

# Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 13th October, 1948.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### NOXIOUS WEEDS.

#### *As to Cape Tulip.*

Mr. GRAYDEN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is he aware that many paddocks along Albany Highway between Perth and Kelmscott are thickly covered with cape tulip?

(2) Is he aware that from year to year this weed is obtaining a stronger hold in this locality?

(3) Have investigations by the Agricultural Department established that this weed is being spread throughout the State in the distribution of plants of various kinds, from gardens in this area?

(4) Does he contemplate taking any further steps to counteract the spread of this weed?

(5) If so, what steps?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) Yes.

(4) Yes.

(5) With a view to finding more effective control measures, the Department of Agriculture is co-operating with the Waite Agricultural Research Institute, South Australia, in an Australia-wide investigation.

## LIQUOR.

### *As to Checks for Adulteration at Royal Show.*

Mr. GRAYDEN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Police:

(1) Under whose authority was liquor on sale at the Royal Show booths checked for adulteration?

(2) What was the result of the investigations?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) Inspections were made by an Inspector of Liquors as authorised under Part 10 of the Licensing Act, 1911-1922.

(2) No breaches of the Licensing Act were detected.

## STATE ELECTRICITY COMMISSION.

### *As to Control of Staff, etc.*

Mr. NALDER asked the Minister for Works:

(1) To whom is the staff of the State Electricity Commission responsible, and/or from whom are they receiving instructions?

(2) Is it a fact that on 19th August the Chairman of the Commission (Mr. Dumas) advised the staff that in future they would receive directions from Mr. F. C. Edmond-

son (Deputy Chairman of the Commission)? If so, what remuneration is he receiving?

(3) Has Mr. Edmondson at any time been in charge of a power station or stations? If so, when and where?

(4) Has he ever been responsible for the operation of a steam power station?

(5) Has he ever been responsible for the design and/or construction of a power station the size of East Perth or South Fremantle? If so, when and where?

(6) What arrangements, if any, are being made to fill the vacancy occasioned by the retirement of the former general manager?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Heads of various sections under the general direction of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Commission.

(2) Answered by (1).

(3) Yes—goldfields of Western Australia.

(4) Yes.

(5) No, but Mr. Edmondson's qualifications were considered by the Sydney County Council of such high order that he was selected as one of the final two for personal interview for the position of General Manager from applicants from this State and other States in Australia. The Sydney County Council's undertaking includes the Bunnerong Power Station, many times larger than East Perth or South Fremantle Stations.

(6) Cabinet is at present giving consideration to this matter.

### BLACK DIAMOND COAL LEASES.

*As to Nature of Tenure, etc.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

(1) Is it a fact that all leasehold tenements embodied in what is known as the Black Diamond Leases converted to an estate in fee simple after acquisition by the State Electricity Commission?

(2) If so, is land still in the state of fee simple, or has any of the property been converted to leasehold tenure?

(3) What is the nature of the tenure of this property, and have the legal requirements been complied with in its return to the Amalgamated Collieries (W.A.) Limited?

(4) If Amalgamated Collieries (W.A.) Limited have not complied with the coven-

ants of the law in order to get legal possession of this property, under what section and what Act are they now operating and on what actual tenement are mining operations being carried out?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Land is still in fee simple.

(3 and 4) The Amalgamated Collieries of W.A. Limited are operating on what is known as the "Black Diamond" Leases by special arrangement with the Government in order to expedite production of urgently needed coal.

### ROADS.

*As to Allocations to Road Boards.*

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister for Works:

(1) In connection with the answers given in Parliament on his behalf on 28th September last regarding general allocations to road boards for developmental roads, will he now state the names of those boards to which allocations of over £1,000 were made during the year 1947-48; also those to receive similar allocations to date during the current year, 1948-49?

(2) Will he state the amount paid to each of the road boards concerned?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Narembeen, Kondinin, Corrigin, Gnowangerup, Kent and Lake Grace, and there is no alteration for 1948-1949.

(2) Narembeen Road Board, 1947-48, £2,000; 1948-49, £2,000. Kondinin Road Board, 1947-48, £2,000; 1948-49, £2,000. Corrigin Road Board, 1947-48, £2,000; 1948-49, £2,000. Gnowangerup Road Board, 1947-48, £1,500; 1948-49, £1,500. Kent Road Board, 1947-48, £2,000; 1948-49, £2,000. Lake Grace Road Board 1947-48, £2,000; 1948-49, £2,000.

### SUPERANNUATION ACT.

*As to Retired Government Employees.*

Mr. BRADY asked the Premier:

(1) Has the Government yet made a decision regarding the payment of pensions to retired railway employees and others similarly affected under the 1871 Act?

(2) If it has, what decision has been made?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) The matter is receiving the consideration of the Government.

#### LAND SALES CONTROL ACT.

*As to Exemption of Business Premises.*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) On what date was it decided to exclude business premises from sales control?

(2) Was the decision made by Cabinet or by the Minister?

(3) What was the reason for the sudden alteration of policy on this matter?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 16th September.

(2) By Cabinet.

(3) Answered by Nos. (1) and (2).

#### BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Mr. Yates and read a first time.

#### BILLS (2)—REPORTS.

1, Marriage Act Amendment.

2, Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act Amendment.

Adopted.

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS.

*As to Postponement.*

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [4.40]: I move—

That items 2 to 6 be postponed until after the consideration of Order of the Day No. 7.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [4.41]: I do not know whether the House will be in order in agreeing to the postponement amongst other items, of a notice of motion. Our Standing Orders state that if a member is not in his place when the item is called on, it goes by the board. I am not anxious to get on with the business of appointing managers to confer with Council managers on the New Tractors, Motor Vehicles and Fencing Materials Control Bill, but I do not want the House to do anything that is wrong. I should like your ruling, Mr. Speaker, whether we shall be in order in postponing a notice of motion

standing in the name of a private member, seeing that this is private members' day and that private members' business on this day takes precedence over Government business.

MR. SPEAKER: The question raised is whether the notice of motion may be postponed. The effect of postponing would not be to destroy it; it would be merely a temporary postponement of perhaps a quarter or half an hour, and I take it that this is a matter the House can determine by its vote. I see no objection to the Premier's motion.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Is it in order for the Premier to move for the postponement of private members' business? You, Mr. Speaker, have said that it will probably be for a matter of only a quarter or half an hour. It is only a matter of degree whether we postpone this business for one hour or 24 hours; the principle is the same. I ask whether the Premier is in order in moving for the postponement of private members' business on private members' day. I claim that he is not in order.

MR. SPEAKER: The question is one for the House to decide. As I have pointed out, it will not be a matter of destroying the motion; it will be merely a temporary postponement.

Question put and passed.

#### BILL—NEW TRACTORS, MOTOR VEHICLES AND FENCING MATERIALS CONTROL.

*Council's Message.*

Message from the Council insisting upon its amendments now considered.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Transport in charge of the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I move—

That the Assembly continues to disagree with the amendments made by the Council.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

*Assembly's Request for Conference.*

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I move—

That the Council be requested to grant a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council and that the managers for the

Assembly be the member for North-East Fremantle, the member for Irwin-Moore and the mover.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Before the House agrees to the motion for a conference, we ought to know where we stand. I noticed a report in this morning's "West Australian" stating that the Minister representing the Government in another place actually moved that one of the amendments desired by the Council be insisted on. Within my experience, the representative of the Government in the Council invariably puts forward the point of view of the Government, and the point of view of the Government is that all the amendments that the Council seeks to make should not be agreed to. That was the attitude the Minister adopted here. The newspaper report, under the heading "Control Bill," stated—

Mr. Wood moved to insist upon the amendment made to limit the control of the distribution of motor vehicles to cars over 12 horsepower and trucks up to a capacity of one ton. The motion was agreed to on the voices.

There is an example of a member of the Government taking a line of action which is contrary to that adopted by the Government in this House. That Minister will doubtless be one of the managers appointed by another place to represent the Council at a conference, and so we shall be in the position that representatives of the Government in the Assembly will be arguing to attain one objective while the representative of the Government in the Council will be taking sides with the Council against the desires of the Government. That is a most unusual state of affairs and one which will render the conference a farce. I wonder whether we ought to participate in a conference under those conditions.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I have been telling you that for weeks.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This is not on all fours with what happened previously, but is very close to it. The Minister for Transport rose in his place and waxed very indignant about references made on this side of the House to what had happened at the previous conference, but this sort of thing justifies the remarks made on that occasion. We felt that we were being double-crossed. I do not wish to anticipate what my colleague may say later on, but here is certainly an indication that we may

have a repetition of what happened before. Surely the Government knows where it stands on a matter of policy and can ensure that its Ministers at least are consistent! We should not be put in the position of having Ministers in this House taking one line of action while Ministers in another place take a different line of action. How can we determine what the Government really desires, whether it is in earnest in the intention to have a conference or whether it is just making a show? I should like to have a statement from the Premier and some explanation of the conduct of the Minister in the Legislative Council.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I agree with a lot of what the member for North-East Fremantle has said. Unfortunately, during the last few weeks, I have not received much help in my attitude to these conferences. However, I suggest to the member for North-East Fremantle that there is a way in which the Council may get over the difficulty and that is for the Council to ballot for its managers and leave the Minister who has adopted this attitude off the conference. After a Minister has made such a statement, he should certainly not be included in the managers. I am getting full up of conferences and I think we should have no more of them.

Mr. MARSHALL: This is certainly very strange procedure, the first of its sort that I have experienced in a period of 27 years.

The Minister for Lands: What procedure?

Mr. MARSHALL: The Government introduced a measure and the Legislative Council made various amendments. With those amendments the Government disagreed, but now we have a Minister in another place deliberately initiating hostility to Ministers in this Chamber. What sort of a Government is this?

Mr. Bovell: A free and unfettered Government.

Mr. MARSHALL: A free and unfettered remnant of a Government. There is nothing solid at all about it.

Mr. Graham: A rabble.

Mr. MARSHALL: A complete rabble.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Did not the Premier say that a Minister who did not agree with the Government ought to get out?

Mr. MARSHALL: I want to know where the Government stands. When legislation is introduced, surely that is something to which the Government subscribes and something to which every Minister is expected to adhere strictly! Or are we to have what we are now experiencing? The measure was rent with criticism and opposition in another place and Ministers are not solid in their attitude. What can the public think of a team of such individuals, who claim to be a strong Government, a Government to be depended upon, a Government solid on the matter of policy? Yet, on many pieces of legislation, there seems to be a difference of opinion. That has happened now on two or three occasions. This is the great solid Government that was going to ensure that all sections of the community were protected, in defiance of the Legislative Council, of course.

Mr. May: Free and unfettered!

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. They would soon see that any legislation that they brought down would be strictly conformed to by their followers at least. Yet we have a Minister deliberately initiating hostility to the Government. He did not wait for someone else, but started it himself. He got in early. He commenced the brawl. This is the very strong Government that was talked about!

Hon. A. H. Panton: Read the top of the paper. It is a strong Government.

Mr. MARSHALL: Unfortunately my sight is like my hearing.

The Premier: Come on, let us hear it!

Mr. MARSHALL: That turns it into a pantomime when one reads "Liberals seen as an anchor." That is too farcical altogether. The members of the Government are in the mire all right. They cannot remain solid on any given point. After all, we do expect members of the Government to remain loyal to their own legislation at the very least, whatever the followers of the Government may do, even though they may break away, which is not unusual. I have done that myself. But at least Ministers should remain loyal to one another. This is the first Government of which I know that has found itself in the invidious

position of Ministers deserting it because a few members in this House or another place have been at variance with legislation introduced by the Government as a matter of policy. The Premier made a statement deliberately designed to show the public what a strong Government he was leading, and said that any Minister who could not agree with the decision of Cabinet should get out. Does he propose to expel the Honorary Minister for Agriculture, who is a member of another place, and who has deserted Cabinet?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Perhaps he will get out himself. Perhaps the Honorary Minister for Agriculture has left the sinking ship.

Mr. MARSHALL: He may have done.

Mr. Fox: He has got the wood on them!

Mr. MARSHALL: This is the first time that you, Sir—and you entered the House about the same time as I did—have seen a Government an absolute shambles. The members of the Government are loyal on nothing. We can never depend on their legislation being adhered to by a full complement of Ministers at any given period. What is the use of the members of the Opposition and other members taking part in discussions when we find that even members of the Cabinet will betray their own legislation? How can the Government expect its supporters to endorse its legislation in those circumstances, particularly when the legislation which is introduced does not appeal favourably to those who send them to Parliament? Who is going to be loyal to the Government when its supporters are not loyal? We surely will not find the two Independents supporting a Government like that! The members of the Government cannot remain loyal one to the other. They desert one another whenever it suits them.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: And we have to go to conferences under those conditions.

