bushel mark. Professor Lowrie once said that we had 28,000,000 acres of wheat-growing land in the wheat-growing rainfall area, and went on to say that, even allowing that half of this land was not suitable for wheat growing, there was no reason why we should not produce on the remaining portion an average of 10 bushels to the acre, or 140,000,000 bushels in all. He predicted that we should be growing 20,000,000 bushels inside 20 years, but we very nearly reached that inside 10 years. The policy of past Governments in Australia has been to protect every secondary industry, but the primary industries of Australia have never had any protection.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Would the hon. member guarantee all primary industries?

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I would. The wealth of any nation is estimated upon the value of its primary production. If the Government desire to assist secondary industries they have as much right to assist primary industries. I am a free-trader. When the Government assist secondary industries and neglect the primary industries they set up a barrier against the primary industries of such magnitude that it is necessary for people like myself to come to this House and ask that the Government should give this guarantee of 5s. a bushel. If the Federal Government will wipe out all duties on everything, the farmer will not require this guarantee, for he knows that he can then grow wheat at less than 5s. a bushel and make a profit. This is a simple question that has been submitted to hon. members. Seeing that wheat has so often been discussed in this House during the last few weeks, I do not intend to dilate any further on this subject. I commend the motion to the attention of hon. members.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [4.57]: I do not regard the motion as a burlesque or anything like that. I view it from a serious aspect. The promulgators of this motion did not go so far as I would have gone. I am not only prepared to stand on the side of the primary producer and to extend the consideration to him I think he deserves, but I am also prepared to extend the same consideration to those engaged in the secondary industries, I mean the great masses of the people of the State. Our well being is not altogether wrapped up in primary production; it is intimately connected also with the whole community which comprises our State. The position we have to consider here is first of all that, owing to the altered conditions consequent upon the war, we have to ask ourselves how long this state of affairs will continue, and what will be the ultimate disparity between the conditions of the future and those which prevailed before the war. I believe that before the conditions under which we live, and the prices that are asked for necessary commodities, go back to anything like normal, conditions will yet be worse and prices will be higher. I may be a Job's comforter. It appears to me, after looking things fairly and squarely in the face and taking the happenings in the world in general into consideration, that it is the future for which we must prepare. I now come to the second aspect of the question. What is a fair and reasonable price to guarantee the farmer for his product? After making a mental comparison between the pre-war conditions, and those which are likely to exist two or three years hence, I say that 5s. a bushel is not too great a price to guarantee or too great a burden for the people of the State to take up. I for one will be perfectly content if in five years' time we can procure our daily loaf at the price we are paying to-day. I am not one of those who think that things will right themselves. They are not going to right themselves. We owe a lot to the farmer who is pioneering the country and suffering more disadvantages than any other section of the community. We have the right to say to him, come out and open the country, and the obligation then is on the Parliament and the people to say that his outlook is made as reasonable as possible. The guarantee suggested is not too much. We as a collective community must guarantee the farmer, and we may also have to guarantee other industries besides agriculture. Mr. Greig advanced some very good arguments, and then immediately knocked them down. He quoted some views enunciated by Mr. Hoover, but those views can only mean that if the farmers of the country will rally together and do the right thing in the way of production, there will be no need whatever for a guarantee. I agree with Mr. Greig when he states that the farming community, although perhaps crude in their political methods, and crude

in their ideas, are about the most honest I will be satisfied to get my loaf in five

people we have amongst us, and I trust they will not become contaminated with the political whisperer who is abroad to-day. If Parliament lays down in a motion that it is of the opinion that the Federal Parliament, in conjunction with the State Parliament, should guarantee 5s. per bushel to the farmer, I believe it will give that added impetus which is so necessary, and which will be required in the immediate future. I do not believe that the success of this State hangs entirely upon the mining industry. It depends upon the success of the agricultural, the horticultural and other related industries. No nation has been truly great unless it has been backed up by those industries, and if this State does not possess what it is said to possess in the directions I have mentioned, it is not going to be as successful as it is anticipated it will be. The motion will perhaps give some encouragement to those on the land to produce more wheat. It may also induce others to go on the land, and that is the reason why I intend to support it. The guarantee is not all that is necessary for the farmers and pioneers who are opening up the agricultural areas of the State. I repeat that no section of the community is working under similar disabilities as the people who are in the agricultural centres. That remark also applies to the children, and again for those reasons I intend to support the motion. Mr. Greig mentioned that for a period extending over four years the wheat farmer of this State had only received a flat rate of 3s. 8d. per bushel for his wheat at the siding, as against 8s. 7d. received by the American grower. But a comparison cannot be made if we look fairly and squarely at the conditions. Mr. Greig must also admit that if it had not been for the intervention of the Federal and State Governments, and the formation of the first pool and the continuing pools the farmer would not have averaged 2s. a bushel for his wheat. Taking everything into consideration I believe the farmer has received the best price that it was possible for him to get under the circumstances, and that by no other method could he have received a satisfactory price. I am not going to stress the American question because there is no analogy between our little Commonwealth and America. In America they have ships innumerable, and they are four or five days distant from big ports, whereas our position is just the opposite. We have few ships, and we are as many weeks as they are days from our markets. However, that has nothing to do with the motion. The motion is that we should deal with the future in the light of the experience of the past. That brings me to the point raised by way of interjection by Mr. Duffell. Does he think that the existing conditions are going to last for another five years? I have already indicated that

years' time for what I am paying to-day. I ask this House whether it is reasonable to assume that we are going to return to pre-war conditions in five years' time? Would the position then be on a declining scale as it was, in the early days of the war, on an inclining scale? It has been said, that suppose wheat were to fall to 2s. per bushel, the general community would have to carry the risk. Admittedly they would, but on the other hand we have to assume that if it should drop to that price, no one would attempt to grow it. The farmer may be unsophisticated but he is not lunatic enough to attempt to grow wheat if the price is only 2s. per bushel, especially after having grown it unsuccessfully at 2s. 6d. per bushel in normal times. I do not desire to say anything further except to give the motion my hearty accord. I hope it will be passed, and that it will receive the fullest consideration at the hands of those to whom it is intended to submit it.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.10]: I realise that this is another of those pious resolutions which Parliament time and again is called upon to take into consideration and as far as possible carry into effect. I desire to say at the commencement that in considering a resolution of this nature we are asking the Commonwealth Government to do something of a doubtful business character. We have to consider the question from various standpoints. I would call the attention of hon. members to the fact that we first of all have to consider the price of land for wheat growing in Western Australia as compared with the price of land for wheat growing in other parts of the Commonwealth. We have also to take into consideration the advantages we have in Western Australia for growing wheat as compared with the conditions which exist in other parts of the Commonwealth. It is generally admitted that we in Western Australia have one of the most even climates, taking it all the year round, in any part of Australia. The occasions have been very rare when we have had to record a crop below the average as a result of a drought. Those things being taken into consideration we have next to consider what would be the effect of a resolution of this nature, if carried by the Western Australian Parliament, on the Parliaments of the other States. They too would have to be taken into consideration, and if Western Australia is going to be guaranteed 5s. a bushel for its wheat what would they expect? They are justly entitled to the same consideration, but they would base their claim on the different conditions prevailing, and under which they were producing their wheat. Then we have to consider that this proposition is launched at a time when the world's markets are very unsettled. I can say from personal experience that much doubt attends the dealing in many articles of merchandise at the present time, owing to

the excitement prevailing and the gambling going on not only in the countries of origin but in the countries of distribution. We have, therefore to look still further afield. When the great war from which we have just emerged was launched, one of the first things Germany endeavoured to achieve was to block the Dardanelles by making an alliance with Turkey. The object was to prevent the wheat stored in Russia being made available to the Western nations and the munitions of war, manufactured in the West, from finding their way into Russia and so helping that country to win through. We know full well what that achievement meant to Germany. Russia, the Argentine and Canada are great wheat producing countries, and we have been told that in Great Britain enormous areas which, before the war, were not cultivated are now being utilised for wheat growing. We have to take into account the probable effect of all this wheat production during the next five years. Suppose Canada, the Argentine and other countries reaped magnificent harvests and we were compelled to exact a fixed price the result would be disastrous to the wheat growing industry of Australia which at present is handicapped owing to its distance from the markets of the world in comparison with competing countries. What would be the effect of the greater freight payable from Australia on top of a guarantee of 5s. per bushel? The future is so uncertain that this is not a reasonable request for the Government to make to the Commonwealth. During the last three years, we have had a policy of Government guarantee to the wheat producer. It has not been for 5s. a bushel or anything like 5s. a bushel. Much talk has been indulged in in this Chamber during the last fortnight concerning a guarantee of 4s. 4d. a bushel and its effect on primary production. If this proposal is carried out, what will be the effect on the general community as regards the cost of food? It behoves the House to hesitate before concurring in a resolution of this nature. If the community have been labouring under disadvantages owing to the high cost of the necessities of life due to the price of wheat being guaranteed at 4s. 4d. a bushel we, instead of concurring in a resolution like this, should apply ourselves to the Bill for regulating the price of foodstuffs. I believe in encouraging to as great an extent as possible the primary industries of the State. In the primary products of Western Australia lies our greatest opportunity to win through and eventually pay off our debts, but this cannot be hoped for if we guarantee a price of 5s. a bushel for wheat. What we want is a guarantee of greater production and greater energy on the part of producers. It is quite true there are farmers among members of Parliament and we have seen their attempts to pass legislation which would advance their interests to the greatest extent. It puzzles me to know why this motion was confined to one section of the community. There is

more than one primary product raised in this State, and surely the people engaged in other primary industries are just as much entitled to a guaranteed price for a like period. I hope the House will not concur in the resolution, notwithstanding the fact that it was carried by a large majority in another place. It is not a fair business risk and it is a proposal which requires more consideration than it received from another place or than has been accorded it in this Chamber before it is sent on to the Commonwealth as a recommendation by the Government of this State.