Mr. MARSHALL: What is the good of wasting time discussing these matters and holding conferences under such conditions? I am disgusted with the attitude of the Government, which is belittling politics in this State. It has not been my experience previously to see Ministers deserting one another in this fashion, and depending on the capitalistic Press to make the public believe that we have in the Government a

solid body of men united on all questions of policy.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: An anchor!

Mr. MARSHALL: It is a cork anchor, a very light one. Consequently, it is floating about, drifting with the currents and zephyrs of the moment; and ultimately members of the Government will find themselves beached. I do not think that the time is too far distant when that will occur, either. The Government will be positively wrecked. It came as a great shock to me to find Ministers disloyal to their own decisions. I suppose this legislation was dealt with in Cabinet; and yet as soon as there is criticism in another place regarding the decisions of Cabinet, we find that Ministers become disloyal enough to initiate hostility to the legislation which they should have supported or, at least, defended.

Mr. GRAHAM: This proposed conference will resolve itself into one in which the members of this House will be supporting a portion of the Government in its fight against another portion of the Government. Other members have expressed themselves with regard to that ridiculous state of affairs and I do not intend to deal with that aspect; but there is one matter arising out of this whole business about which I am tremendously concerned and I hope I can express myself upon it without causing any feeling on the part of the Minister such as apparently was the case last week. If this motion is carried, we will find ourselves faced with the necessity of going into conference with the Legislative Council. What the outcome will be I do not know. I am aware that the Act provides that certain things may be done by means of regulation; and I feel I am entitled to ask for and the House is entitled to receive an assurance that whatever is determined as a result of the conference of managers, will not subsequently be undone by means of regulation.

I make my position perfectly clear: that if the Government is not ready to give that undertaking, I am not prepared to support a move which seeks to call upon the time of any member of this Chamber in engaging in a conference. Such conference may take hours to arrive at a settlement which ultimately may be shipwrecked because the Minister, by regulation, undoes

everything that has been determined by the managers and accepted by both Houses. The Minister here is perhaps in the unfortunate position that a Minister of the Legislative Council will be in control of the Bill. I do not know whether I am assuming too much when I assume that the Government is in some measure responsible for what its components do, as when, irrespective of what is decided by the Government or by Parliament, an individual Minister goes off at a tangent and does whatever he likes.

For the purpose of this discussion, I would like to believe that the Government has a little cohesion occasionally and that, before any action is taken to defeat the will of Parliament by means of regulation, other members of Cabinet will be consulted. Such being the case, the Minister in charge of the Bill in this House should give an undertaking to us—that is, to members on both sides—that what is ultimately determined by way of conference shall continue in existence at least for a reasonable period instead of, as was previously the case, the determination of Parliament being completely nullified by a regulation gazetted a week or so later.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I did not read the report that the hon. member quoted from "The West Australian" until just now, but I can see nothing irregular or extraordinary in it about what happened last night in another place. When the message from the Assembly was received there the Honorary Minister for Agriculture moved that the Council's amendments be not insisted on, but was defeated in that motion. As Minister in charge of the Bill in that House he had to move that the will of the House be given effect.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Wait and read this, before putting your foot too far into it.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: It is immaterial what took place in the Upper House. The majority rules there and the Minister in charge of the Bill has to give effect to the wish of the majority. The Assembly expressed the opinion that the Bill, as it left here, represented the desires of this House, and though I am reluctant to make such a statement I hold that my ef-

forts will be to have effect given to the voice of the Assembly, regardless of what might be done in another place.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do you see what the Honorary Minister moved—

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: He is accountable for his own actions in that place. I think it will be found that he endeavoured to get the Bill through but was defeated by the wish of the majority. Would members have him continuing to move, ad infinitum? That would be a sheer waste of time.

Mr. Marshall: Let one of those that moved the amendments move that they be insisted on.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: That is a matter for the Council to decide. I have stated the position in which the Honorary Minister found himself. He was unable to give effect to the wish of the Assembly and is accountable for any action he took. I assure the member for North-East Fremantle that when I asked him yesterday if he would be one of the managers I did so in all sincerity and without any reservation that he would be called upon to do other than fight to the last to see that the will of the Assembly prevailed. The hon. member made an error in saying that when I spoke the other evening I corrected what had taken place at a previous conference. I was referring to the charge of insincerity made against me in regard to this conference, when I would not make a public statement that I was sincere. I can assure the hon. member that I would not do that. I have asked him to take part in this conference with the full responsibility of seeing that the will of the Assembly prevails.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

#### *Point of Order.*

Mr. Leslie: I rise, Sir, on a point of order. I did not rise during the course of the debate because the initial speaker had already got in so many of his remarks that I thought it reasonable the debate should be allowed to be concluded. I draw your attention, Sir, to Standing Order No. 130 which states—

No member shall allude to any debate in the other House of Parliament, or to any measure impending therein.

With all due respect to you, Mr. Speaker, I say that this is not the first occasion upon which that Standing Order has been breached. I suggest that in future any allusion to any debate or business transacted in the other place should be regarded as being highly disorderly.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that you tell this young fledgling that you know more about the Standing Orders than he does.

Mr. Speaker: Order! Standing Order No. 145 states—

If any objection is taken to the ruling or decision of the Speaker, such objection must be taken at once.

Mr. Leslie: I said I was late in rising.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member was a little too late.

### **MOTION—LAND SALES CONTROL ACT.**

#### *To Disallow Exemptions Regulation.*

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville) [5.8]: I move—

That Regulation No. 1 made under the Land Sales Control Act, 1948, and published in the "Government Gazette" of the 28th September, 1948, and laid upon the Table of the House on 28th September, 1948, be and is hereby disallowed.

#### *Point of Order.*

Mr. Graham: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I think other members will agree that no vote was taken on the motion moved by the Minister for Transport.

The Minister for Transport: Yes it was.

The Minister for Education: The member for Northam rose to speak, and the Speaker put the question.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member may proceed.

#### *Debate Resumed.*

Hon. A. H. PANTON: That regulation reads—

#### *Schedule.*

1. The following lands are exempted from the whole of the provisions of the Land Sales Control Act, 1948:—

(a) Land being the lot, or any part of a lot, marked as such on any plan of subdivision registered or deposited in the Office of Titles or Registry of Deeds, not exceeding one acre in area and upon which there is no improvement in the nature of a building and which is not used wholly or partly for the

purpose of a farm, grazing area, orchard, market garden, dairy farm, poultry farm, pig farm, or apiary.

(b) Lands being premises used solely as a factory, workshop, office, warehouse, or shop, or used solely for any other industrial or commercial purpose other than a purpose mentioned in paragraph (a) of this regulation: Provided that any provision for residence on any such premises of an employee of the occupier of the premises shall not of itself operate to exclude the premises from being lands within the meaning of this paragraph.

(c) Lands used solely as licensed premises (including registered clubs) within the meaning of the Licensing Act, 1911-1946.

I am compelled to move to disallow the whole of the regulation as the paragraphs are marked (a), (b), and (c). Had they been numbered 1, 2 and 3, I might have been able to move to disallow one portion only. I hope I will be pardoned for dealing with the debate that took place on this matter, notwithstanding the member for Mt. Marshall. When introducing the Bill the Minister made a definite statement to the effect that its purpose was to place on the statute-book of this State the legislation necessary to give effect to a continuance of land sales control. In due course we dealt with the Bill and there was some mild criticism from this side of the House. During his speech the Minister congratulated and thanked the Opposition for the response accorded to the Bill. The Bill was then sent to the Legislative Council, and in due course was returned with several amendments, which were received with some hostility by members here, particularly on this side of the House.

We, of the Opposition, were agreeably surprised when the Minister moved to disagree with the whole of those amendments, one after the other. That motion was supported by the members here and the measure was returned to the Council. I contend that from then on the matter ceased to be a discussion between the Minister or the Government and the Opposition, and became a trial of strength between the two Houses. The measure was sent back to the Council with a message that this House had rejected the amendments, and several members of this Assembly were so interested that they visited another place to listen to the debate. It is not often that members of this Chamber frequent another place but on this particular occasion several were to be seen either in the rear of that Chamber or in the

President's gallery. The Honorary Minister in another place moved that the Council's amendments be not insisted on, and the only reason given was that sent up by this House.

At that stage the big bad wolf rose in his seat. I refer to Mr. Watson, who is now evidently the chief representative of big business interests in that House. After having heard the reasons advanced he said, "I trust that the Committee will insist on the amendments." That was all that was said about them. The Honorary Minister did what he could and called for a division, but nine of the pack followed the new leader across the floor and the Honorary Minister's motion was defeated by 10 votes to five. That was the end of the fight, so far as the Honorary Minister was concerned. It was formally asked that the rest of the amendments be not insisted on and Mr. Watson just as formally asked that they be insisted on. No further divisions were taken that night and eventually the managers went into conference.

We waited for  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours for the conference to end and at 5.45 a.m. on the Friday morning we listened to the report and were delighted with the result. Not only was the Council defeated but the general opinion was that this new member, this big bad wolf who had arrived in the Legislative Council, had been put in his place. At 5.50 the House was adjourned and we all went home very content and felt that the  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours spent roaming about the House had not been entirely wasted.

The shock came when the regulations were laid on the Table of the House. It was only about a fortnight afterwards when I noticed in "The West Australian" a statement by the Minister and I thought that for once that newspaper had made a mistake. You, Mr. Speaker, will remember that I rose from my seat in this House and asked the Minister whether he had been correctly reported and he said "Yes." The regulations were laid on the Table of the House the same day and they set out to do something which we had waited  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours to see undone. On looking through the regulations we find that the Minister has included in them provision to exempt the very things for which we had fought with the Legislative Council. So I ask myself, and I did on that occasion, whether we were actually involved



in a shadow spar and whether the Minister was really in earnest and if so who influenced the change of opinion on the 28th.

I suggest that the Minister, if he intends to reply, takes the trouble to explain, and I hope that he will have a reasonable explanation, because at the moment I am unable to see one at all. Naturally, knowing something of life in this world, I jumped to the conclusion that the people most concerned had been using influence, and those people would be members of the Real Estate Institute. I happen to have a few friends in that institute—I do not know whether I will after tonight, but I did—and I was assured that they, as an institute, had nothing to do with the business at all.

The Minister for Lands: Quite right.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: However, the members of that institute are very pleased with the information contained in the regulations and I do not wonder at their being pleased either. In this morning's issue of "The West Australian" the president of the institute, Mr. C. N. Langsford, commended the Government on its action. I can quite appreciate his commending the action of the Government because yesterday an interesting episode took place and that was the first major land sale in this State since the regulations were gazetted. Mr. Langsford said he did not think there would be any undue rise in prices, particularly of land, and that it would soon stabilise itself.

The first big land sale since the regulations were published took place yesterday, and the results were announced over the air at 9 p.m. last night and again this morning. One block of vacant land in King-street, between Hay-street and St. George's-terrace, was passed in at £7,000. I understand the Treasury valuation was £6,000 and the block was later privately sold for £10,750. The price of this particular block of land jumped from the Treasury valuation of £6,000, and was sold privately, shortly after the sale, for £10,750. The name of the buyer, of course, was withheld. The block has a frontage of 55 feet and a depth of 89 feet. The auctioneers, Robertson Bros., said that under the Treasury valuation the block would have been pegged at £6,000, and I suggest that Robertson Bros. know what they are talking about.

Another lot in Murray-street, west of Milligan-street, sold for £8,000. It has a frontage of 50 feet and a depth of 180 feet. A block of  $2\frac{1}{4}$  acres in Adelaide-terrace, near the Ozone Hotel, was passed in at £5,500. A 48-acre orchard property at Chittering was also passed in.

So it looks to me as though the members of the Real Estate Institute had every reason to be happy and I think they should have a champagne supper and at least invite the Minister to it, and probably the Acting Leader of the Opposition as well.

The Minister for Lands: I do not like champagne.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I understood the Minister grew grapes for many years.

The Minister for Lands: Champagne is too artificial.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Now the Minister has made a point. He is one who should talk about being artificial.

The Minister for Lands: Champagne has too many bubbles in it.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: This bubble has burst. Since the regulations were laid on the Table of the House, Dame Rumour has been particularly busy and a number of people have come to me because my name happened to be on the notice paper as the mover of the motion to disallow the regulations. First of all, the members of the Real Estate Institute assured me that they had nothing to do with the regulations, and that no blame was attachable to them but whatever has happened behind their backs I do not know.

The Minister for Lands: I can confirm their statement.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Then that is good enough for me. The Minister will want to confirm a lot of things by the time I have finished.

The Minister for Lands: I am not worried.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The Minister is never worried. That is the trouble. I was also told by members of the Legislative Council, who were good enough to try to get me, as they thought, out of trouble, that I was quite wrong and that the Minister had informed the House that he desired a free hand because he did not want amendments of this sort put into the Bill

and he desired the right to move to exempt if he wished.

The Minister for Lands: To take further control if necessary.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I read the Minister's speech three times in Hansard and the Minister had a right to check that speech. I also read very carefully the notes the Minister was good enough to hand to me and there is nothing in them about it. When the Minister introduced the Bill we took his remarks for granted and we backed him up 100 per cent. in everything he asked us to do. I intend to read a few extracts from the Minister's speech and I am not reading from Hansard. The Minister said—

"The purpose of the Bill is to place on the statute-book of this State the necessary legislation to give effect to a continuance of land sales control."

I admit that I have repeated myself by quoting those remarks but I wish to bring them into sequence. A little later on the Minister said—

While our economy remains affected by the war and inflationary tendencies are apparent, I think we will all be in accord with the principle that some form of control is necessary.

I think the House agreed 100 per cent. with those remarks and I do not believe there was any argument about them. Then the Minister made, in my opinion, a significant statement as follows:—

In order almost to defeat the blackmarket which has been rampant in the sale of vacant metropolitan, suburban and country town lots it is proposed to release these properties from control but the Government will retain the right to re-impose control should this course be considered desirable.

The Minister was then dealing with vacant metropolitan, suburban and country town lots and he eventually inserted in the regulations exemption up to one acre. He stated in his speech that the Government would retain the right to re-impose control should such a course be considered desirable. He was then talking about vacant lots in the areas I mentioned. I do not think there was any doubt about the inference of that statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member will resume his seat. Standing Order No. 130 states—

No member shall allude to any debate in the other House of Parliament . . .

It has usually been the practice in this House, when dealing with the proceedings of the other House, to talk of "another place." As I understand the hon. member, he is actually reading extracts given to him by other members.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Not in the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member has not referred to debates, but the usual procedure is to take umbrage under the old statement by talking of another place when referring to the Council.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The extracts I am quoting are from the Minister's speech made in this House. What I had to say about the Legislative Council is finished. I do not want to get into a discussion with you, Mr. Speaker, but I do not think you will find anywhere in Standing Orders that members are not allowed to refer to another place as the Legislative Council. However, that is an old-fashioned tradition which has grown up and which could be very well cast aside. I am now dealing with the Minister's speech when he introduced the Bill, and I am in order there. The Minister went on to say—

The course proposed by Western Australia is similar to that of New South Wales and Victoria where control is being maintained over all sales with the exception of vacant metropolitan, suburban and country town lots.

That is further evidence of the exemption of those particular lots only, because the Minister said that we were following the lead of New South Wales and Victoria. When speaking on the second reading of the Bill I made the following comment:—

The Bill apparently has been brought down for the purposes of control, but I have difficulty in finding out what it is to control. We have been informed by the Minister that it is proposed to lift all the controls over the sale of metropolitan, suburban and country town blocks.

The Minister interjected, "Vacant blocks," and I replied by saying—

I hope the Minister will tell the House, if he thinks it worth while replying, just what is to be controlled.

After several members had spoken on the subject, the Minister set out to reply and some of the extracts from that reply are very interesting. In one place the Minister states—

Then again it has been said that we are adopting the Commonwealth regulation.

What follows that statement is most important—

Of course we are adopting the Commonwealth regulations, because we will admit that they were operating quite satisfactorily.

The Minister tells the House that the Commonwealth regulations were operating quite satisfactorily, yet within a fortnight he finds it necessary to exempt important provisions of those regulations. Those are my objections. The Minister asked us to disagree with the Council's amendments and both sides of the House thought that at last we had a man of iron who would disagree with the Legislative Council, and we stuck 100 per cent. with him. Yet within a fortnight he calmly places on the Table of the House, and publishes information on the point in the Press, exemptions respecting the very regulations that caused the whole discussion.

Mr. Graham: It was a sell-out.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Then again, the Minister said—

I said last night that it was proposed to lift completely the control over vacant lots in town and country areas.

I emphasise this because the Minister consistently referred to these vacant lots in metropolitan and suburban areas and country towns. I assume the Minister will endeavour to tell us that he meant something else, but I am reminding him of what he said. He went on—

In reference to business premises, we do intend to allow an increase of 15 per cent., plus the basis. If members will work that out, it will show an increase of 32 per cent. on the 1942 levels.

So evidently when the Minister introduced the legislation he felt very happy about it. In fact, he even gave credit to the Leader of the Opposition, Hon. F. J. S. Wise, for getting the first 15 per cent., and went on to say that it was proposed to add another 15 per cent., to which we raised no objection whatever. That means that it worked out at 32 per cent.

The Minister for Lands: You will agree that it is a little more than 32 per cent.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I am not good at mathematics, but I assume that is so. At any rate, it is nothing to what it will be before this is finished. The next extract I shall quote from the Minister's reply seems to me to clinch any argument that it was

intended to exempt certain areas by regulation, such as he has done. The Minister went on to say—

One member stated that this control would be more vexatious than previously.

Evidently that refers to some member on the Opposition side of the House, because that is just what we would say, but the Minister went on to contend that it would not be so. He said—

We are giving certain relief from control and, as we are taking over the machinery of the Commonwealth, how can control be more vexatious than before?

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that I pointed out that the Minister said that control was working all right. He went on to say—

I maintain that there will be an improvement in that respect. Quite a lot has been said about black marketing. This is a most undesirable practice, and the less I hear about it the better I like it. During the war years, reputable real estate agents, men who have been accustomed to doing business on strictly honourable lines, suffered considerably owing to the practices that had grown up. I feel that we shall now be able to allow legitimate business people to engage in their business.

At this stage, the member for North-East Fremantle interjected, pointing out that that applied only with regard to town and suburban lots. The Minister replied—

Yes. I stated that a 15 per cent. increase was allowable on business premises. I agree with the hon. member that that will probably not correct black marketing.

He continued with this very significant statement—

I do not think it is sufficient. It might have been better to lift the lid right off—

I do not know just what lid the Minister suggested might be lifted off—

—but the Government gave earnest consideration to the matter. This is a big responsibility in such a time, especially as we have a full realisation of how values will spiral, and we are doing our best to exercise control that will have the effect of allowing prices to find their true level gradually and not have a severe and sudden spiral in prices that would be bound to upset the economy of the State and probably, to a great extent, bring about inflationary tendencies.

Here again the Minister had better take notice because no longer should he show a desire to growl at members of the Opposition. He continued—

I appreciate the references to the Bill made by members of the Opposition. I believe they have all indicated that they realise the necessity

for giving relief as far as possible, and that they consider that very close control, particularly of vacant lots, has brought about undesirable trading. I thank members for their criticism.

The introductory remarks by the Minister when placing the Bill before the House and the statement he made in reply to the speeches of members on the Opposition side of the House, and particularly to my contribution to the debate, left no doubt in the mind of Opposition members, at any rate—I do not know to what extent members sitting on the Government side of the House were in the Minister's confidence—that the Minister had no intention of exempting other than vacant lands in metropolitan and suburban areas and country towns. I have shown what intimation was given by the Minister as to what he proposed to do, and yet we find that he has provided the drastic exemption which I now seek to have disallowed. My contention is that once the measure left this House and was interfered with in another place—I bow to your desire, Mr. Speaker, in my reference to the other place—it then became a fight, or discussion, between managers representing the two Houses, and not one between the Government and Opposition members or between the Minister and other members of this House and members generally of another place.

I claim that members of this Chamber, irrespective of Party considerations at all, had a right to know what was in the mind of the Minister before he went to the conference of managers. I do not like to use extreme language at any time, but to me it seems very hard to understand that we have not been deceived. If the Minister has an explanation that will undo what I think really happened, it will be an agreeable surprise to me. I do not think there are that number of dumb Doras here that we would be content to walk about for four or five hours if it were not in the belief that at the conference the Minister was putting up a real effort, and certainly not a sham fight. I feel that I can congratulate Mr. Watson, who did a marvellously good job. He entered the Legislative Council to represent properly the people who sent him there—big business. At his first opportunity, he did a very fine job, and I have no hesitation whatever in congratulating him. However, he no doubt will agree that he who laughs last, laughs

best. He went to the conference of managers and there the fight was carried on for 4½ hours. At the end of that time, we went home, leaving Parliament House feeling quite elated; in fact, I told my colleague, the member for Kimberley, when driving home, that it had been time well spent and it was worth while waiting 4½ hours to hear of the win. But what a downfall!

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: It was like a semi-final.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: A fortnight afterwards, these regulations are laid on the Table of the House by the Minister—they almost slipped past me unnoticed—exempting the very regulations that Mr. Watson so carefully fought against in the conference. I do not know if it was a sham fight there or not. I do not know much about what happened at the conference of managers. During all the years I have been a member of Parliament, I have not once asked a manager just what happened at a conference, and I did not do so on this occasion. I would probably have been told to mind my own business—which is a thing I do not like being told. I know that people have said to me that the Minister made this or that statement. I have told them that he did not say anything of the sort in this House. I have also been told that at the conference the Minister agreed to certain things, but I do not know whether that is or is not correct. At any rate, people have no more right to know what happened at a conference of managers than I have. I suggest that this is a very serious matter.

Mr. Graham: Hear, hear!

Hon. A. H. PANTON: It is to me, at any rate, and it should be to all members of the House. If we are to send managers to conferences with definite instructions—after all, that is what it amounts to—it will be realised that that is what we did on this occasion. The Minister disagreed, and we backed him up 100 per cent. Thus there were definite instructions from this House to our managers to adopt a certain course of action. That was done, and they returned to us having given way on only two small matters. The Minister for Education smilingly said it was best for us to leave them alone, as they would be useful for bargaining. Unfortunately, he gave the show away because two members of the Legislative Council were standing in the Chamber lis-

tening to the discussion. I do not know what happened at the conference of managers, and I do not know what the Minister gave away. But if Mr. Watson knew—I say this advisedly—that within a fortnight the regulations about which he had put up such a fight were to be exempted, I do not know why he stopped there for 4½ hours engaged in a fight over them—unless it was just a sham fight, after all. I hope we will not have any more of that sort of thing, whatever may be the fate of the motion I am placing before the House.

As members are aware, I have to move for all the regulations to be disallowed, because we cannot amend them. If the motion is agreed to, then the Minister can easily gazette further regulations exempting the metropolitan, suburban and town lots to which he referred. The Government might like to consider the whole position in the light of what happened yesterday when the Premier was here. If he should see fit to make some inquiry, he will appreciate, in view of what is already apparent, that land values are going to jump very high. A member of the institute was good enough to tell me that town lots were just so much chickenfeed to them at £60 or £70. What those people want is something big, and they have got it—good luck to them! If they are to get something big after the way we discussed the legislation concerned, which received the approval of this House, then the sooner we knock off and—I agree with the member for Fremantle—put an end to conferences of managers and settle the issue on the floor of the House, the better for all concerned.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

### **MOTION—FISHING INDUSTRY.**

*To Inquire by Select Committee.*

Debate resumed from the 29th September, on the following motion by Mr. Leslie:—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the condition of the fishing industry in Western Australia and means whereby greater supplies of local fish at reasonable prices can be made available to the consumer.

**MR. KELLY** (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [5.43]: Before dealing generally with the motion, I would like to discuss some of the statements of the Minister when speaking on the

subject. Before I do that, however, I desire to express my regret at the Minister's absence from the Chamber because of ill-health. I trust it will not be long before he can return to the House and resume his seat. To criticise, even to a minor degree, the Minister's statements is, in the circumstances, somewhat difficult. He commenced his speech by saying that the Government had no objection to the appointment of a Select Committee, but pointed out that all the information that was likely to be obtained as a result of the inquiry was already to be found in the files of the department, so that but little good would result from the work of the Select Committee. If that is so, why does the Minister agree to the appointment of a Select Committee? If a committee be appointed, it will undoubtedly be a great expense to the State. Further, the Minister has said that all information relating to the fishing industry is already on the files of his department, and as no doubt the result of an examination by a Select Committee would reveal that the industry is in an unsatisfactory state, I am wondering why the Minister has not seen fit to implement a policy that would at least improve the position.

I think the department over a period of years has attached far too much importance to the catching of fish and too little to the reproduction and the preservation of fish stocks. The Minister dwelt upon the activities of the department, which are chiefly centred in the establishment of fish processing and canning factories. The Minister rather proudly referred to the expansion of the industry and quoted figures of the catches during the respective seasons of 1941 and 1947, the inference being that the result obtained supported his contention that the industry was making vast strides. The Minister also made mention of the snap-freezing processing plant at Albany. I do not wish to contradict him, but I would like to make it clear to the House that the process which he spoke of as snap-freezing is quick freezing. He lauded the company for its efforts to establish snap-freezing. On the carton which the Minister displayed, these words appear—

The process by which this package has been prepared should not be confused with the often carelessly used phrases of "snap frozen," "deep frozen," "Quick frozen" is the result of careful application of the world's latest quick freezing process.