On motion by Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles debate adjourned.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

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

BILL—PRICES REGULATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan [5.24]: It is naturally with some diffidence that I rise to intervene in this discussion at so early a stage of my Parliamentary career. As I feel impelled to oppose the Bill, an obligation is cast upon me to offer some explanation of my attitude. I regard this Bill as quite unnecessary, as a measure incapable of achieving any result in the direction of reducing prices, and as a measure which will involve considerable cost which we cannot afford in the present parlous state of our finances. It seems to me to be purely a piece of political camouflage capable of doing no good whatever. In order to justify that position, I may well call in the aid of those members who already have addressed themselves to this subject. I have not been able to read the reports of the whole of the debates, but I have perused what I could in the short time at my disposal since I returned to the State. Taking first the Minister for Education, he is a gentleman I have known for many years; he, as members have learned by experience, has a reasoning and logical mind. Some years ago he dealt with a Bill of a very similar nature. He reasoned it out and showed the utter folly of putting such a measure upon the statute-book. He was then practically the counsel for the plaintiff. He had a free hand and an open mind and formed an unbiased judgment. To-day he is in a somewhat different position. He is rather the advocate for the defendant and he has had to twist his facts and arguments in order to meet the situation and justify himself with his clients—his colleagues in the Government.

Hon. J. Duffell: You must not call it twisting.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I can think of no better term to express it. Even taking the attitude of the Minister to-day, he clearly

demonstrates that this Bill is not warranted. He says the high prices must continue so long as there is a shortage of supplies. That is quite true. This Bill will not alter that. A shortage of supplies is governing the present high prices and this Bill is not calculated in any way to get rid of the existing scarcity. The Minister says the high prices must continue so long as this shortage exists. I agree with him in that. He says the chief cause of the shortage is the destruction of production. That also is true. He says the high prices are also due to the inflation of credit. That is true. Not a word does he say in the whole course of his speech to demonstrate that undue profits are being made in this State. Then the Minister summed up his remarks by saying that the object of the Bill is not to decrease the cost of living or lower prices, but for publicity purposes; in other words, for camouflage in order to remove a lot of false impressions from the public mind. If that is what it is for, this Bill certainly is not necessary. He says in effect, almost in so many words, that he does not suggest there is anything radically wrong, but the Bill is brought forward because people are less likely to do wrong if there is fear of publicity. It seems to me that that is not a sound reason for passing a measure of this kind, which certainly is going to be very irksome to the people upon whom it is imposed. I did not hear the speech which Mr. Panton delivered on this Bill, but I read it; and I regard it as a very informative utterance. If there is any member who ought to support a price-fixing measure, it is Mr. Panton. But he believes that this Bill is not justified. He says, "I am afraid it will have little or no effect." I quite agree with Mr. Panton. He goes on to show why, and he gives a very sound reason, too. He says that the factories which make the goods are not here, and that therefore the prices which, by this Bill, we propose to control, are not made here but are made elsewhere, and we can exercise no control over them. He says further that, so far as Western Australia is concerned, the Bill will deal chiefly with retailers, who, he considers, have very little opportunity to do any profiteering. I also agree with that as a fact. I have just returned from the Eastern States, and I found that in Sydney and Adelaide, where price-fixing Commissions exist, prices are, notwithstanding, quite as high as they are here. Therefore, if prices cannot be reduced where the goods are manufactured, and where there can be some investigation as to whether the manufacturers are charging too much, how much less can we do any good in this State, where we are simply importers of the goods and have nothing whatever to do with their manufacture? I do not want to detain hon. members by traversing many of the speeches, though I could do so. Each one of them that I have read supplies arguments against the passage of the Bill. Sir Edward Wittenoom said that there was no profiteering, but that the Bill would be useful to show

that there was not any. I have yet to learn that it is a good thing to pass legislation in order to prove negatives. Another hon. member said that the measure would operate as a sort of policeman. That may be so, but I suggest that we can get police, if we want them, at much less cost than the administration of this Bill will involve. The measure proposes to instal three high salaried commissioners, besides departmental paraphernalia. I have had a pretty long experience of this State, and it shows me that once a department is established here, it dies very hard, and takes a long time to get rid of. If we appoint three gentlemen as Commissioners—and we shall have to pay them salaries of £800 or £900 a year if they are to be any good—and if we appoint a couple of assessors and also a staff of clerks, there will be great difficulty in getting rid of that establishment. To show the utter insincerity of the business, I need only mention that the last clause of the Bill provides that the measure is to remain in force for only about a year. The Minister for Education and Mr. Sanderson and Mr. Panton have each of them given the true reason why the Bill can have no effect. They all say that the prices of the goods are not made here and that there are no factories here, and that our retailers are in strong competition with one another and therefore cannot profiteer. I think I have shown so far that the Bill is unnecessary, except as a means of fooling the people into a sense of false security as to future prices of commodities. I want to ask hon. members whether the cost which this measure will involve is justifiable in the present state of our finances, and in view of the return we shall get from it by way of reduced prices? The proposal is to create a large new department whilst a mere handful of civil servants in receipt of from £200 to £300 a year are refused a few pounds extra—the total annual cost, I am informed, being from £1,600 to £1,800—which would enable them to dress decently and live with reasonable comfort in their positions in life. I see nothing whatever to warrant the expenditure on this measure. Undoubtedly prices are high, and those prices are due largely to causes which have already been stated here by hon. members. To restore normality is a world problem. Prices all over the world to-day are high. It seems to me that, instead of endeavouring to improve things by a measure of this kind, we should endeavour to see how we can overcome the existing scarcity, which is the real cause of high prices. Let us get down to fundamentals. We may for a time artificially interfere with natural laws, but we cannot continue that interference for long. The natural law of supply and demand operates, and there is only one method of meeting it. The present scarcity is due to wastage arising from the war. That scarcity must be removed. How are we to remove it? Only by increased production.

Everybody talks increased production to-day, but the wider question is, how are we to increase production? Now, production is the result of the combination of two elements. There is the labour factor, and there is the conserved labour factor generally known as capital. It is these two elements which must be combined in order that we may get greater production. Now, instead of wasting our time, as it seems to me we are doing, in discussing a Bill of this nature, let us set to work to see how best we can bring about a combination of the two elements which tend towards production. How can we harmonise labour and capital? In my opinion the first thing to do is to get out of our minds any idea that we are living in antiquity. Let us realise that we are living in a new era, in an era when the worker will not be satisfied with what he has been getting in the past, will not be satisfied with anything less than a fair share of the results of his labour. We have to get into our minds that we are living in 1919 and not in 1819. I suggest that we should endeavour to bring about a conference between capital and labour. I myself have been trying to bring about such a conference with a view to harmonising the worker and the employer. If we can do that we shall have done much good.

THE PRESIDENT: Is the hon. member dealing with the Bill?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I am offering these observations, Sir, to show that by harmonising capital and labour we shall get greater production and consequently lower prices without this Bill. I think that is a reasonable argument.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member may proceed, as long as he connects his arguments with the Bill.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I feel somewhat nervous in addressing the Chamber for the first time, and perhaps I may be a little discursive. What I want to suggest is, in the words of Sir Samuel Griffith, who published a paper on this subject a little while ago, that the days of mastery have gone and that we have reached the time when fraternity must take its place. If we realise that, we shall be able to consolidate the worker and the capitalist, and in that way obtain increased production. With increased production we shall begin to get back to our pre-war reserves, and with increased reserves we shall have supply in excess of demand, and then prices will naturally decrease. I think that is the way in which we ought to try to bring about reduction of prices, and not by such methods as the Bill proposes. There is just one other point I would like to make. One hon. member said that we must pass this measure, as its rejection here would mean another nail in the coffin of the Upper House. To that I reply that if this House shows weakness by passing a Bill which will prove costly to the State, and yet of no avail, the people will say, "What is the use of the Upper House? It does not help

us at all. It is useless; therefore let us sweep it away." But if this House is a strong House, and boldly says, "Here is a Bill brought before us involving heavy cost at a time when the greatest economy ought to be exercised, a Bill which cannot prove effective, and which therefore we will not pass," the people will have confidence in this Chamber and regard it as a bulwark, and will rally to maintain it. There is nothing whatever to be gained by weakness. Everything is to be gained by strength and fearlessness.

Hon. R. J. LYNN (West) [5.45]: I have no intention of delaying the House by quoting statistics or the reports of various Royal Commissions, Federal and State, which have inquired into the question of price-fixing; because, like Mr. Panton, Mr. Holmes, and the previous speakers, I have very little faith in such a measure of a local nature. Profiteering, or a percentage of profit higher than should be earned on capital, may be found in some cases outside the limits of the State, but I venture to suggest that in few cases, if any, will it be found within the State. In order to regulate profits within the limits of the State, such a measure as this before us should have power which this Parliament cannot grant. Instances could be quoted of branch establishments in Western Australia, and in Australia, which are conducted on account of the head offices, some of which are in the Malay States and some on the continent. A Bill such as this should only regulate the percentage of profit that can be charged on the invoices received by the branch houses, the landed cost. But that landed cost will be so regulated that the head office or the manufacturer will invoice at such a rate as to make provision for the profit in the first instance, even assuming a very small percentage of profit on the landed cost. It would be easy to instance many such cases. We have in this State branch offices of Birmingham firms and firms operating on the continent and overseas. The Bill is of necessity restricted to regulating the percentage of profit invoiced to those branch houses. The profit made on the manufactured article or the raw product, or on the goods shipped here, would be made in the first instance by the manufacturer. In large businesses carried on here the schedule rate is represented by deductions by way of commissions or percentages. It would be easy indeed for those percentages to be regulated by an alteration in the schedule of rates, so as to permit of the firm with branch houses here adding a profit in accordance with the Bill, but at the same time defeating its object. I propose to deal only with the one industry which I profess to know something about. I do not say that, because in my particular industry no profiteering exists, therefore no profiteering exists in any other industry; because we have instances

in this State—I am willing to admit they are isolated—where we have seen certain products cornered to the detriment of the people.

Hon. J. Duffell: What about the shipping industry?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: The shipping industry is not controlled in this State. The offices here are simply branch offices, and the Bill will have nothing to do with the regulation of freights and fares.

Hon. J. Duffell: Not on the coast?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: No, it is a Commonwealth matter. A price-fixing Bill should be for the Imperial Government and not for Western Australia or even Australia; because we should then get to the crux of the trouble, the root of the evil respecting the cost of the raw material. It could then be traced from the raw material right through to the manufacturer, and thence on to the wholesaler and to the retailer. If that were possible some good could be done, and in addition some of the evils that exist to-day would be redressed. I take up the position that it is not a fair thing to see—it exists in other countries to-day—wealth and affluence on the one hand and poverty and degradation on the other. There should be some levelling-up system that would alleviate the evils which exist in large populous centres. A measure like this will not have the desired effect. I support the Bill, not because I think for a moment that it will have the desired effect, but because I am anxious that the Government should have an opportunity to delve into certain questions which have been before the public for some considerable time. Accusations have been freely made, and I believe in some cases with a certain degree of truth, that profiteering does exist in some lines in this State. If that be so and if the charge has been laid, the expense to the State will not be so great that we cannot afford to pay it in order to see whether there is anything in the charge. I can only speak for one industry, one which expends hundreds of thousands of pounds per annum in wages, and in which little or no profit or dividend ever gets into the hands of the investor or those responsible for the conduct of the business. I am inclined to think we have in this State as much profiteering in some circles as, on the other hand, is practised by the merchant who attempts to corner goods. We have engaged in some industries men averaging from 20s. to 25s. per day and living under infinitely better conditions than some of their comrades in the metropolitan area on 9s. or 10s. per day. I am anxious to know whether in such cases, if they do exist, the men concerned are not profiteering as against their own community of interests in other parts of the State. If it can be shown that it is so, and others are called upon to pay a higher rate for the commodities because of the increased cost of production which has been brought about owing to those circum-

stances, I think the Bill may possibly delve into some of those matters with informative results.

Hon. J. Cornell: The only possible charge of profiteering which can be brought against the worker is that he does not earn what he gets.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I am only anxious that an opportunity should be given the Government to investigate some of those matters which have for a considerable time past exercised the minds of the public. To read the Press reports is to come to the conclusion that only one subject is being discussed in the election campaign to-day.

Hon. J. Cornell: It has taken the place of the Kaiser.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: It is a pity the Kaiser is not here, if only to furnish an additional subject of controversy. I think some amendment should be made to Clause 15. The owners of proprietary lines are entitled to some consideration respecting price-fixing. If the commissioners can regulate the maximum price at which a commodity may be sold, then the proprietary lines should be protected to the extent that no one should be permitted to cut those lines to such a degree as to practically wipe them off the market. Some of the proprietary lines in Perth are being sold below cost, and that not by people directly interested in that particular class of business, but by people who are merely using the proprietary line as a draw line in conjunction with another class of business, so as to create in the purchaser the belief that all other commodities in the shop or store are being sold at the same ratio of profit. The commissioners at the request of the owner of proprietary lines should have power to regulate a minimum price for his lines; in other words, that man should be protected by a minimum just as the consumer is to be protected by a maximum. Another objectionable provision is that contained in Clause 17, which provides that the commissioners may ascertain and state in their report the percentage of profit made during any specific period by any trader on the amount of capital, including borrowed money, employed by the trader in such business. It means that the commissioners will not only be empowered to fix the price at which a commodity shall be sold, but shall be empowered to publish broadcast the percentage of profit which a trader is working on, together with the amount of money borrowed by him. That is going too far. The commissioners should be content to fix prices, and should not be empowered to publish the exact percentage of profit on which a trader may be working. That clause might well be eliminated. I fail to see why these particulars should be published. The Bill is intended to regulate prices, not to give all information to the public as to the conduct of any firm's business. When this Bill reaches the Committee stage I propose to ask hon. members

to delete this, because I cannot see what object the Government have in view in placing such a clause in the Bill. If the measure becomes law no one can sell at any price other than that regulated by the commissioners. All that the Bill provides for is to regulate prices, and not to disclose the percentage of profit or the business which any man is operating. If the amount of money on which people are trading were made public there would not, in numerous instances, be many of us trading to-morrow. We have a State capable of great things and huge development, and it is essential that we should not be restricted or limited in our operations by hindrances of this nature. It is necessary for the development of this State that money should be invested in it, in order to quicken progress and enhance the prosperity of the State. Let our operations, therefore, be free so long as the public are not, as it is stated, taken down as a result of the profit that is derived from those operations. There is no necessity for any reference to be made in publications respecting the operations of any firm unless the public require a measure for the fixing of the price of goods. Let the commissioners regulate the percentage of profits that they consider necessary, although I contend that they will not be in a position to fix even a reasonable percentage of profit which will apply to all sections of traders.

Hon. J. Cornell: If there is nothing that the public object to, why should they not know?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: Why should the public be made aware of all the transactions of a business from the financial point of view, if this is a Prices Regulation Bill? If it is a Prices Disclosures Bill then let the public know everything. I do not see that it can have much effect in this State. If the commissioners were called upon to deal with Jones' jams for instance, they might decide that the percentage of profit to be made should be eight, nine, or ten per cent. There would then be one city house at one end of the street turning their capital over ten times, and another house at the other end of the street only turning it over once. Even under a price-fixing measure, we shall have a higher percentage of profits gained by the retailer than he would perhaps have made if there had been no Bill at all. The leader of the House admitted that it was a Bill of a camouflage nature, and I do not think he has much faith in itself himself.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is that why you are supporting it?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: No. I am supporting it because I believe there are instances in Western Australia of profiteering having occurred. I am anxious to give these people, who make such a charge, an opportunity of proving it. If this Bill becomes law some of those persons who were interested in profiteering some few months ago may so arrange their business in the future as to keep

themselves remote from any possible charge of profiteering.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Are you referring to illegal combines?

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I am opposed to any combination of persons whose object is to inflate prices. I am also opposed to any profit that is in excess of a reasonable one at a time like the present. I will support the second reading of the Bill, but in Committee will move in the direction I have indicated.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY (Central) [6.5]: I support the Bill even though it makes a belated appearance. I do not agree with some hon. members who state that they have not much faith in the influence that this Bill will have upon our commercial world. If the Act dealing with the control of trade in war time were still in operation it would have some restraining influence on profiteering in this State. I agree with Mr. Lynn that this is not altogether a question for Western Australia to deal with, and that it is one for the Federal Government to tackle in co-operation with the States. The Federal Government should in turn co-operate with the Home authorities. This is a far reaching question, and one that is agitating the minds of people in all countries. The first shot in a war is usually the signal for commercial brigands to become busy, and as a rule they do this very successfully. During this last great war they upheld their traditions and did so remarkably well.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You are referring to the strikers.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: The hon. member seems to think of nothing else but strikers. I suppose he is not referring to the blacksmith's striker. The essential features of a debate are very often affected by the bias or narrow-mindedness of those who engage in it. We are of course apt to be affected by our environment, but in any case the value is often taken out of a debate by such interjections. I appreciate the difficulty of the Government in this matter. I have very little faith in the Federal Government, however. I doubt their earnestness, because their best supporters, the people who are responsible for keeping them in power, are those against whom the Federal Government tell us they are going to legislate. The Prime Minister tells us what he is going to do with the profiteer, but these very people are responsible for keeping the Prime Minister in power, and will be responsible for keeping him there if he wins on the 13th December. We cannot turn to the Federal arena for any help in this direction, but we have a chance of receiving help from our own State Government. They believe they can do something to alleviate the position, and I am prepared to give them the opportunity to do it. Although the Bill does not go as far as we would like it to go, it will no doubt have a restraining influence on the profiteering that is rampant in the State. This profiteering is, I am ashamed to say,