It is therefore quite clear that the company desired to distinguish between the terms "snap-freezing" and "quick freezing." The finished product must be kept in freezers after having been reduced to 60 degrees minus; this is essential for its preservation. I understand the company has installed freezers and is now installing additional freezers throughout the retail establishments where the fish will be handled. It is imperative that the degree of coldness should be maintained if the product is to be served in a fresh state. From my own experience of this type of treatment of fish, I have found that even after it has been 24 hours away from a temperature of 60 degrees minus, it is still a very palatable food. There was no sign of any taint; in fact, it compared well with fresh fish. The company which has installed this process is well abreast of the times, as I understand there are only two other similar plants in Australia.

The process is extremely popular in most of the progressive countries of the world. In some countries—America, for instance—the selling of whole fish is fast becoming obsolete. I think the company referred to is worthy of the greatest encouragement and assistance in order that its enterprise might be firmly established. As I have said, the product is highly satisfactory and its flavour excellent; even after having been 24 hours away from its frozen condition, it is equal to fresh fillets. The pack is attractive in appearance and this product must prove a distinct boon to country as well as to city people. The pack has this to commend it, that it is hygienic and convenient, while the price at which I understand it is being retailed shows that the minimum profit has been given full consideration. The motion opens up a wide field of inquiry. Previous Select Committees have obtained a fund of information relating to the industry generally, but I feel the result has not been materially to improve the industry. In fact, previous Governments, irrespective of their political complexion, took very little action to implement the recommendations of Select Committees in past years.

I ask the member for Mt. Marshall what guarantee he has, if a Select Committee is now appointed, that the Government will take any more notice of its findings than previous Governments did on past occasions.

The motion asks that a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the condition of the fishing industry and means whereby greater supplies of local fish, at reasonable prices, can be made available to the public. The Select Committee, if appointed, would have ample opportunity to examine fish stocks and fishing grounds, as these would open up a big field for investigation.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Esperance is important in that connection.

Mr. KELLY: Yes, and many other grounds. My reference to fish stocks reminds me of the crayfish industry. I wish to point out how fallacious it is for us, as a State, to be proud of the vast increase in this section of the industry. The Minister compared the catch for the year 1941 with that for the year 1947. He told us that in 1941 the catch was 107,648lb., and in 1947, 2,335,826lb.

Mr. Fox: That was on account of export.

Mr. KELLY: Undoubtedly that stimulated the production, but it is not my point. I am more concerned with the lack of supplies for our own people, who should not suffer in order that we might bolster up a large export trade. We should not be so proud of our large export of crayfish tails when we take into consideration that the tail measurement permitted by the Fisheries Department was  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches. Latterly it has been increased to  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches. What is the position in the other States? In Tasmania, the size of the tail is fixed at  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches, while in New South Wales and Victoria I understood 4 inches is the minimum. Yet we are catching many hundreds of thousands of crayfish with tails of a minimum size of  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches, and it must be borne in mind that this minimum has applied but very recently. The huge increase in the catch in recent years has been at the expense of our crayfishing grounds. Therefore I think we have little to be proud of in commenting on the quantity of crayfish taken from our waters and on the vast increase in the export trade.

In my opinion the Select Committee, if appointed, should direct its inquiries into three quarters, namely, conservation of stocks, reproduction and protection. It must also thoroughly examine the ability and qualifications of fishermen. I think too many people have gone into the fishing industry in the last 12 to 18 months who know

very little about it. To some it appears to be a lucrative means of employment, and to others it simply appeals. It is erroneous for fishermen, or would-be fishermen, to consider it as a large holiday, because that is not the case. The average man who has been fishing in our waters for a number of years and is totally experienced, finds it a most arduous occupation. So, the position with regard to the types of fishermen must be examined by the Select Committee. Their efficiency and equipment must be considered if we are to place the industry on a sound footing, and bring fish to people at a fair price whilst, at the same time, paying to the persons who handle the fish from the sea to the market, reasonable remuneration.

The transport facilities must also receive a tremendous amount of attention. Marketing, storage, and finally the retail side, must all come in for a vast amount of investigation before any Select Committee could report on the industry in general. If this House agrees to appoint a Select Committee, it must establish definite proof that the necessary quantities of fish are available in our waters. Personally, whilst not being a pessimist, I do not think there is an abundance of fish if we take into consideration the amount that would be eaten by our people if the price were within easy range of their incomes. I do not think there would be an abundance on some of the fishing grounds once the supplies were drawn on to suit the needs of the State. Over long periods we find that very few fish are taken from the ocean, but that the majority of the retail supplies come from cold storage. It is very difficult to estimate just what quantity would be required to satisfy the needs of the public.

Another point that exercises one's mind is that of the degree of cheapness which would justify the use of the term "reasonable prices." I think that expression was used by the member for Mt. Marshall. That would have to be considered on its merits and after an examination of the industry. During the past five or six years, many thousands of pounds of fish have been retailed at prices ranging from 1s. 1½d. to 1s. 4d. per lb. The variety has included mullet, herring, tailor, bream, and skipjack. Does the mover of the motion envisage a much lower rate than that which I have quoted? If so, in what way would costs be

proportionate—that is to say, from the actual catching of the fish to the purchase by the retailer, when there is only a margin of 1s. 1½d.? Let me deal with the fishermen's angle, and I will commence with the man at Shark Bay. He receives 4d. to 4½d. per lb. on the average. His work there, as on most other parts of our coast, is purely seasonal. The hazards are great and losses are inescapable by the majority of fishermen, whether totally experienced or not.

I recently inspected the returns of a number of our most competent fishermen. The returns for some trips are undoubtedly high and would lead one to the opinion that those men were making a fortune, but from other trips of the same fishermen, the returns are very poor. Their expenses are always high. Frequently during the netting of a shoal of fish, a shark will come within the area of the net, and, before being liberated or killed, it will cause a great amount of damage to costly equipment. I understand that recently nets have increased in price a further 55 per cent. on the normal amount. Losses of operational time through bad weather, too, are very considerable. So, having regard to all the aspects, from the fisherman's point of view, I do not think it is possible for any great reduction to take place in the amount he receives.

We must next consider the facilities for transporting fish from the fisherman to the market, and again I take Shark Bay as the starting point. Before the war, Shark Bay was serviced by five vessels—the "Koolama," "Centaur," "Gorgon," "Koolinda" and "Kybra." Of recent years only the "Kybra" has been on the run and she makes a trip about once a month. So, to overcome the disabilities of the fisherman at Shark Bay, some alternative means of transport had to be provided, and road transport was established. I believe that two trips weekly have been made for some time from Shark Bay to Geraldton. To provide this form of transport it was necessary to establish a freezing works at Denham so that ice could be supplied to the fisherman and refrigerated storage made available to him in order that his catches could be held between trips. The road freight from Shark Bay to Geraldton is 3d. per lb., so that the fish, purchased from the fisherman at 4½d., has now reached the figure of 7½d. at Geraldton.

The rail charges from Geraldton to Perth, or Fremantle as the case may be, are roughly another 1d., bringing the total to 8½d. Other handling charges, together with the cost of bringing the fish to market, amount to ½d. per lb., making the total 9d. It will be agreed that up to this point there has not been any great surplus of profit in any single avenue. That applies to both the catching and the handling of the fish. Marketing charges are roughly 10 per cent. on the price, and amount to about 1½d. So, before the retailer has a chance to sell the fish at all, it has cost him 10½d. per lb. That does not include schnapper, which is a little more costly and retails at a higher price. What happens to the difference between the cost of fish to the retailer at 10½d. and the amount of 1s. 1½d. to 1s. 4d. paid by the consumer under price-fixing? I ask that question of the hon. member who introduced the motion, to bring into relief some of the costs that the retailer has to face in the handling of the fish in the city or, at an advanced rate, in the country.

In Perth, rentals are high. I have made inquiries of several of the shops in the city, and I find that some of them are paying as much as £20 per week for quite small premises. Of course they are not all paying as much. That applies to shops in the main thoroughfares of the city. On top of the high rental, the retailers have to pay wages and meet costs in connection with wrapping paper, electric light, storage, ice, refrigeration and general wastage—and there are many ways by which general wastage occurs. On that basis, if the price could have been maintained at 1s. 1½d. to 1s. 4d. per lb. the amount of margin to the retailer would not be great. This was virtually the position during the period when price-fixing operated. Since price controls were lifted on the 20th of last month I think I would be right in saying that abnormal prices have prevailed. The ruling prices at the present time are as follows:—Bream, 1s. 4d. to 1s. 5d.; herring, 1s. 4d.; pilchard, 1s. 4d.; skate, 1s.; mullet, 1s. 3d., 1s. 4d. and 1s. 10d.—why the big disparity there I do not know—tailer, 1s. 4d.; whiting, 1s. 6d.; white fillets—presumably shark—2s. 4d.; and schnapper, 1s. 10d. and 2s. schnapper cutlets—no, that is wrong, they

were not branded schnapper cutlets but “cutlets”—are selling at 2s. 9d. and 2s. 10d.

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

Mr. KELLY: At the tea adjournment I had quoted the price of cutlets and remarked that they were just as branded because they represented no definite quality or type. Yet they were retailed at a price as high as 2s. 11d. per lb. That, I remind members, is the price that has applied since price-fixing has been lifted although it has been increased to the general public. However, fishermen are still on the same price of 4½d. per lb. that existed prior to the lifting of control. Throughout my remarks, which apply to the period when price-fixing was in existence and since the lifting of controls, I have referred to legitimate sales at fixed rates. There is another side to the picture, and I think some mention was made of it by the Minister. These conditions began when the price demanded by some fishermen was above that allowed. Of course, for competitive reasons it became necessary, in order to fulfil contracts for some of the retailers, to make purchases at prices higher than the fixed rates and in some cases more than the minimum was paid.

It might safely be said that it was during this period the “under counter” trade sprang up in this State and in many instances it was conducted at above the fixed rates. Also, there was a large percentage of under-standard quality fish available and visible to the general public at the fixed rate so that no exception could be taken to that price. However, the discerning customers were served frequently from under the counter and the price factor in those sales did not enter into the picture. Cafes, restaurants and other public institutions bought direct from fishermen in some instances and they, too, paid high prices. During the whole of this period we dealt largely with the fish obtained from our own waters.

At about this particular time chaos entered the industry and it was found that in almost every retail shop in the city imported fillets were on sale. These were of excellent quality and at a price within the range of the majority of people, that is, 1s. 9½d. per lb. Also, with the imported fillets no waste resulted. Some fishermen, who previously had enjoyed a price higher than the maximum, found that this was not



obtainable from the sources previously exploited and so the "under-the-counter" or "behind-the-scenes" trade practically went out of existence. Then again, because the catches of the various fishermen in different parts of the coast were being consigned to cold storage and not into the retail shops, the cold storage chambers became filled and the fishermen in most cases were rendered idle for quite a long period.

All this fish had been held in storage during a period when imported fillets were being sold in the Perth markets and throughout the State, and consequently considerable deterioration took place. When the supply of imported fillets was exhausted we found that the public was being offered quite a lot of deteriorated and inferior fish. At this time, too, the Government was approached and requested to do something to relieve the position. The Chief Secretary told his interviewers that it was only a passing phase and that matters would rectify themselves. I venture to say that the fishing industry and its various disabilities will not rectify themselves, particularly if no action is taken by the Government to bring about better conditions throughout the industry.

The only lasting course that will place the entire industry on a sound and satisfactory basis is the appointment of a board of control. This is no new idea because the suggestion of appointing such a board was made several years ago when the Opposition was in power, and I understand consideration was being given to it about the time the Government assumed office. The principle of boards controlling any particular industry is not new. As a matter of fact, Queensland manages its fishing industry through a board of control and I understand, although I have not had the exact figures, that that board manages the industry at a very low over-all cost.

Then again, we read that the British Trawlers' Federation of Grimsby has recommended to the British Government that a board of control take charge of the entire fishing industry of Great Britain. Other nations have already adopted the principle of controlling the fishing industry by means of boards of control. On the 16th of August, 1948, the Minister was written to by representatives of the fishing industry on these lines—

Marketing of Fish, Bill for Voluntary Board of Control: Provision for the marketing, sale and disposal of fish and for the establishment of a Board of Control was considered some two years ago by the then Government in power.

The Bill followed closely the recommendations of the Advisory Committee which was set up by the previous Government.

It was desirable to have a State-wide plan ready for proclamation and to avoid inevitable chaos which was and is now existing in the industry.