responsible for much of the great poverty that exists in this young country of ours. Mr. Lovekin, I believe, takes a certain amount of interest in social life, and he must recognise that great poverty exists in Western Australia, though possibly some hon. members have not seen evidence of it. With regard to the publicity clauses of the Bill, if there is nothing wrong about a person's transactions, I do not see why he should object to their being made public. If a man is tried in a court of justice, as many of the profiteers should have been tried, I see nothing wrong in his affairs being disclosed. When a man approaches the Arbitration Court he has to make public all his transactions. The same thing applies to any man who goes to a court. If his affairs are being conducted in a legitimate manner, I see no reason for any secrecy regarding them. He should not be afraid to go into any court in the land and show how he stands. There can surely be no objection to the clauses from that point of view. Mr. Lovekin also expressed the opinion that the cry of profiteering was a false one, and that the reason for the high cost of living was the scarcity of commodities. I cannot agree with that view, seeing that we have more commodities in the State to-day than we ever had before. We have more wool, beef, mutton, and wheat and more animals on the hoof than we ever had before. I think that disposes of the argument raised by Mr. Lovekin. We are counselled to produce, and go on producing. It seems to me that we are producing more than we have ever done before, but costs continue to go up and profiteering still prevails. It has been maintained that profiteering does not exist. It is hard to believe that in face of the evidence placed before the Interstate Commission. The hand of the profiteer is seen right through that evidence. From cover to cover of this report instances will be found that profiteering does exist, and that the cost of commodities has risen since the war, and since 1914. It is also shown that the profits made by selling the products of the country have increased from 12 per cent. to 50 per cent. In face of this evidence the most prejudiced man must agree that profiteering does exist in the country. If that is so, what objection can there be, when there is a chance of rectifying a wrong, of the opportunity being taken to do so? The Bill should have some effect upon those unscrupulous persons who are exploiting the country in the way they are doing. The evidence taken before this Interstate Commission was obtained at the point of the bayonet and traders displayed great reluctance in disclosing their business. One of the recommendations of the Commission was as follows:—

The foregoing figures need no comment beyond the somewhat obvious fact that they refer to a period of grave national danger and emergency. Many of the accounts submitted were found unsatisfactory, inasmuch as various methods have been adopted for the purpose of cloaking

the real extent of the profits. An accurate disclosure of the true position has only been made possible by the closest investigation and persistent demands for the fullest detailed information.

This has been the position right through the piece. These people who made exorbitant profits ranging from 12 per cent. to 37 per cent., and as high as 50 per cent., were very slow in bringing evidence forward, and it was only by the stringent methods adopted by the Commission that they were forced to disclose their business transactions.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: At the tea adjournment I was referring to the fact that assertions had been made that there was no necessity for a Bill of this description. I was reminded then of the report of the Interstate Commission particularly dealing with Nestles Milk Company. There is no company operating in Australia to-day, with the exception perhaps of the Vacuum Oil Company, that has so successfully exploited the people as the Nestles Company. This company entered into business in Australia some years ago, and they made a success of it. If it were a legitimate trade we would have no cause for complaint, but we find that this company, operating to the extent that it does, has been charged by the Interstate Commission with exploitation. The transactions of the Nestles Company as recorded by the Interstate Commission make very interesting reading. The Commission state that this company should have been proceeded against on account of their attitude. The same thing might apply to the Vacuum Oil Company. We find that the Nestles Company was carrying on operations as a legitimate trading company under the protection of the laws of Australia, and we learn that some time ago an inferior brand of milk was placed on the market which was not Nestles, but which had been purchased by the Nestles Company, and that company put their own labels on the tins and disposed of it as a milk of their own manufacture. That was practically an illegal act, yet no action was taken by either the Federal or the State Government. The finding of the Interstate Commission is very strong on this subject. It practically amounts to an indictment against the company, but no action was taken. Nestles Company have exploited the people of Australia to a great extent. At the same time nothing has been done by way of taking action against them. Under a Bill such as the one we are discussing, there would be power to prosecute for anything of the nature I have described. Companies of this description who are responsible for many injustices, and who are certainly responsible for many faults in this State, should be dealt with according to the strictest letter of the law. So far as the Nestles Company in this State are concerned we must recognise that we are to a considerable extent dependent on them for artificial milk, for the reason that we are not able to

produce sufficient fresh milk to meet all our requirements. But if the company sell rubbish, although perhaps not exactly rubbish—but an inferior article—and charge the top price for it, there should be some power to see that they are not allowed to exploit the people in that direction.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Will you tell us how this Bill will meet that difficulty?

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: I cannot go into details at the present juncture, but I think a measure such as this will have a restraining influence. When given an inferior article the question can be raised. Committees should be appointed in various districts, and it should be their duty to bring under the notice of the Commission what is taking place, and the Commission in turn should report to the Government, and, if the steps are taken which should be taken, the culprits will find themselves in their proper place, and that is the dock. The Vacuum Oil Company are in almost a similar category. This company has been dealt with exhaustively in another place by the leader of the Opposition, and his remarks have been given considerable amount of publicity throughout the State. Hon. members are, I suppose, fairly conversant with those remarks, and also with the reply of the Vacuum Oil Company, which was published at a later date. We can decide for ourselves what attitude we should adopt, and our opinions will easily be formed in regard to the operations of that company. Again, we have a fairly illuminating example so far as the clothing trade of Australia is concerned. There are something like 25 firms operating throughout Australia, including the Commonwealth factory. The profits of those companies since the outbreak of war have been astonishing. In 1914 they amounted to 12 per cent., but they reached 35 per cent. and continued to be high, and, strange to say, the biggest profits were made out of the Defence Department. Whilst companies are prepared to make certain profits in ordinary times, in war time they seem to have been able to make huge profits. Some power should be given to prevent that kind of thing continuing. I do not know whether this Bill will have any effect in that direction, but an Act should be passed to deal with matters of that kind. Our own Bill, of course, will be confined to propositions from the local standpoint. There is no doubt about it that the cost of living has gone up by leaps and bounds. I would not care to be egotistical enough to cross swords with such an authority as Mr. Holmes on this question, but when the Bill is in Committee I shall take advantage of the opportunity to ask Mr. Holmes to explain the reason for the high cost of beef in the metropolitan area.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I can answer that now; it is due to shipping.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member cannot answer it now.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: Possibly the shipping question may have something to do with the high cost of beef, let us take the hon. members re-

marks in connection with the purchase by the Wyndham Freeding Works of cattle at £6 odd per head. I suppose that is correct, coming from such an authority. Adding to that the cost of transport, it is difficult to reconcile the total with the price of £30 per head at which bullocks were sold some months ago. The hon. member has given two sorts of explanations as to the high cost of beef, but we are satisfied that that high cost in the metropolitan area to-day is made up between the grower and the consumer and most of the profit goes to the middleman. Several hon. members who have spoken have made reference to the middleman, and the sooner we bring about an alteration of that position the better it will be for everybody concerned. There is something else besides the shipping question, because this is a matter which has been going on for a lengthy period. Cattle are a certain price at Wyndham, and when they fetch between 200 and 300 per cent. more in the market there is something wrong somewhere, and it is time a body such as the Commission which will be appointed under the Bill should inquire who is getting all the profits, and who is robbing the people in the metropolitan area and in outside centres. I suppose that is the reason why the butchers have formed themselves into a union in the metropolitan area, because they have such important propositions to deal with. I hope the hon. member will take advantage of the opportunity to try to explain the position from the standpoint of the producer, as well as from the standpoint of the consumer. There is only one thing which will help us if it is not possible to derive advantage from a Bill of this description, and it is the matter of co-operation, that is, bringing the producer and the consumer more closely in touch with each other. We are told that cattle raising in the Kimberleys does not pay the producers. If that is the case someone between the producer and the consumer must be reaping huge profits. There should be a system of co-operation, and the Government would do well to stand behind co-operative societies, see that their credit is good, and endeavour to bring the producer and the consumer closer together. As the position exists to-day, there are only two classes in the community—the exploiter and the exploited. The question of house rents is another matter that should be brought within the scope of the Bill. In the State at the present, rack-renting is going on to an enormous extent. We find that the poorer classes experience the greatest difficulty in paying extortionate sums that are asked by owners of houses. Particularly is this so in the metropolitan area where rents of 10s. and 12s. per week up to £1 per week are being asked for what are nothing less than hovels. I have made an inspection of some of these places myself. I take nothing for granted, and when the occasion presents itself, I see what I can for myself. I have found hard working people living under very difficult conditions, experiencing the greatest difficulty in keeping their heads above

water mainly because of the high cost of living, and more particularly because of the extortionate rents that they were asked to pay for the places they were living in. This obtains throughout the State to a greater or smaller extent. In connection with the business on which I was engaged, I found in some of these places there were four or five children, and it was impossible to clothe them properly. They certainly were able to get enough to eat. None of the children had boots to wear to school. In certain seasons of the year that would be no great hardship in this State because they were pretty hardy children, but it was not a case of convenience, it was a case of absolute necessity that they were without boots. The man was hard working and he was rarely out of work. I also discovered that in some instances these houses were owned by fairly wealthy people. I do not grudge these people their wealth. In one particular case the family were poverty stricken and were battling very hard to squeeze out the rent each week for the poor shanty they occupied. I was in the Terrace about that time and saw the landlord of this particular place in an 800 guinea motor car. I do not deny that the car might have been handy in connection with his business and it might not have been altogether a luxury, but it does seem a queer state of affairs, and there does appear to be something wrong with a system of government that permits to exist the most abject poverty side by side with wealth. There is certainly something wrong when this poverty is not attributable to the individuals themselves. Wealth has been amassed out of the people, profiteering is going on and the wealth comes from the masses of the people. Rents and cost of living generally might be dealt with under this measure, but certainly something should be done to alter a rotten system under which people who are hard triers cannot make good. We have exploitation in every walk of life, even down to the smallest connection. I find myself paying 1s. 2d. per lb. for fish cutlets from a shop in Perth. I happened to visit the Geraldton district where the fish are caught and I learned that the men who catch the fish receive 5½d. per lb. for it. There is a big leakage between 5½d. and 1s. 2d. per lb. There is scope for reflection and thought; someone should step in and see that this exploitation does not continue. If it is not due to exploitation, the system is wrong and someone who is not earning the money is certainly getting it. In consequence, the people in the metropolitan area are unable to obtain fresh fish at a reasonable price, and yet the men who catch the fish and who risk their lives in the industry are receiving only 5½d. per lb. for it. The same applies to tomatoes. In Geraldton high prices are given for early tomatoes for the Kalgoorlie market, but at present the people are getting not more than 4d. or 5d. per lb. for them, if that. To-day I paid 10d. for a lb. of tomatoes. Poor people cannot stand that sort of thing. Tomatoes, fish, meat and