The proposed Bill would assure the continuity of organised marketing. Towards the close of the previous Government's term of office, an advisory committee was appointed to inquire into every aspect of the trade, stabilisation and marketing of fish. The advisory committee's report followed closely on the lines of the Queensland Fish Board.

Voluntary Board: The Bill, however, did not provide for a voluntary board, but a voluntary board could be appointed. The voluntary board could operate for any 12 months or two years until the board got firmly established. The only paid servants of the board would be the secretary and staff.

It was firstly intended that a board of, say, four members should be appointed, three members being elected by the fishing industry, consisting of a wholesaler, a retailer and a fisherman, and one nominated by the Minister.

The marketing of fish, which was to be the primary function of the board, would be governed by relative sections in the Bill which covered the delivery of all fish to the board, issuing the necessary certificates and the making of all payments as well as the sale of the fish by the board.

Provision could also be made for the board to submit a report of its proceedings to the Minister, annually, and for this report together with the accounts as last audited and a copy of the auditor's report to be tabled in Parliament.

Apart from the merits or demerits of open marketing, the essentials of open marketing today are not suitable neither are they available at the various centres. Whilst consideration could be given to the establishment of a voluntary board—there exists today, a very strong desire among all sections of the industry that they be brought together into a common organisation, such as proposed in the Act, now already prepared by the Crown Law Department.

All fish caught by fishermen, fish which had been purchased from the board, fish sold by the board and fish subject to interstate trade would all come within the scope of the Act.

Although we all preserve the freedom of trade and intercourse between the States in the Commonwealth, the Act when proclaimed would be valid provided fish intended by the owner for interstate trade was specifically exempted.

If a voluntary board were appointed, a ballot of the entire industry could be ascertained

whether the industry desired legislation to continue in its present form or whether the board should continue to operate on a temporary basis.

A board of control is fully capable of solving the many problems of the industry and in addition it could make a big contribution towards investigating the prices of fish, the importations of fish into W.A. and the shortages of fish. So long, however, as present conditions exist there will always be a bottle neck in the industry, black marketing and extreme high prices.

That letter was sent to the Minister when chaos in the industry was rife in this State, but he and his colleagues decided that there was still no necessity to take any action, although all interested parties in the industry were firmly convinced that there was only one way of overcoming the disabilities of the industry and that was by the formation of a board of control. I agree that that is the best way to overcome the difficulties of the industry. A board of control would be more positive than could be the activities of a Select Committee. Such a committee would take a long time to reach the recommendations stage, and even then the Government might not be prepared to adopt the recommendations. We have experience to guide us in coming to that conclusion. On previous occasions Governments have been confronted with the findings of Select Committees and very little has materialised for the benefit of the industries concerned.

A properly constituted board of control with full power to act could commence operations almost immediately after being appointed. If stability in the fishing industry is to be established, there is no alternative, in my opinion, to the appointment of a board of control. Should the Government not be prepared to consider the formation of such a board in order once for all to place the industry, which the various participants have said is in a sad state, on a proper footing, the only course to adopt is to appoint a Select Committee. However I have very little faith, not in the operations of a Select Committee, but in the action that might be taken on its recommendations.

**HON. J. T. TONKIN** (North-East Fremantle) [7.47]: In my view one does not need to have had considerable experience as a fisherman or to possess extensive know-

ledge of the industry in order to discuss this motion. The object set out in the motion is an admirable one; it is one with which we may all without exception agree. That object is to ascertain means whereby greater supplies of local fish at reasonable prices can be made available to the consumer.

The mere fact of the motion's appearing on the notice paper indicates that the trade is in a most unsatisfactory condition. People cannot obtain adequate supplies of fish at reasonable prices. Fishermen are from time to time laying up their boats and refraining from going out to get fish and, while this is occurring, large quantities of fish are held in cold store and the charges are slowly but surely swallowing any profits likely to be made. In a situation like that people interested in various aspects of the trade look for some possible solution. As a result of that situation the member for Mt. Marshall has tabled this motion for discussion.

Surely it is obvious to all that the problem is one of marketing. Men are able to catch large quantities of fish, and, in various periods, far more than under existing conditions the market can absorb. So our problem is not one of catching fish at present, although that could conceivably occur later on if proper measures are not taken. The problem at the moment is one of marketing or distribution. This problem is not peculiar to Western Australia. It has been experienced by other States and other countries much older than we are and, in some instances, very positive measures have been taken to effect a remedy.

This Government has declared through its Minister that it is not in favour of boards. The Minister in control of fisheries told a deputation that the Government was not in favour of boards and that he definitely would not agree to a marketing board for this industry. When reference was made to the Queensland marketing control board, he went further and said he had been informed that that was not a success and, as Western Australia in the near future would very likely be engaged in exporting large quantities of fish—building up a large export trade—he felt it would be undesirable to have the industry shackled with any marketing board. That was the effect of his statement.

I regret that through illness the Minister is not present to hear what I have to say, because I believe I could convince him that he had been badly informed, if informed in the manner indicated by him. This problem is not new to us. It has been under consideration in this State for several years. My colleague, the member for Leederville, when Acting Minister for Fisheries at one time, convened a meeting which was the result of an effort on the part of all interested parties. The initial meeting, a report of which appeared in "The West Australian" of 10th October, 1945, formed an advisory committee. The article referred to had this to say—

More equitable and wider distribution of fish to the public of Western Australia, suppression of black-marketing, stabilisation of prices at a reasonable figure and acquisition of port installations and refrigerators are the main objectives of a committee elected at a meeting of all sections of the trade and of representatives of Government departments convened yesterday by the Minister for Lands, Mr. Panton, acting on behalf of the Minister for the North-West, Mr. Coverley, who controls fisheries. The meeting, which was addressed by the Commonwealth Superintendent of Marketing and Distribution of Fish, Mr. F. J. Haase, and which evinced a desire to ask for legislation to provide for more orderly distribution, elected the following committee.

The advisory committee, representative of all sections of the trade, gave consideration to the matter and, at a subsequent conference in Mr. Panton's office, made recommendations which were adopted. I quote now from "The West Australian" of the 13th February, 1946, under the heading "Fish Supplies; Control by Board"—

Representatives of all sections of the fishing industry in this State met in the office of the Acting Minister for Fisheries, Mr. A. H. Panton, yesterday and adopted the recommendations of the advisory committee appointed last October as the basis of legislation for the control of the industry.

The advisory committee, which was selected from producers, wholesalers and retailers, recommended the appointment of a board to control the industry. The meeting yesterday decided that in addition to the three sections mentioned being represented on the board, a consumers' representative should also be appointed. In its report the committee asserted that any scheme of organised marketing would require to include (a) payment for catch at port of landing; (b) a guarantee that all marketable fish would be received; (c) a stabilised price to the producer with seasonal adjustments; (d) adequate representation of producers on the marketing authority.

It may be a coincidence or not but those are precisely the things which the Queensland set-up provides for the industry in that State. Yet the Minister here said he understood that the Queensland marketing board was not a success. I have copies of three annual reports of the Queensland Fish Board established under the Fish Supply Management Acts of 1935-46. In quoting from the 1946 report, which covers the year ended the 30th June, 1946, I desire to let the House know something of the charges imposed on the industry as a result of the existence of this marketing authority.

Market dues on fish actually sold by the board amounted to £3,931 7s. 2d. and the cold storage charge on such fish amounted to £1,121 5s. 7d., a total of £5,052 12s. 9d. Taking the total quantity of fish sold by the board, 5,593,936lb. the actual cost to the fisherman for market dues was .168d. per lb. and the charge for cold storage of such fish as was placed in cold store pending sales was .048d. per lb. With the addition of commission amounting to £13,867 16s. 7d., the cost to the fisherman per lb. of fish for commission, market dues and cold storage was only .81d. per lb. or less than  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per lb. For the year 1947, I have not the report before me, but the total cost of all charges was .55d. per lb., little more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Those charges included cold storage, commission and even transport. Therefore by no stretch of imagination can it be said that this organisation is an expensive control board for the industry.

Mr. Leslie: Did you say that that figure included transport?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. The board receives the fish at the port, pays the fishermen a certain price for it and transports the fish to wherever it has to go.

Mr. Smith: Does that include cleaning the fish?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Not so far as I know, and the cost is slightly in excess of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a pound. This board has gone from strength to strength, as might be ascertained from a perusal of the figures supplied in each annual report. In the year 1935-36, the quantity of fish received for sale by the board was 3,457,800 lb. There was a steady increase, with the exception of the middle war years. I do not want to weary the House by quoting all these figures, but I will give those for the last two years in

this table. For 1944-45, the quantity was 3,673,550 lb., or roughly nearly 200,000 lb. more than in the initial year; although during the period between the initial year and that year, the quantity dealt with had been in several instances close to 5,000,000 lb. For the year 1945-46, there was a very big increase to the large total of 5,635,096 lb.; and if my memory serves me rightly, there was approximately a 10 per cent. increase on that figure for 1946-47.

So an all-time record was established by the board for the quantity of fish handled, and we find that the board has erected premises at various ports and from time to time extended its facilities to such an extent that I understand they are available at all ports on the Queensland coast for receiving fish from the fishermen. The attractive feature about this is that the fisherman has no worry with regard to the disposal of his fish. His job is to go out and catch fish and deliver it at the port, and the marketing board guarantees to take the whole of the catch at a certain price. So the fisherman knows how he stands when he gets his cash. Having delivered his fish, he can go out for more. He knows what his return has been, and he can go out for more without being concerned about having it put in cold storage and wondering whether there will be a profit when it is disposed of.

The marketing board struck a very real difficulty at a period when, for certain types of fish, the market was glutted. The mullet or the herring season, for example, would result in larger quantities being available than the board cared to handle at the time. That involved the board in a fairly substantial loss, because it had agreed to take all the fish that the men delivered. To overcome that difficulty, last year the board adopted the principle of grading the fish and of fixing a different price in glut seasons. So now the fisherman knows that in between seasons when the various types of fish are scarce, his price will be a certain figure, and in the glut season the price will be somewhat lower. He also knows that his fish will be graded into either or both of two grades, according to the type of fish he delivers. The fishermen are satisfied with that arrangement and the industry is stable. There is no need to lay the boats up. The fishermen continue to be engaged in the business of catching fish, and the board

arranges distribution, not only for the consuming public in Brisbane but also for the consuming public in the country areas of Queensland as well.

Is not that the set-up at which we are aiming; some system of marketing which will enable the fisherman to go about his business of catching fish without any interruption and which will, at the same time, ensure an ever-increasing supply of wholesome fish at reasonable prices to the great body of consumers, whether in the town or in the country? That is what the Queensland board appears to have done, if we are to take notice of the annual reports presented to Parliament. I suppose the advisory committees formed in 1945 and 1946 were aware of the existence of this board in Queensland and of the work being done, and that is why they advocated a somewhat similar organisation in Western Australia. But the Minister has informed them that he will have none of it. The member for Mt. Marshall desires us to have a Select Committee for the purpose of ascertaining what he set out in his motion. What will happen then?

I agree with the Minister that this information is already on the files. The Minister told the House that, and we know it is a fact. The necessary information to have this question determined is already available, so why have a Select Committee to get information we already have? It would be all right if we had a guarantee that if after consideration the Select Committee recommended a marketing board, the Government would introduce the necessary legislation. I would say, "By all means let us go for the Select Committee and go for it quickly"; because I feel that, with the information available, there would be only one finding of the committee and that would be a recommendation for legislation along the lines of the Queensland Act. But I do not like chasing futilities very much, and it seems to me that to have a Select Committee to probe evidence we already have and then make a solemn report to Parliament and let the matter rest there is only to waste the time of members of the committee and of the House, more especially as we have already had a declaration from the Minister in charge of the department that the Government is opposed to boards and he does not want the industry shackled with a marketing authority because in the

near future he expects Western Australia to engage in the export trade.

I think that is a wonderful example of wishful thinking. If something is not done to put stability into this industry, without a doubt it will seriously languish. In recent days I have had discussions with men whose capital has been sunk in this business, and they are very perturbed at the state of the industry. They have been instrumental in having large quantities of fish caught and delivered at Fremantle, and have been in the unhappy position of having that fish in cold storage because it could not be placed on the market at a satisfactory figure. One man told me—and showed me documents to substantiate what he said—that he had paid £90 in one month for cold storage and £60 in another month. It would need to be a wonderful business that would stand that drain upon it; those charges having to be made out of the money received for the sale of the fish.

To reduce cold storage liabilities, this company made the fish available to the retailers at a reduction of 3d. a pound. But that did not result in a reduction of 3d. a pound to the consumers. The price remained the same, with the result that there was no solution to the problem at all, and the market was not expanded nor a greater demand for the fish created. The experience in Queensland appears to be that, as a result of the operations of the marketing board, the demand for fish has continued to expand and the supply has increased as well, indicating the healthy state of the industry. That is the very opposite to what we have here, with the industry in a most unhealthy state. Other industries in Western Australia have been given the protection of marketing boards. The very biggest industry which is now to receive the very definite protection of a board is the wheat-growing industry.