bread are necessary commodities on which to raise a family. Yet the people find it almost impossible to pull through and pay the high prices ruling for these necessities. Mr. Holmes ventured a few remarks as to who in his opinion were the profiteers in this country. He did not refer to the beef buccaneers. One of the principal bugbears was the member of Parliament. I hope the hon. member spoke for himself. I shall not plead guilty to being a profiteer in this direction. I do not know how the hon. member reconciles his remarks; I can only conclude that he spoke for himself. I speak for myself and I refute the imputation that I as a member of Parliament am a profiteer. The hon. member stated that members were returned to Parliament on a salary of £300 a year and immediately set out to get £500. Personally, I give the whole of my time to my occupation and I candidly confess that I believe I am well worth £500 a year. If the hon. member considers he is not worth £500, he is at liberty to hold his opinion. I am not referring to ability. I venture to say he is a very worthy representative of a worthy province, and he represents it honestly and well. He certainly represents one section very well indeed. During my short term in Parliament, a little over three years, I have travelled over 50,000 miles. That is putting it at the lowest estimate—and a large portion of that travelling has been through my own province and at my own expense. I have endeavoured to make myself acquainted with all the wants and possibilities and propositions throughout the length and breadth of this State, and it has taken considerably more than the £300 a year allowed me to pull through. As a matter of fact, this is the worst paid job I ever had in my life, so I can claim that I am not a profiteer. The hon. member has a province, far distant it is true, and he drops along there occasionally and, in his painstaking and energetic manner, takes a motor car—

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member is not quite in order in referring to the conduct of other hon. members.

HON. J. W. HICKEY: I was making a comparison following on the charge of the hon. member that members of Parliament were profiteers. In fact, the hon. member referred to members of Parliament as being the greatest of profiteers. I was endeavouring to justify my contention that I was not a profiteer. I have endeavoured to earn the few pounds allowed me and have endeavoured to give good service for it and, consequently, I at least can claim that I am not a profiteer. The hon. member also stated that the next worst profiteers in the State were the working men. The hon. member is always very keen on this subject, and he misses no opportunity to libel a very fine section of the community, namely, the working man. The hon. member should have made some definite charge or statement, but he contented himself with speaking in very general terms and making a charge which, after all, amounts to very little. I would like

to ask the hon. member if he would accuse the timber workers, a large, a very energetic section of the community, of being profiteers. They have been working for 9s. 7d. a day for a considerable number of years under the very worst conditions, living in the bush, trying to raise families entirely removed from all social conditions and with very few educational facilities. Does the hon. member include them in his category of profiteers among the working class? Again, the railway men represent a section of the community who work at all hours the whole round of the clock; they are at the beck and call of the management at any time of the day or night. Does he include them among the profiteers of the working class? Perhaps the hon. member includes the shearers, the men who year after year go to the North-West, that part of the State the hon. member knows so well, far removed from their homes and families, for the convenience of the pastoralists. They have not altogether a bed of roses. They travel as fast as they can from one shed to another, and the conditions under which they live are not altogether desirable. I wonder if the hon. member designates them profiteers of the working class! Again, we have the miners on the Golden Mile. I wonder if he includes them among the profiteers of the working class; they certainly embrace a large section of the working community of the State. A visit to the Golden Mile or any other mine would convince the hon. member that there is not much profiteering in the mining industry unless it is by those who are in charge of affairs. If he thinks that a man getting out of his bed at midnight and tumbling down a big mine and then climbing up into the stopes and risking his life, working under a competitive system which makes him really a slave—though I admit the men themselves are partly to blame for this—if he thinks such a man is a profiteer, I would like him to tell me. If he wants any proof of the risks these men run, he can get none better than by a visit to the cemetery of Boulder and Kalgoorlie, or to the Old Men's Home, or to the Wooroloo Sanatorium. I am satisfied the hon. member was not personal in his references but, when members make charges of this description, they should confine themselves to something definite. Such remarks are too general and, at a time like this, when we are on the verge of a general election, they are liable to produce a bad effect. I refute the statement of the hon. member that the working men come under the heading of profiteers and, as I indicated before, if he thinks otherwise, he can find definite proof to the contrary in the monuments in the cemetery and among the inmates of the institutions I mentioned. I trust that the Bill will be passed. I certainly think that it does not go far enough. It does contain certain powers which, if exercised strictly, impartially, sympathetic-

ally, and with judgment should have some restraining influence on the profiteering which undoubtedly exists and consequently its operations may shortly have the effect of giving people a chance to pull through on the pittance they receive in their various occupations.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Clarke, debate adjourned.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 11th November.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [7.58]: I view this Bill more as one to be considered in Committee than one to be discussed on the second reading. I should like to extend my congratulations to the Government and especially to the Minister for the immense amount of work he has put into the measure and for the good principles he has embodied in it for the benefit of the road boards in this State. I have had a very large experience of road board matters. Over 20 years ago, I was chairman of the Collie road board, and I say the State has much for which to thank the members of the road boards. They work very hard; they give much of their time to the work, and they have shown considerable ability in the management and supervision of the roads. The road boards of Western Australia are not in the same position as they were 10 or 15 years ago. When I was chairman of the Collie road board there was no trouble to get money from the Government to carry out necessary pioneering work in the district. We received large sums of money, perhaps more than we were really entitled to, but I can say that money was well expended in the Collie road district, and I am sure the same applies to other portions of the State where money was so liberally granted in years gone by. Now the position is that, in order to get money at all, the chairman and the members of a road board have to importune the Government very considerably, and they do so without much success. As a result, the boards have had to tax a good deal more than they did in the past. After all, the most important work that can be done in this State is to open up the country by good roads. Although railways are needed, we also need good roads, in order to enable the settler to get his produce to market. On analysing this very lengthy Bill, I find that it contains only 22 new clauses, which are not of a very important nature. The most important thing I can see in the Bill is that it proposes to enable the considerable number of municipalities which have been created as the result of the amalgamation of road boards, to carry on efficiently. They are to be given power to borrow money for electric works, for gas and water supply, and other necessary purposes

set out under the Municipalities Act. It is very necessary that they should have these powers in order that they may cater for the needs of the large centres created by the amalgamation of municipalities and road boards. The Minister for Works has been very careful indeed in preparing this measure. From a conversation I had with the hon. gentleman only recently, I feel sure that he is going to do all he can to help the road boards to raise the money they require. His scheme embraces the Traffic Bill and the present Road Districts Bill, and also a measure to amend the existing Roads Act which he proposes to introduce next session. Our thanks are due to the hon. gentleman for the splendid work he has done, and is doing, in connection with these matters. One very gratifying thing as regards this Bill is that everybody seems to be in favour of it. Due consideration is given to the views of the existing road boards and also to those of the executive of the road boards, which meets once or twice a year in Perth. The whole of the new clauses have been submitted to that executive and also to the various road boards, and from the speech of the Minister for Education in introducing the Bill I gather that 90 per cent. of them have been approved by the bodies concerned, leaving only 10 per cent. of the clauses for discussion. A novel feature of this Bill is that under it women can be elected as members of road boards. Personally I do not favour women becoming members of Parliament or members of road boards, but the prevailing idea seems to be that the excellent work done by women during the war, and the great individuality and business acumen displayed by them during that period of stress, justify their appearance in this Chamber and in another Chamber, and also on road boards. I repeat that personally I do not agree with that view, because I do not think a woman's functions lie in that direction. I think she is very much better employed in looking after the household and in charitable work. Her appearance in the public arena I consider quite wrong. However, I again express my gratitude to the Government for the introduction of this Bill, which, if passed, will tend materially towards the advancement of the State.

Hon. H. STEWART (South-East) [8.4]: There are one or two clauses to which I desire to draw the attention of the Minister for Education, and I hope he will answer my queries regarding them. Clause 23 provides—

(1) Every adult person, being a natural born or naturalised subject of the King and the owner or occupier of ratable land in a district, who is not disqualified by any of the provisions hereinafter set out, shall be qualified to be elected and to act as a member of the board of such district.

Subsection (1) of Section 18 of the principal Act reads—

(1) Every adult male person, being a natural born or naturalised subject of the King, and having, as the owner or occupier of ratable land in the district, the qualification of an elector under this Act, and who is not under any of the disabilities hereinafter specified, shall be qualified to be elected and to act as a member of the board of such district: Provided that no person shall be qualified to be elected unless on the day of nomination all rates payable in respect of any land within the district, for the payment of which he is liable, have been paid.