As a result of the decision of the farmers, there is to be set up an organisation which will give a guaranteed price for the product delivered. That is what the fishermen want. Are they any different from wheat-growers with regard to what they are entitled to have? Do they differ in merit from the potato-growers, or the dairymen, or the onion-growers, or the growers of grapes? Each of the industries I have mentioned has been given a marketing board, a controlling

authority to carry out proper and controlled distribution. We know what is wrong with the fishing trade, so let us get busy and do something to try to put it right. We do not have to break new ground in this respect because we have the benefit of the experience of other States and countries. Queensland is not the only place where a marketing board has been set up.

I have literature here showing that there are several boards in Great Britain, one of them controlling only one type of fish. I refer to the Herring Marketing Board. Herring fishing is a very big industry in Great Britain. But other countries have seen the need for some form of marketing control instead of leaving the business to the old laissez-faire idea in the hope that it will work out all right in the long run. It never does—not for the producer or the consumer. The two bodies of people suffering today in this industry are undoubtedly the consumers, who want more fish at reasonable prices and cannot get it; and the fishermen, who are catching more fish than they can sell and are not prospering in the process.

So we have to come to grips with the marketing problem to find a solution. Therefore, let us try what has been done elsewhere. This marketing board did not cost the Queensland Government very much. It loaned £15,000 to the board in the initial stages, and the money has by no means been lost to the Government. The Government has a marketing authority which has brought stability to the industry and the very notable development of the industry appears to be complete justification for the step it took.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Who owns the freezers in Queensland?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Marketing Board, which is an authority established under the Fish Supply Management Act. That board has had to acquire premises—it has rented them in some instances and in the other cases has had them erected—and has established markets and depots for the receiving and disposing of fish. It licenses people to sell the fish and disposes of the catches of the fishermen to those licensed sellers. So far as I can ascertain, there has been very little complaint. The board is representative of the various sections of the industry and of the customers also, and it carries on the business of the

industry to the satisfaction of all concerned. I can come to no other conclusion, after having read the reports that have come into my possession.

Hon. E. Nulsen: And the price of fish is much lower in Queensland than in Western Australia, I take it?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Undoubtedly, because the costs to the fisherman are so much lower. Another pleasing aspect is the assistance that the board has given the fishermen in various ways. I think its policy has undergone a change once or twice but broadly it is this—

#### Assistance to Fishermen.

As mentioned in previous reports, the Board, since its inception, has been making advances to fishermen not only for boats, engines, gear and equipment, but also for the purchase of nets, the advances being repaid by deductions from the proceeds of the catch. This policy is being continued and substantial amounts will have to be advanced to place fishermen back in the industry on their discharge from the Services. Most of the fishermen's boats were taken over by the Navy at the outbreak of war.

That is a quotation from the report for 1945. The report for the year ended the 30th June, 1946, reads—

#### Assistance to Fishermen.

As mentioned in previous reports, the Board is continuing its activities of assisting fishermen in the purchase of nets and other equipment, but during the year the Board has advanced a further step in this direction by setting up a service department at the market, whereby the Board purchases for the fishermen not only nets, ropes, corks, etc., but all classes of fishing equipment for net and line fishermen, and keeps stock of same where possible. The Board will also purchase parts for fishermen's motor boats and provide any other service required by the fishermen. The Board does not now finance fishermen for the purchase of boats and engines but has arranged with the Industrial Finance Department of the Commonwealth Bank to provide the funds required by the fishermen for this purpose.

With the creation of markets and depots all cases for the transport of fish are being provided by the Board and the fishermen are not now required to supply or own any cases. Assistance is also being given to fishermen to obtain cases in the small areas where no depots have as yet been established.

That indicates substantial help to the fishermen—welcome help, I imagine. Here we have an organisation that renders considerable assistance to the fishermen in the purchase of gear and the like, and that guarantees to take over the catch at a certain price.

That same authority arranges for the distribution of the fish so that the greatest possible number of people can be assured of supplies. Is that not the end that we desire to attain in Western Australia? We all acknowledge that the present conditions are unsatisfactory, and so far no other solution has been suggested. The people most concerned in this matter, having had a meeting and considered the question, have suggested the establishment of a marketing authority along the lines of that operating in Queensland. In the light of that, why do we want a Select Committee to go further into the matter?

All we want is a declaration from the Government that it will give this experiment a trial in Western Australia. This system has gone beyond the experimental stage in Queensland, having been in operation there for 12 or 13 years and, though it would be experimental in this State, it would not cost much to set up that authority and we would then be able to ascertain whether it was of benefit to the industry. The fact that those concerned want it should cause the Government to give the proposal most serious consideration. I have no option, if I wish to see the matter advanced, but to vote for the appointment of a Select Committee. If I voted against that course I would achieve nothing, and if I vote for it I feel that I still will not achieve much, unless I can get from the Government a declaration that it will take some notice of the findings and recommendations of the Select Committee.

Mr. Leslie: No Government would give that undertaking.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It should, in order that we may be certain that the Select Committee will not be an utter futility. The Minister has already informed the House that he has all the necessary information on his files and I think the Government should give an assurance that the Select Committee will not be a complete waste of time, if it is appointed. If there is even the faintest hope of its achieving something I will be prepared to help it along.

On motion by Mr. Fox, debate adjourned.

#### BILL—NORTHAMPTON LANDS RESUMPTION.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

## **BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.**

Received from the Council and read a first time.

## **BILL—NEW TRACTORS, MOTOR VEHICLES AND FENCING MATERIALS CONTROL.**

### *Council's Further Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council and had appointed Hon. E. H. Gray, Hon. R. M. Forrest and the Honorary Minister for Agriculture, Hon. G. B. Wood, as managers for the Council, the President's room as the place of meeting and the time 2 p.m., tomorrow.

### *As to Time for Holding Conference.*

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:  
I move—

That the Council be requested to alter the time of meeting from 2 p.m. to 11.30 a.m. tomorrow.

My reason is that I feel it is not necessary or fair to members that we should perpetuate a system that has been in operation for many years, whereby a conference begins at midnight and the great majority of members are kept wandering about the premises instead of being able to go home to bed while the conference managers are meeting. The Government does not think that is a proper way to conduct business. If the conference managers meet at 2 p.m. tomorrow I doubt whether they will have had time to come to a decision by 3.45 p.m. I think it would be better if the conference met at 11.30 a.m. and the House were called together on the ringing of the bells at 3.45 p.m. tomorrow in order to receive the report. The House could then meet at the usual hour of 4.30 p.m.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I will not oppose the motion as I feel that the Minister has made a sensible move in this matter. He appreciates the unfairness of having members waiting round the precincts of Parliament while conferences are in session. Since this Cham-

ber appointed me one of its managers something has developed that causes me to ask that I be relieved of the responsibility of representing this House at the conference. When the managers were being appointed I had some doubts as to whether we should go into conference with the Legislative Council, in view of the attitude adopted by the representatives of the Government in another place. I quoted from a newspaper cutting what had occurred in another place. At that time I did not have opportunity to read all that was said regarding this matter in that Chamber but subsequently I did so and, as a result of what I read, I feel that I cannot now conscientiously go into that conference and argue the point on matters that I feel are already decided. It was said by the Acting Chief Secretary in another place, when he was agreeing to an amendment for the exemption of cars of under 12 horsepower, that that provision had really been included at the direction of the Minister though it had been decided against by the Government. The words he used were—

I intend to agree that the control of motorcars of under 12 horsepower shall not be brought within the scope of the Bill. That was not intended. It was done by order of the Minister.

When I read that, I wondered what it meant and the only conclusion I could arrive at was that the Government had decided to exclude cars of under 12 horsepower but that the Minister had put that provision in the Bill against the decision of the Government. I therefore saw the Minister for Transport and pointed this out to him and asked what it meant. He could not tell me what it meant so I informed him that I would see the Government's representative in another place and ascertain whether it meant what I thought it did. I told the Minister that, if it did so, I could not conscientiously act as a representative at the conference.

I saw the Honorary Minister in another place and he told me that the words to which I have referred meant that the Bill was not to include motorcars of under 12 horsepower but that the Minister intended by order to include them. It is a repetition of what we had before. We are being asked to agree to one thing here and the Government has in the back of its mind something else which it intends to do. I

do not know who is to blame with regard to the matter, but this method of doing business does not satisfy me. I am not going to attend any conference to argue conscientiously for a point of view when I feel that the Government wants something different from what it proposes in this House. We have already had one example of that and this appears to be a second one following closely after it.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: A new technique.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister in another place has said that it was never intended that this should be in the Bill and yet we have to go and fight to have it kept there. What sort of a situation is that? It was not intended that it should be in the Bill, yet the managers of this place have to go along and fight for it to be kept in the Bill. Just imagine what would happen in the conference if one of the members of another place stated that it was never intended that it should be in the Bill and asked why should there be all the argument about it? What would the answer be? Under those circumstances I feel it is an utter futility for me to attend the conference and I ask the House to relieve me of the responsibility and appoint somebody else in my place.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I regret the decision of the member for North-East Fremantle and I hope that on reconsideration he will decide to accept the position to which the House has elected him, and which I ask him to accept. I give him an assurance, and he will find it in "Hansard," that when I introduced the Bill in this House the provision was to include all motorcars, and I specifically mentioned motorcars up to 12 horse-power. I stated that the control had been released by the Commonwealth and when the member for Fremantle interjected I referred him to the "Daily News" of that night, where it was recorded that the Commonwealth Minister for Transport had found it necessary to resume control.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Unfortunately we have had one instance of where the Government changed its opinion over-night.

The Minister for Lands: That is not correct.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The answer the Minister gave to my question this afternoon, proves it conclusively.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Whatever may have been said elsewhere, the Government stands by the Bill as introduced in this House and by the recorded statements I made when introducing it. If members will refer to "Hansard" they will see that I stated that it was hoped the control of vehicles up to 10 and 12 horse-power would be released within two months or so.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: What is the answer to the statement by the Minister in another place? He will be on the conference, that is the trouble.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: As I assured the House earlier, we are going there to fight for the decision of this House. In reply to the statement made by the member for North-East Fremantle that it was the intention of the Minister, and he was referring to me, to proclaim this by regulation, I would remind him that the Minister controlling the Act will be the Honorary Minister for Agriculture. I only introduced it in this House because it had to be introduced in the Legislative Assembly. Consequently if any orders were to be made they would be made by the Honorary Minister for Agriculture and not by me.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That makes it worse.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I wish to make it quite clear that neither the Government nor myself had any intention of introducing anything such as that by regulation. We were perfectly clear and outspoken in our attitude.

Mr. Rodoreda: It is time someone resigned if that is the case.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I appeal to the hon. member to reconsider his attitude. If some statement has been made, maybe by mistake, in the other place, I do not think that is any reason why we should be forced into an intolerable position in this House. I would be most reluctant indeed to be forced to pick a team of managers without representation from the other side of the House. I again appeal to the hon. member to reconsider his attitude and accept the posi-



tion as a manager. I give him every assurance that he will get support from me, and I think I can answer for the other manager as well, to see that the Bill, as we want it, is agreed to.

*Point of Order.*

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Mr. Speaker, what action is open to me, in order that I may be absolved from the responsibility of attending the conference? I have made it plain that I do not desire to go to the conference and I have given my reasons. I feel that it may not be a healthy conference for some people, so I think it would be better, in the interests of the Government, to appoint somebody else because I feel strongly about the matter. This is another trick being put over us by somebody and I am not going to be a party to it in any shape or form. I will refer to what happened before when the appropriate time comes and I will prove what I said up to the hilt.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot.

Hon J. T. Tonkin: I can.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Minister made a statement on the Thursday that certain things were to be included in the Bill as well as certain provisions, but on the same day, in another place, the Minister representing the Government made a statement of policy which was entirely different. When I asked the Minister here when the decision was made, he gave a date which coincided with the delivery of the speech in another place, and which was a day after he delivered a speech in this House. If that does not prove that the Government changed its mind over-night, I do not know what does. Under the circumstances I ask the House to absolve me from the necessity of having to attend the conference and to select somebody else in my place.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What can the member for North-East Fremantle do to be exempted from serving on the team of managers?

Mr. Speaker: The Minister will make his own arrangements.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It has nothing to do with the Minister. The member for North-East Fremantle has asked the House to do something, and he should be given a "no" answer. He should be granted

exemption and I do not see why you, Mr. Speaker, should say that the Minister will make his own arrangements. The House will make the arrangements.

Mr. Speaker: The member for North-East Fremantle has given his reasons and, as the Minister is in charge of the Bill, it is no concern of the Speaker.

The Minister for Transport: I must ask the Acting Leader of the Opposition if the views of the member for North-East Fremantle coincide with all members of the Opposition and whether it is the intention that no member of the Opposition shall accept appointment as a manager.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I have not had an opportunity to consult any members of the Opposition on the matter. I have been extremely busy today, especially since tea, preparing material for a speech which I must make in this House tomorrow. Consequently it has been impossible for me even to follow the course which the debate has taken since the tea adjournment. If the Minister wants to test out the position as to whether any member of the Opposition side is prepared to serve on the team of managers at the conference, he would have to try by nominating one or other members, of the Opposition, or perhaps by adjourning the matter for the time being.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: In the event of a member asking to be relieved from the position of a manager, is it not your duty, Mr. Speaker, to put the question to the House? He should be permitted to withdraw if he so wishes.

Mr. Speaker: I have given my ruling and I stand by it.

*Debate Resumed.*

Question put and passed.

**MOTION—TIMBER INDUSTRY.**

*As to Benefits for Workers.*

Debate resumed from the 29th September on the following motion by Mr. Reynolds:—

That in the opinion of this House the timber workers of this State are entitled to the same benefits as the Collie miners are receiving under the Collie Miners' Amenity Fund proclaimed in March, 1948.

to which the Minister for Forests had moved an amendment as follows:—

That all words after the word "house" in line 2 of the motion be struck out and the following words inserted in lieu:—"The Govern-

ment should examine the position as to the provision by the sawmilling industry of amenities for timber workers."

**MR. MAY** (Collie—on amendment) [8.40]: As one who has the honour to represent quite a number of timber workers, I welcome the resolution introduced by the member for Forrest. In my opinion there is no more loyal or hard-working section of the community than the timberworkers. Down through the years the timberworker has been a most consistent and most loyal worker for the State and the work in which he engages is of a very arduous nature. I regard most timberworkers as being very badly circumstanced as regards conveniences when taking into consideration the amenities enjoyed by many other sections of the community.

The housing conditions, water supplies, roads, etc., are all inadequate. There is no such thing as electric light and many other items that I could mention which are enjoyed by the public in the larger towns. The Minister when speaking to the motion showed that he was in sympathy with it and, although he moved an amendment, I feel that the objects set out to be achieved by the member for Forrest can still be done under the amendment. The Minister referred to the fact that most timbermills are now very small and that the life of small mills is short as compared with the large mills that were in existence in days gone by. That really makes the necessity for the motion more urgent. After all when 30 or 40 people go into the bush, where there are no roads, nothing but the virgin bush, they deserve some consideration. In numerous cases those men who go to such jobs have families, some of them large, and there is little or nothing to interest the families at the mills except the existence undertaken by the breadwinner to earn his pay.

Timber, like coal, is a national asset. We do not have to grow the trees; they are already there in the bush. For that very reason, I feel that the workers engaged in the industry are entitled to some consideration arising from the benefits derived from that national asset. There are many directions in which amenities could be provided for the people there. In the course of his remarks, the Minister referred to large mills like that at Pemberton, but there are many other centres that he could have mentioned.

Pemberton is more or less like Collie, seeing that the industry there is centralised with a large community that has grown up, with the result that those employed there can enjoy most of the amenities that are available to other sections of the people. Once we get away from those larger timbermills, then the question of providing amenities becomes most urgent.

I agree with the Minister that people who are prepared to withdraw themselves as it were from civilisation, are deserving of more consideration than those who reside in the metropolitan area and other closely settled districts. On account of the scattered nature of their work, timberworkers must be dealt with, from the amenity point of view, differently from those who, for instance, can enjoy the privileges available at a large centre like Collie. I do not think the member for Forrest, when he moved the motion, intended that the same set-up should apply, but rather to direct attention to the need for amenities and not so much to draw a comparison between the coalminers and the timberworkers. Down the years the men employed in the forests have been more or less poorly paid individuals, considering the nature of their work and the circumstances in which they live. It is quite impossible to provide up-to-date schooling facilities or amenities such as can be enjoyed in settled areas, in view of the scattered nature of the work throughout the bush.

The fact that timbermills are not permanent undertakings makes it all the more necessary for some facilities to be provided whereby the families of the workers concerned can keep pace, more or less, with those in more favoured districts, from the point of view of education and so forth. The Minister seemed to be concerned as to what type of amenities could be provided. I suggest that the means of providing them should be drawn from all timber produced on the square. It should be augmented by a royalty on all timber and its provision should have no relation to the ultimate cost of the commodity. I feel that a scheme of that description could be administered by a committee, or board, representative of all sections of the industry, and payments made from the fund should be on the basis of representations from the various mills concerned. The timberworker himself would

have a much fairer idea of the amenities required than could any board have in determining what amenities he should receive. Only by such means could a fund be administered so as to alleviate the disabilities suffered by such a scattered community.

To illustrate what I mean: The timberworker is not overpaid for the labour he undertakes. He is one of the poorest paid workers in the State. He goes through the year, and the time arrives for his annual holidays. He has not had much opportunity during the twelve months to provide the funds necessary to enable him to take his family away for a holiday, as others more fortunately circumstanced can. That is one direction in which the amenities fund could operate. If the timberworker knew that at the end of 12 months he could take his family away to the seaside or somewhere else, for a holiday, it would do much to stabilise the industry and encourage others to enter it, a result that is so much desired at present. In my electorate there are mills like Treesville, Buckingham and Lyall's, and the only chance the workers there have of visiting a township is when a bus service is provided for them. That is another way in which the fund could be applied.

The Minister referred to the fact that men in the timber industry work five days a week, which meant that they had Saturdays and Sundays, to themselves. Of what use are Saturdays and Sundays to such workers, apart from the rest from toil, unless they can take their families away somewhere where there will be a change of environment? If a transport service were made available to enable the workers to visit Collie or some other large town in the South-West during the week-end, what a change it would mean for their families, to say nothing of the benefit derived by the timberworkers themselves. There are two concrete directions in which the fund could be utilised with advantage. Action along those lines would serve the industry in good stead in many directions. It might attract more workers to the forests. The industry is sadly under-manned, having regard to its needs. Reference has been made to the condition in which the timberworkers and their families are forced to live. Usually they have a poor type of house, with inadequate water supplies and so forth. I

have been in some of their homes during the winter and in many instances they were literally washed out. During the summer months they had to put up with the inconvenience of blow-flies and other pests, against which they had no effective protection. They suffered many other disabilities as well.

I do not think we should draw any comparison between the position of workers scattered throughout the bush and that of those more conveniently situated in the larger towns. I do not suggest that the workers in the towns should not receive some consideration from the amenities fund, but I feel that those who are working in scattered, isolated areas far away from townships are the people most deserving of consideration. The Minister also mentioned timberworkers who were conveniently situated so that they could take trips to the coast to engage in fishing at week-ends. Those facilities are enjoyed only by the workers in the Pemberton district and the areas to the south and towards the coast. Even so, those men are not able to take their wives and families with them. I suggest there is not much enjoyment for a timberworker who is in the bush all the week, although he may rejoin his family at night, if he has to go to the coast for fishing purposes by himself.

We should not take into consideration circumstances peculiar to a few people living in the lower South-West. I am concerned that the fund should be established and that it should be financed from royalties imposed on timber. After all, the worker in the bush cuts himself off from the pleasures and amenities of town life in the interests of the State itself, and he is therefore entitled to the consideration I suggest. As I have indicated, a committee should be set up to control the expenditure from the fund, and I feel that there is no body more capable of suggesting what amenities should be provided than one drawn from the people to whom the amenities will apply. To some extent the forest workers are in the same position as timberworkers although the former possibly enjoy better types of houses and work in more or less compact groups with about a dozen houses in each forest centre.

Many of these forestry settlements are cut off from the larger towns, and I agree

with the Minister that the men working in them should be included among those who are to be provided with amenities. The Minister's suggestion that a conference of all people in any way engaged in the timber industry should be convened would prove beneficial, could it be arranged. No doubt, such a conference would suggest many amenities that could be provided for the timberworkers. The Minister's amendment is really as satisfactory as is the motion; and I am being led to hope that the interest which he has shown in the motion will prove to be the forerunner of a fund to provide amenities for the workers. Speaking generally, the families of the timberworkers are lagging far behind so far as education and social standing are concerned, for the reason that they are confined in the bush where they have no chance of getting the standard of living enjoyed by other members of the community. The time has arrived when we should take stock of the conditions under which our timber workers live, or exist.

I honestly feel that we all should do everything in our power to see that people who are prepared to go into the bush and live under such conditions are given the opportunities and the standards of life which we ourselves expect to enjoy. It will be observed that families who have lived for any length of time in the bush are easily picked out when they visit Perth or a town such as Collie. One can easily notice how strange the surroundings are to them. When children brought up in the bush reach maturity, the conditions under which they have lived during their childhood must have an undesirable or prejudicial effect upon them. That is why we should interest ourselves in some scheme whereby they can be given the amenities which they should enjoy but which, in their case, are non-existent. I therefore feel that the motion, as sought to be amended by the Minister, should receive the support of the House.

**MR. STYANTS** (Kalgoorlie—on amendment) [9.4]: The proposal outlined in the motion follows on the provision of the amenities fund that was established under the Coal Miners' Welfare Act. Possibly the member for Forrest was given heart to bring this motion forward in the statement made by the Minister who was acting for

the Minister for Mines in introducing that measure. The Minister said he thought that in the near future similar funds would have to be provided for many classes of workers—a sentiment to which I heartily subscribe. I have great sympathy for the men working in the timber industry, particularly those working in the bush camps. I also have great admiration for the womenfolk who accompany their men in those camps and bear and rear children there, with no amenities whatever. They have no medical attention, no schooling facilities, no ablution facilities, while the class of house in which they have to live must be seen to be fully realised. I am speaking now of the bush workers.

There is no doubt about the worthiness of the timberworker to participate in a fund of this kind. He has been a most loyal worker to the industry; only on very rare occasions has he taken direct action. I doubt whether the record of the timberworkers of this State can be equalled by any other body of workers elsewhere in Australia. While I approve entirely of the provision of amenities for the coalminers, and while I realise the arduous nature of their work and the distasteful conditions under which they labour, I do not think one can compare their conditions with those of the timberworkers. Once the miners leave work, they do not lack amenities. They have good hotels, billiard saloons, picture shows and dance halls—every amenity that is available in a town of the size of Collie. The timberworker only in rare instances can enjoy such amenities.

I shall deal particularly with the bush workers, because, as a member of the Honorary Royal Commission which inquired into the housing conditions of timber employees, I had the opportunity to inspect their working and living conditions, as well as the working and living conditions of the men employed on the timbermills. The housing conditions of the bush workers are in many instances deplorable, and, as I have said, must be seen to be realised. I was born in a shack on a timbermill, and the class of accommodation has not improved since. As a matter of fact, at some of the mills the same sort of house is still in existence except that it is the worse for 50 odd years' wear.

In passing, I would say that some of the millowners realise this and are providing a better class of accommodation. We saw some very comfortable houses that would be eagerly sought after in the metropolitan area. These were made available at a reasonable rent, but they are the exception. The others fall into the category of homes that would have been regarded as quite comfortable some 40 or 45 years ago, but would not now be considered to be a standard house. We found that the womenfolk in many instances were having a particularly bad time. Roofs were leaking and in some of the homes we saw dishes and buckets placed in the lounge or bedroom to catch the leaking water. In many of the homes baths were not provided. There was an acute shortage of water at many of the mills and the mill management was not attempting to provide a sufficient supply. I noticed that when the Minister was speaking to the motion he mentioned two mills only, Pemberton and Hakea, two State mills. Pemberton has, as was pointed out by the member for Nelson, a large community which enjoys many amenities that can be found in plenty of towns throughout the length and breadth of the State.

The accommodation at the Hakea State Mill is almost ideal, except that electric light is not provided. The homes are beautiful and are built on spacious blocks of land. There is an abundance of water which, however, is not potable, but rainwater tanks are provided. An ample supply is laid on to the blocks and consequently the conditions there are almost ideal. This remark applies also to Nyamup, where we saw some first-class accommodation. In many localities which we visited the water supply was crude in the extreme. The housing at two of the mills which were mentioned as being within the electorate of the member for Collie—Lyall's and Buckingham's—had a depressing effect on the members of the Commission. The water supply at Lyall's Mill—and this mill has been in existence to my knowledge for over 40 years—had to be carried in a bucket or kerosene tin from a creek which had a thin trickle of water.