This Bill proposes to eliminate the proviso, which I understand was inserted in the existing Act at the request of successive road board conferences. That being so, I would like to know the reason for the proposed omission. It seems to me rather a necessary proviso. Clause 128 of the Bill contains a proviso which, failing some satisfactory explanation, should, I think, be deleted as unnecessary. The clause reads—

(1) The board may, from time to time, appoint and remove a secretary and such other officers and servants as may be deemed necessary, and may define their duties, and may assign reasonable remuneration for their services: Provided that no secretary shall be appointed or removed without the approval of the Minister: Provided also that the secretary shall vacate his office if so directed in writing by the Minister.

From experience I have gained of road boards, I think the members of them ought to be competent to dismiss their paid officers without having first to obtain the sanction of the Minister. I shall await with interest a further explanation by the Minister for Education, and reserve to myself the right to give notice of amendment in this connection. There is yet another clause to which I may direct attention, Clause 129, which reads—

On the resignation or death of any officer, or on the cessation or abolition of the office of any officer, the board may, with the approval of the Minister, cause to be paid to such officer or to such of his surviving relatives as the board may think fit, any gratuity not exceeding the amount of one month's salary for each year of the service of such officer.

It seems to me that no reference to the Minister should be necessary in connection with this clause, if it is safeguarded by a proviso that no gratuity shall be paid in a case where an officer resigns after other than satisfactory service. In other circumstances, the approval of the Minister should not be necessary.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

[57]

BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 13th November.

Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill. New clause (partly considered):

[The Honorary Minister had moved: That the following be added to stand as Clause 7: "Section 104 of the principal Act is hereby amended by the excision of the words 'the Chief Inspector shall, if so required in writing by the owner of any fence,' and the substitution of the words 'the owner of any fence may by writing under his hand require the Chief Inspector or the board of any district in which the fence is situated to inspect the fence or cause it to be inspected, and the Chief Inspector or board shall.'"]

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: When this new clause was before the Committee previously I questioned the desirableness of its inclusion. Having since looked carefully into the matter, I have been forced to the conclusion that the amendment is a very desirable one. I therefore offer no further opposition to the new clause.

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. J. J. Holmes, Bill re-committed for the purpose of considering a new clause to stand as Clause 2.

Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

New clause:

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to stand as Clause 2: "Section two of the Vermin Act, 1918, is hereby amended by the addition of the following words:—'Provided that the power of imposing rates in the other portion of the State under any Act mentioned in the First Schedule to this Act shall be subject to a limitation similar to that contained in the proviso to subsection (2) of section fifty-nine of this Act.'"

The object of new clause is to encourage fencing against rabbits in the northern portion of this State. I think we are all agreed that it is the experience of Australia that the more rabbit-proof fencing is erected, the better the opportunity one has of coping with the rabbits. The Act passed last session provided, as regards the South-West Division, that any owner fencing against rabbits should be exempt from rating. Such an owner is not relieved of the responsibility of destroying the rab-

bits on his holding. If he does not destroy the rabbits, the proper authority can enter upon his holding and do the work. But where he has erected rabbit-proof fencing within the meaning of the Act, he is exempt from rating under the measure. That provision of last year's Act, however, does not apply to the northern portion of the State. The object of the proposed new clause is to encourage the erection of rabbit-proof fences throughout the State.

New clause put and passed.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

BILL—FRUIT CASES

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day; Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair, the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Interpretation:

The CHAIRMAN: An amendment has been moved to strike out the words "prescribed standard" and insert "that set out in the schedule to this Act."

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yesterday I intimated that I did not propose to ask hon. members to vote on the clause until they had an opportunity of reading the evidence taken by the select committee, which is now before them. I now propose to ask them to vote on the clause without bothering about that evidence, and indeed to discurd the report of the select committee altogether. I consider I have sufficient grounds for this. The issue raised by the amendment is as to whether the sizes of fruit cases shall be inserted in the Bill or prescribed by regulation. Yesterday I gave the departmental reasons why the sizes should not be inserted in the Bill, the reasons being that in the other States the sizes were provided by regulation, and so might be altered from time to time, and that unless we have here facilities for readily altering the sizes by regulation it might act adversely against our own producers. The select committee told us in their report that they desired that the sizes should be set out in the Bill, as in the South Australian Act. The whole of the controversy we had yesterday was based on this difference of opinion as to whether the sizes should be in the Bill, as in the South Australian Act, or whether they should be provided by regulation. I stated yesterday that the department was puzzled to understand what this reference to the schedule in the South Australian Act meant. The only effect of this was to draw from Mr. Sanderson an attack on the department. The fact of the matter is that the department, like myself, accepted the report of the select committee in good faith. We now find we were not entitled to do so. The provision in Section 6 of the

South Australian Act is that until otherwise provided the standard for fruit cases shall, for the purposes of the Act, be the sizes named and described in the schedule; that the Government may by regulation prescribe standards for fruit cases in addition to those named in the schedule; and that the Government may by regulation substitute new standards for fruit cases. I submit that not only I and the department, but the Committee have been carelessly misled by the report of the select committee, which told us that the standards in South Australia are fixed by the South Australian Act. Nothing of the kind. For the purpose of convenience the sizes of fruit cases were in the first instance included in the schedule of the South Australian Act, but it was specially provided that it was only for the time being. In every other State the Act provides that the standard shall be fixed by regulation, and so too in South Australia, where as a matter of fact since the passing of the Act regulations have been adopted prescribing the standard size of fruit cases.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is an extraordinary speech which we have heard from the Minister. I ask other members of the select committee to make any explanation they think fit. As chairman of that committee I will attempt to voice their opinions in my own way. The Bill is of but secondary importance. We can decide the whole matter on this one question. I represent a large number of people who are directly interested in the question, and as their representative I have no hesitation in saying that in my opinion the Bill is bad. I do not expect all to agree with me. As a fruitgrower also I again say the Bill is bad. I am not going to support it, but in deference to people who are just as competent as am I to express an opinion, I am prepared to waive my objection. On the question of my having carelessly misled the Committee, I say it was a most unfortunate remark. The leader of the House, very cleverly as usual, has fixed on this particular point, which I at once admit is open to attack, and he says he has been misled by the select committee.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You say it is the one point in the Bill.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The remarks of the leader of the House were unfortunate, and I think he is somewhat unfair. But assuming that he is right in all that he has said, it has nothing whatever to do with this question which the committee inquired into. Assume that the remarks of the leader of the House are true—

The Minister of Education: I am prepared to prove them.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I am not prepared to accept them, and if there was sufficient time I would show that the hon. member is mistaken. However, as I say, assume that his remarks are correct; surely he cannot expect more than that we should assume that everything he says is correct and justified! I have then no hesitation in saying that the point at issue between the parties interested

has nothing whatever to do with the South Australian Act, but is as to whether the sizes should go into the schedule. It could be proved up to the hilt from the evidence, but I did not expect such an explosive bomb to be thrown at the select committee or at me.

The Minister for Education: Do you not think it is justified on the wording of the committee's report?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: No, I do not. Members, however, can form their own opinion. I am compelled in the circumstances to refer to the evidence. Here are some extracts from the evidence by Mr. Mercer, who represents the fruit and produce merchants, people who are entitled to respect even if the Chairman of the Select Committee is not—

I am in favour of certain measures being included in the Bill.

I should like to see the measurements a hard and fast law.

I am here on behalf of the Packers' Association and not as a private individual.

We do not want to give the Department too much scope.

If you are going to put all this in the Bill it is a very different thing from a regulation, which can be withdrawn.

I have had enough of regulations.

I do not want the Agricultural Department to have too much power.

As a matter of fact it is not a departmental Bill, except at the instigation of the growers.

It does not interest us from the departmental point of view except what the growers will ask.

Here is the evidence of the departmental officer—

We have to regard the executive of the Orchardists League as the only body representing the fruit growers of the State. We do not go into the question of whether they represent the majority or not. We must take it that they are representing the majority of the growers.

The Executive Committee of the Orchardists' League waited on me yesterday. I explained that I had no hostility either towards the league or the industry. I asked them to tell me how many fruit growers they represented. By a process of arithmetic, logic and imagination we arrived at the conclusion that they represented 300 out of a total of 2,400. I asked them to give me the names of the members of their executive committee, comprising a dozen or so persons. I said that half of these men came from the district in which I lived, namely the Upper Darling Range district. I said to them, I would use that information to suit my convenience. I also said "You ask for this Fruit Cases Bill. On your own showing you do not know what you want, and if you did know it is a big claim for you to make that you represent the whole of the industry." I was not prepared for such a ferocious attack upon the Select Committee and upon myself. If we are to be guided by the evidence taken before the

Select Committee and pay attention to the Orchardists' League, I have no hesitation in saying that the Bill ought to be withdrawn, that the question of the cubic capacity of the case should be put into the Bill, and that this would meet the requirements of the different parties interested. It is not creditable to hon. members that when one asks for Parliamentary papers, copies of "Hansard," and reports, and Acts of Parliament, that one cannot get them supplied. I do not blame the officers of the House, or any House Committee, but I do blame the general condition which apparently prevents one from having in a readily acceptable form the latest information on these questions with which we are called upon to deal. When I get hold of an Act of Parliament I first read it as it stands. I then read the "Hansard" report dealing with it in order to see what was intended to be done. In addition to that if I have the time I like to get hold of the departmental reports showing what the effect of the Act was as soon as it was brought into operation; but to get all the official documents on the table of the House is a different matter.

The Minister for Education: You read the South Australian Act?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Yes, and the South Australian debate, and the New South Wales Act.

The Minister for Education: And you submitted that report in the face of what you read?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I did.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Look at question 351 in the evidence.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The difficulty of the whole position is that those who gave evidence did not agree, but that to my mind justifies the attitude I take up, and as Chairman of the Committee I was prepared to waive my own opinions on the subject in order to meet the wishes of the different people who were insisting on a case of some kind. I have done my best to voice the opinions of the committee, and I repeat that the charge made by the leader of the House is not warranted and is unfair.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I suggest that this is a matter that is hardly worthy of lengthy or serious debate. It is a matter which affects trade and commerce, and if we put an arbitrary provision in the Bill we shall not have that elasticity which will be necessary for the proper carrying out of trade and commerce, whereas, if we put this in a regulation, we can alter it from time to time with comparative ease to suit the conditions which may arise. I therefore suggest that the matter be left at that.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I was not one of those who thought it worth while to refer this Bill to a select committee, but for some reason or other a select committee was appointed, and I was one of the victims. Of course, I am always prepared to carry out the duties a member of Parliament is expected to perform, and I accepted the position, not that I was sufficiently interested.

I was not sufficiently interested even to speak on the second reading of the Bill, but the fact remains that the select committee were given work to do, and we did it, and I must thank the leader of the House for his appreciative remarks on the work done by that committee, and also his appreciation for those citizens who were sufficiently interested to tender evidence at their own expense and in their own time to enlighten Parliament on account of this "tuppenny-ha-penny" measure. The House made itself ridiculous by appointing a select committee to deal with this Bill, but the committee did all it was instructed to do and called evidence. The Minister has taken us to task because he said we made false statements. One of those was that we did not examine fruit growers. I understand he wishes to withdraw that insinuation now, having found out that we did. As he has attacked us on the matter of accuracy, I would remind him that his record in that direction is no better than that of the committee. He wants to be pretty careful when he questions the accuracy of others. It is a very delicate question for the Minister to handle. Let us see what the fruit growers did advise. They said that under certain conditions these measurements should go into the Bill. Mr. Hawter was asked this question and he answered it as it is published—

As to the shape, would you prefer to have it specified in an Act of Parliament, or to leave it to the Agricultural Department to make regulations as they think fit?—To be effective, it should be specified in the Act.

Mr. Harper's evidence might be quoted—

With regard to the size or capacity of the case, what objection is there to putting the decision of the growers into an Act of Parliament if they have definitely decided on the capacity of the case?—If the shape is to be kept apart, I do not see any difficulty in its being put into the Act.

Then if we turn to the evidence given by Mr. Breen of the Fruit Industries Branch we find that he was asked, "Does your department propose to deal with the shape?" and the reply was "No." The departmental officers do not appear to have any ideas. They are waiting for ideas and will get them from the same sources as were open to the select committee. We found that the men who gave evidence had more to say than yes or no. They had reasons for advocating a standard case of a certain shape. According to the evidence of Mr. Breen, even if this is embodied in a regulation, he does not know what shape the standard case should be. We could have cases of all shapes which would hold the requisite cubic contents, but they would not be standard cases. That is why those who have gone into the question require not only a bushel case but one of standard shape. The department are not prepared to recommend this and those dealing in fruit have no confidence in the

department. This is why they object to handing over the matter to the department. Unless something more definite than the hazy idea of the department can be put into Act or regulation, the fruit growers of this State do not want any standard case at all. The various agents have as much confidence in and respect for the department as the Minister has shown for the report of the select committee. Probably a regulation could be altered more easily than an Act of Parliament. Yet the evidence goes to show that at least 12 months' notice would be necessary if an alteration were made. Question 143 asked of Mr. Humphries, manager of the State Sawmills, stated—

How long a notice would the mills require before any new regulations were made operative?—According to our arrangements with the distributors, if they want delivery of a certain number of cases they have to notify us in August of the quantities they require before the end of the following December. In October they give us an indication of the number of cases they will require between the end of December and the end of March. They are also allowed to amend the latter order if they give notice before the end of January.

His opinion was that 12 months' notice should be given before any alteration was made. Similar evidence was given by Mr. Breen as will be found in question 242. He said it was the intention of the department to allow 12 months' notice. If even a regulation were altered, 12 months' notice would have to be given. When I made that statement yesterday, the leader of the House interjected, "Nonsense."

The Minister for Education: I shall show you presently that it is nonsense.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: The evidence goes to show that it is necessary.

The Minister for Education: I am not questioning the evidence.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: The impression given by the Minister was that a regulation could be altered ad lib. The main objection of the one witness who opposed the standard fruit case was that the size would not be mentioned in the Bill. If a standard case were decided upon, even he would not object to it if it were stated in the Bill. We were given to understand that the South Australian Act contained the size in the schedule. This question can be settled. For the leader of the House to say we want to discredit not only the report but the evidence—

The Minister for Education: No, the report only.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: We have gone to the expense, trouble and time to get evidence, and I wish members to read the evidence because they are as capable as the select committee to decide what should be done. We have decided on the evidence that it would be better to place the size in the Bill, so that those who have to observe the law would know just what it was. If it is

done by regulation, I fail to see how they would be aware of it. If it is left to regulation, it will probably be that the association which can best impress the department will get its way. It has not yet been shown that the report is not based on the evidence. The evidence shows that the witnesses considered there should be a standard case of a certain shape specified in the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I did not propose to make further reference to the statement in respect of the select committee that the dimensions of the standard case should be set out in the Bill as in the South Australian Act, but Mr. Millington referred to it as a matter still to be settled. Does he suggest that I have not correctly read the South Australian Act? The Act is here for any member to read. It was merely a preliminary measure, stipulating the size until regulations were framed.

Hon. H. Millington: Was not it set out in the Act at the time?

Hon. A. Sanderson: Yes.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The Act clearly states that it is set out in the schedule, but only until otherwise prescribed. The Governor was empowered to make regulations to prescribe the standard size and to vary the size described in the schedule. The department subsequently issued regulations.

Hon. A. Sanderson: When?

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: On the 26th October, 1916, and, in those regulations, the standard size of the case is set out. Whatever schedule there is in the Act, no longer has force because it has been superseded by the regulations framed in accordance with the Act. The South Australian Parliament, in making that provision, evidently had in mind that this matter could not be laid down hard and fast. It has been said the evidence points out that 12 months notice is required. I am not questioning the evidence. Mr. Millington does not realise that it will be an offence for a person to sell fruit in any case except that prescribed by regulation. Suppose under this measure regulations were immediately framed. Suppose it was decided that the measure should not come into operation for 12 months. There would be nothing to prevent people from using the newly prescribed cases at once. In exactly the same way, if, with these regulations existing, some other State of the Commonwealth prescribed a different size of case for a certain class of fruit, there would be nothing to prevent the department from immediately altering the regulation in such a way that the old cases might still be used so that the people who had manufactured those old cases, or who had bought them, might not be deprived of the use of them. The regulation would be framed so that it would not be an offence for a person to use a new case in such a way as not to commit an offence in another State. What is required is the ability to prescribe a new case if circumstances demand it—a new case which may perhaps be used at the same time

as the old one, though in different circumstances—possibly for export to another State. That is the elasticity which one must have.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I think the leader of the House would do well to report progress.

The Minister for Education: Do you want to prevent the measure from passing this session?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Considering that the report of the select committee and the evidence have been printed at a cost of £12 10s., and have been put in the hands of members only to-night, I think progress might well be reported now in order to permit members to study the report of the select committee and the evidence. We had considerable debate on this Bill last session, when the Honorary Minister stated that it arose chiefly out of the fact that certain Chinamen had cut cases a little below the proper size.

The CHAIRMAN: I would ask the hon. member to confine himself to the amendment.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: If we were allowed till the next sitting to consider the report and evidence, we would be in a better position to deal with the Bill.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: It seems to me that the members of the select committee, and also the witnesses examined, are rather afraid of sudden alteration in the size of case if the matter is left to regulation. The leader of the House has said that, if there was any alteration, the old case could still be used for a certain period. I believe that both the views of the members of the select committee and the witnesses before the select committee, and the leader of the House would be met by adding to the definition of "standard case" such words as "but no alteration in the prescribed standard be made compulsory until 12 months' notice be given of such alteration." There seems to be some doubt about leaving the matter to the Agricultural Department. The amendment I have suggested will remove any possibility of violent and sudden alterations.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I thank the hon. member for his suggestion, which however can hardly be discussed on this amendment. The proper place for it would be Clause 4.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE: There is no disagreement of any kind between the members of the select committee. My position from the first was that I wanted to see if I could get any information from orchardists in the South-West Province. I have had no replies whatever to communications which I have sent them. Therefore I promised to support the Bill. But that fact did not in any way prejudice me as a member of the select committee. It is not the Agricultural Department I am afraid of. What I fear is that someone of insufficient experience may go to the department, get the ear of the officials there, and induce them to alter the size of case. As an old fruitgrower, I know that alteration of cases is a most mischievous and troublesome thing. Obviously there must be

a great many cases in stock at the mills, and these cases, if of the wrong size, will be thrown on the hands of the millers. Then, when cases of a different size are wanted by the orchardists, the prices will be put up on account of the worthless stock. I shall vote for the clause as it stands.

Hon. E. ROSE: At a conference of fruit-growers held in Bunbury only two months ago it was definitely decided that a standard fruit case ought to be introduced. It was further decided that the members for the South-West Province and the member for Bunbury should attend the fruitgrowers' executive in Perth in order to deal further with the subject. A copy of this Bill was submitted to the fruitgrowers' executive by Mr. Clarke, Mr. Mouey, and myself, and the executive went through the Bill and expressed themselves as satisfied with it. We took exception on the point as to regulation, but the executive were satisfied that the size should be fixed by regulation. They asked for no amendment, but requested us to support the Bill as printed.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is no use saying about this Bill, "Let us get rid of it; let us put it through; it is unimportant."

The CHAIRMAN: I must ask the hon. member to speak strictly to the amendment, and not to speak to the Bill generally.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The issue of this clause and of this amendment is, are we to have the size by regulation or in the Act? The whole of the argument and attack of the leader of the House was based on the South Australian Act. I say, "Very well; strike that out of the report." That ought to meet the hon. gentleman's wishes.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment is to strike out certain words of the clause, not certain words of the report.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: In order that hon. members may appreciate the issue on which they are about to vote, let them read the evidence; and in order that they may appreciate the evidence, let us report progress at this stage. The bulk of the legislation in this State for 25 years has been passed in the method in which it is suggested that this Bill should be passed; and that is one reason why we find ourselves in the present impossible position. It is not an affront to me personally to be told that my word is of no value; I have been told that in a good many cases. However, I have given some time and attention to the report of this select committee. Let hon. members read the evidence; they will then be able to give an intelligent vote on the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 8 to 11—agreed to.

New clause:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move—

That the following be added to stand as Clause 6:—"6. (1) No person shall manufacture or sell cases or shucks intended for fruit cases of the prescribed

standard which are of less dimensions, size, or capacity than that of the prescribed standard case. (2) If any person charged with any offence under this Act or any regulations hereunder relating to the sale of any fruit in a case of less dimensions, size, or capacity than those of the standard case, shall prove that he purchased the same from a manufacturer who represented the case to be of the dimensions, size, and capacity of a standard case, such proof shall be a good defence to such charge."

The object of the clause is to ensure that the cases which are cut and supplied will be cut according to the prescribed standard. At present practically all the fruit cases are supplied to the orchardists by sawmillers. The new clause protects the orchardist who purchases his cases from the sawmiller.

Hon. A. Lovekin: It will meet the point raised by Mr. Kirwan.

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—PURE SEEDS.

Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. J. J. Holmes, Bill re-committed for the purpose of further considering Clause 2; Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair, the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Interpretation:

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I move an amendment—

That in the definition of "Botanist" the words "or other officer of the department, appointed to examine seeds for the purpose of this Act" be struck out.

It would appear that under this provision we propose to make botanists by Act of Parliament. Surely we cannot make a qualified man by Act of Parliament! How does the leader of the House propose to get over the difficulty?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not see any alternative to leaving it to the department to appoint a competent officer.

Hon. H. Stewart: Is not the present plant pathologist a competent officer?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes, but he may not be available at the moment he is wanted.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Many of the Government departments have a lot of officers travelling about the country posing as experts and issuing all sorts of silly regulations. If we have a competent botanist in the department, by all means let us utilise him, but to follow on with the words "or

other officer of the department" is to make those gentlemen properly qualified botanists by Act of Parliament.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The hon. member is raising a very minor point in a very minor Bill. I agree with him, but it is evidently the policy of the Committee to hand over everything to the departments for control by regulation. Let this amendment be rejected, and let us give these people what they ask for. There is not a qualified botanist in the department.

Hon. H. Stewart: There is.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: My information is derived from the report of the Department of Agriculture. A qualified botanist is one who would be recognised as a qualified botanist, not in the department, but outside it.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment has nothing to do with the definition of a botanist. Will the hon. member confine himself to the amendment?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Mr. Holmes wishes to confine the botanical work to a botanist in the Agricultural Department. As far as I can make out, there is no botanist in the ordinary sense of the term in the Department. The report refers to a botanical pathological assistant, a position which has nothing to do with that of a qualified botanist.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: This man is a qualified botanist, but he is an assistant to a man who is not a botanist.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We are going to hand over to a number of officers in the department the right to do work which should only be done by a qualified botanist.

Hon. H. STEWART: I support the amendment. It appears from the report of the department that the present officer, Mr. Herbert, has only been classified as a botanical and pathological assistant. The papers show that Mr. Herbert is really a qualified botanist and plant pathologist and holds the degree of B.Sc. in this particular department of science, from the Melbourne University.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must confine his remarks to the clause under discussion. It is not a question of what the department had, but of striking out certain words. The hon. member is not in order. He can refer to no officers of the department on this discussion.

Hon. H. STEWART: The Committee is indebted to Mr. Holmes for bringing the matter forward. Seeing that there is a qualified officer to administer this measure, I think the Committee would be well advised to support the amendment.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I would favour the definition being struck out altogether. Clause 6 of the Bill refers to "a botanist," and in Clause 9 it appears that the botanist mentioned is not intended to be a botanist of the department.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot discuss the definition of a botanist.

We are discussing the question of striking out certain words.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Though it does not seem to be necessary to retain the definition of botanist in order to prevent any question arising later, we might still retain the definition of botanist but add these words "holding a recognised qualification as a botanist." I think this would meet the wishes of Mr. Holmes.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: On a point of order. Can you accept an amendment on those lines before Mr. Holmes's amendment is dealt with?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The effect of such an amendment would be to leave us where we were. If a man holds such qualifications he would be a botanist within the meaning of the Act.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: He has to be an officer of the Department. He would require to hold that qualification, which is essential to enable him to carry out the duties devolving upon him. I move an amendment on the amendment—

That in line 2 after the word "department" the words "holding a recognised qualification as a botanist" be inserted.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There will be no necessity for Mr. Nicholson's amendment if the words are struck out. The definition will be "a botanist of the Agricultural Department," and if there are half a dozen men in the department who hold qualifications they will all be botanists in the Agricultural Department.

Hon. J. BOWING: Mr. Holmes's amendment recognises the effect which has been apparent to me for a considerable number of years, that some of the work done by the Agricultural Department is carried out by incompetent men. We want to be sure that those who are carrying out seed supervision are competent to do the work. Because of the knowledge I have of the work done in the South-West by some of the agricultural experts I intend to support the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment moved by Mr. Nicholson is not in order. The hon. member, however, can move to insert those words if other words are struck out.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I will withdraw my amendment.

Amendment on amendment by leave withdrawn.

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

Ayes	9
Noes	3

Majority for .. 6

AYES.

Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. Ewing	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. J. W. Hickey	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. A. Lovekin	(Teller.)

NOTES.

Hon. H. P. Colebatch Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. W. Kirwan (Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

Clause as amended agreed to.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

House adjourned at 10.8 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 19th November, 1910.

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

QUESTION—CONSTABLE TAYLOR, RETIREMENT.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN asked the Minister for Mines: 1, When was James Richard Taylor, ex-police constable No. 61, retired from the force? 2, What was the number of years of service. 3, Were a number of men retired at or about the same time, owing to age and years of service? 4, Were the regulations governing the Police Benefit Fund altered just prior to the retirement, making an alteration in regard to the payment of gratuity? 5, If not, why were they not paid the usual gratuity of one month's pay for each year of service? 6, Will he see that the regulations under which they contributed to the fund for so many years are carried out, and not any regulation made just prior to retirement?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, 31st May, 1918. 2, 28 years and 29 days. 3, One sergeant was retired in June, 1918, who had had 39 years and 3 months service. 4, Yes. 5, Answered by No. 4. 6, The matter is controlled by the Police Benefit Fund Board, on which the contributors are represented.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is not fair, though.

QUESTION—SPECIAL CONSTABLES, KALGOORLIE.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Minister for Mines: 1, How many special constables have been sworn in at Kalgoorlie since the 6th inst.? 2, What wages, if any, are being paid these special constables?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, 680. 2, None up to the present.

QUESTION—HOSPITAL FOR THE INSANE, EX-ATTENDANT EDWARDS.

Mr. DUFF (without notice) asked the Chairman of the select committee on the Hospital for the Insane: Will he allow me to see the papers in connection with the ex-attendant Edwards?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN replied: I have not any papers.

QUESTION—PASTORAL LEASES, RETURN.

Mr. WILCOCK (without notice) asked the Premier: When will the return relating to pastoral leases in the Murchison district, ordered by the House three weeks ago, be available?

The PREMIER replied: I think I told the House that the preparation of the return would take a considerable time. So far as the information is available, I shall endeavour to have it placed before the House in a day or two.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT—FINANCIAL RELATION WITH COMMONWEALTH.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [4.35]: With the permission of members, I desire to make a statement to the House regarding the recent conference of Premiers summoned by the Prime Minister to consider certain proposed amendments to the Commonwealth Constitution. The conference was held in Melbourne on the 26th and 29th of September. This State was represented by the Minister for Education (Mr. Colebatch). The Prime Minister submitted proposals for the amendment of the Commonwealth Constitution on the lines of the 1915 referendum proposals, and invited the support of the different State Governments. The representatives of the States, after conference apart from the Prime Minister, intimated that they were not prepared to pledge their respective Governments, that they considered the proposed amendments to be in excess of what the Federal Parliament required to enable it to deal with the problems of high prices and industrial unrest, and that they desired time to consult their Governments with a view to submitting alternative proposals. The Prime Minister was unable to grant this request but, out of deference to the wishes of the representatives of the States, made certain modifications in his proposals, the most important of which was