The water was open to pollution on both sides of the creek by the indiscriminate patches of horse and cattle refuse, and by fowl pens abutting on it. The houses had no showers and were deplorable in the

extreme, particularly from the point of view of the womenfolk. In some of the localities there was not even a dance hall in which to hold a social evening. As I have said, the people with whom I particularly sympathised were the men working in the bush camps. Almost without exception their conditions were bad. In many instances they were working 12 or 15 miles from any large centre of population, and it was not the exception to find some of them living in camps measuring 9ft. by 8ft. These were neither lined nor ceiled, except in some cases where the men had themselves cut down some chaff bags and placed them in the ceiling to prevent the water dropping from the corrugated iron on to their clothing on a frosty morning. When they left for work they would get wet to the knees even on a fine day. They were forced to work in all weathers and on returning to their camp at night, not even a drop of hot water was provided for them by the company. They had to light a fire, take off their wet clothes and prepare their own meals. They had to live and sleep and keep their foodstuffs dry, as well as dry their clothing, in these hovels 9ft. by 8ft.

If any section of men is entitled to some consideration, it is the bush timber-worker. I am not going to say that those living in the larger communities should be excluded from the benefits of any amenities fund. As far as I can see, with rare exceptions—Nyamup was one—the timber companies make no provision at all for the entertainment or social life of their employees. On a number of occasions I asked those representing the millowners whether they provided or encouraged any class of entertainment or recreation for their employees. With few exceptions, they said that usually the private companies made them available. On inquiry I found that, in almost every case, it was, with the bush worker, simply a matter of eat, sleep and work. No recreation of any kind was provided for him. Neither did he have facilities of any sort, or even the decencies that men are entitled to in these enlightened days. Generally, the housing conditions for the womenfolk, even in the large centres, were not up to standard. In many places they did not have stoves or baths unless they provided them for themselves. In some cases where they were provided by the company an additional rent was

charged. Rents were not extortionate at any time, but if a stove or bath was provided, an additional amount of about 1s. a week was charged.

It is difficult to understand how, in these days, any company could be so unmindful of the welfare of its employees as not to provide a bath, shower or stove. Although many of the mills have been established for a period of 50 years, we find that the employers, with the exception of those at the railway mill at Banksiadale, have not been sufficiently enterprising to provide electricity. That could easily have been done by installing small diesel units, as has been done on many of the small mining shows on the Goldfields. The Commission did not recommend that the companies should be compelled to put in these plants because of the fact that there was likelihood—almost a definite promise, in fact—that within five years the electricity scheme for the South-West would be an accomplished fact. To say that 25 or 30 of these plants should be provided and then scrapped after a short period, did not appeal as being worthy of recommendation. Had the millowners been in any way enterprising, they would have seen the comforts and amenities that could be derived from the supplying of electricity, and they would have put in these plants many years ago.

There is also the question of roads and footpaths. Some mill sites, with 50 or 60 houses, have been there for up to 50 years, and they have not got a decent footpath or road. The roads are just what the tradesmen make between the rows of houses, and no footpaths are provided. How the women got along with perambulators was a mystery to us. Even at an old-established mill like Yarloop, there was loose sand immediately the women got outside their doors. How they moved along with their perambulators up to the axles in sand was difficult to understand. I mention these matters to show that not only are the menfolk labouring under very unfavourable conditions, but that the womenfolk are, in many instances, living in circumstances much below what is a reasonable standard.

I realise, with the Minister, that the matter of providing these amenities for the timberworkers is much more difficult than it was for the Collie miners. These people

are scattered over wide areas and, in many instances, are in small groups. I think the Minister's suggestion is excellent, that the parties should be called together to discuss, first, whether a levy should be made on the timber provided by these people for the inauguration of an amenities fund, secondly, what the nature of the amenities should be and, thirdly, how they should be applied and a workable scheme brought into operation. Probably the Minister's suggestion will have more far-reaching effects than the well-intentioned motion of the member for Forrest. All I can say in conclusion is that the motion has my whole-hearted support. I believe these people are a very deserving class. They have been most loyal to the other sections of the community of the State, in that they have rarely had industrial trouble, and the commodity they produce is absolutely essential to our progress and welfare. If anything can be done to improve the lot of these people, and particularly the bush workers, it will have my whole-hearted support.

**MR. BOVELL** (Sussex—on amendment) [9.22]: I feel I should make some contribution to the debate because I represent a considerable number of timberworkers. I wish to pay a tribute to the sterling work they have done throughout the years. They are entitled to great credit for the way they have stuck to their work when the product they are sending out is so much needed. It does the heart good to see what they do at the timbermills in the interests of the community. I travel through my electorate, in which there are 17 or 18 mills. In moving the motion, the member for Forrest was very well intentioned, but I cannot see how amenities can be provided for a scattered community in the same way as they can be for the Collie miners who are assembled in a small area.

The timberworkers are very scattered. We have the mills, the bush camps, the fallers and so on. It would be hard to get amenities that would be acceptable to them all. I think the Minister's suggestion is a very good one. Before we rush in and create various funds, the interested people representing the timberworkers should get together and confer. The workers and the millers should see whether some equitable scheme can be submitted for the provision of these amenities. We do not want the position to

arise that after a fund is established some timberworkers will say that, whilst others are receiving amenities, they are not. We have to see that we have a well-balanced scheme. I feel that the Minister is on the right track with his suggestion.

**MR. REYNOLDS** (Forrest—on amendment) [9.26]: I thank the Minister for Forests for his sympathetic handling of the motion, and also the members representing the electorates of Nelson, Collie, Kalgoorlie and Sussex for their contributions to the debate. I should like to make it clear that I moved the motion at the request of the executive of the Timber Workers' Union, which is an organisation with a membership of over 2,000 men. Members will recall that in November of last year a Bill was presented to this House to give certain concessions to the Collie miners. When I went through my electorate in February and March of this year, I was asked at various mills what was my attitude in regard to that Bill, and had I any intention of requesting the same consideration to be extended to the timberworkers. I told them that it was a matter for the union, and if the executive was in favour of the suggestion, then I would be only too willing to move accordingly in the House. That is how the motion came to be moved. It was not of my volition, but because the timberworkers realised that they were worthy of the same consideration that was extended to the Collie miners.

**Mr. SPEAKER**: The hon. member, I take it, is speaking on the amendment and not replying.

**Mr. REYNOLDS**: Yes. I was pleased to hear the Minister say that we should give consideration to these amenities. I feel he was sincere when he made that remark. The words that the Minister proposes to have inserted are not as specific as I would like, but nevertheless I feel he was sincere in what he said, and made a genuine attempt to meet the position. As the executive of the Timber Workers' Union will be meeting in a fortnight's time, I suggest to the Minister that a conference along the lines he mentioned be convened at the same time. I know perfectly well that at the next meeting of the executive of the union I shall be

asked to explain what has taken place here in regard to the motion. I trust the Minister will give some thought to convening this conference so that we can put forward suggestions which will result in good coming of the motion.

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

### **BILL—NEW TRACTORS, MOTOR VEHICLES AND FENCING MATERIALS CONTROL.**

*As to Manager's Withdrawal and Substitution.*

**The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT**: In regard to the representation of the Assembly managers at the conference on this Bill, I regret to say that the Acting Leader of the Opposition has informed me that no member of his Party is prepared to act. I therefore move—

That the member for Canning be appointed manager in place of the member for North-East Fremantle.

Question put and passed.

### **BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 29th September.

**MR. PERKINS** (York—in reply) [9.33]: I have listened with interest to the speeches of members on this Bill. Some of the suggestions that have been made I have, to some extent, been able to deal with in amendments I have placed on the notice paper. Amongst the amendments of which I have given notice is one that is in reply to an objection, raised by the Minister for Lands who controls the department, regarding the possibility of some district being so large and straggly—if I may put it that way—that it would be difficult for any fire brigade set up at any central point to cover the whole of its area. I regard that as a valid objection in certain circumstances and have endeavoured to cover it by proposing to grant the Minister power to proclaim the

whole of a local authority's district, or any portion thereof, as the area to be covered.

Another objection which the member for Leederville brought to my notice as the result of a discussion which he had with Mr. Watson of the King's Park Board was in regard to that provision of the Bill which specifies an officer appointed under the Forests Act to carry out any inspections at the request of the Minister. It appears that there would be some difficulty in obtaining the officer required by the limitations set out in the original clause. I therefore propose to overcome that objection by specifying any field officer of the Forests Department, which is the suggestion originally coming from Mr. Watson. The member for Nelson also raised some objection in that the Bill did not cover all crops which were insurable under the heading of crops. I understand that he will move certain amendments to make the Bill more comprehensive in that regard and I will have no objection to them.

There is another item, which was not specifically raised by any member, but as a result of the discussion on the Bill I realise it is a necessary provision to cover a point which the Minister did not actually touch on. The point is that quite an efficient brigade may be set up in a particular area, but it is possible, due to some loss of enthusiasm on the part of the people forming the brigade or for any other reason that caused the brigade to lose its efficiency, it would be unjust to carry on the statutory reduction of premium for that particular area when, in fact, an efficient brigade did not exist. Therefore, I propose to add a provision to enable the Minister to withdraw approval if any such contingency should arise.

Among certain other points raised, the Minister said that it would be very expensive to transfer a forest officer from area to area to make the inspection to, which I have referred. It is inevitable that some inspection must take place and I have made that clause in the Bill very wide to give the Minister the maximum discretion possible, which I believe will make the measure workable. The Minister may or may not charge the costs of such an inspection to the local authority. I am hoping that it will be the practice of the Government, if the Bill becomes an Act, that in making such inspections the cost of them will be met from gen-

eral revenue. The Government will be getting off quite lightly in the matter of protection to property in country areas compared with protection to property in town areas because in the latter areas, under the provision of the Fire Brigades Act, the Government is called upon to find two-ninths of the expense to maintain that big organisation. Surely it would be quite a small contribution to ask the Government to stand the cost of such a inspection to give effect to this provision of the Bill.

The Minister also mentioned that he thought the advisory committee was against such a measure. My information is that the advisory committee has not as yet considered the matter closely, but that it proposes to do so later. I have contacted the three road board representatives on the advisory committee and they are all in favour of such action being taken. I cannot speak for other members of the advisory committee and do not know what their opinions are. The Minister also said he thought it would be necessary to have a uniform standard of equipment before anything could be done. I doubt whether the Minister, in making that remark, fully understood my intention. It is inevitable that there will be a wide disparity in the types of equipment necessary to cope with the great range of conditions existing in this State. For instance, the conditions in the Geraldton area differ greatly from the fire risk conditions in the eastern wheat-belt, and again there is a very great difference in the conditions in the area represented by the member for Nelson.

I think the Minister and his advisers will have to exercise a good deal of discretion to determine what is suitable equipment for each area. In the early stages at least, I believe it will be necessary to approve of certain brigades, but if the local authorities give some indication that they will improve their equipment and thus justify the Minister's proclamation of their area, with a resultant reduction in the premiums charged in that area, some discretion could be exercised. However, it is very necessary to reserve the maximum discretion to the Minister and the exercise of that discretion, I believe, will enable the measure, if it becomes law, to operate effectively.



Now I wish to refer to the equipment that already exists in country areas. The Minister seems to think that none of the country authorities has sufficient equipment at present to justify this legislation. Admittedly the equipment varies in different areas, and I am inclined to think that few areas at present would justify their proclamation under the measure, but I believe that with the coming into force of this legislation, many more local authorities would be encouraged to set up the requisite equipment. At present there is a tendency amongst local authorities to ask the question, "Who is going to gain the benefit if we expend the money of the ratepayers in setting up equipment costing probably £1,000, £2,000 or even £3,000?" This has militated against the standard of equipment which we all hope will eventually become a feature of our country fire brigades. I should like to quote from a letter I received from the secretary of the Bruce Rock Road Board, who is known to some members. It was not written with the object of being quoted, but I believe that Mr. McGuigan would have no objection to my reading sections for the information of members. It states—

For the ensuing fire season, as you know, we have three brigades—3 fire engines and 7 (seven) mobile units which are loaded to motor trucks and operated manually.

Replacement value of above equipment is approximately £3,245. The three trucks were purchased ex disposals—the last two being in practically new condition.

Cost of the trucks is £100 each (£300 in all). Labour, of course, is voluntary.

The local authority maintains the equipment, insurance on volunteer members of brigades, vehicle insurance, etc., and has imposed an additional rate to return the required funds. An important point is that an efficient fire fighting organisation can exist, generally, in the townships only where volunteer personnel are available to maintain the service and to man the fire trucks.

During the fire hazard season, farmers are occupied fully on seasonal works and not available for rehearsals. They do, of course, turn up and join in with the knapsack sprays (which are essential to complete the subjection of the outbreak).

So that those who comprise the brigade personnel have mostly little financial interest in the properties they protect. When away fighting fires, some of them are actually contributing by loss of business during their absence. Some measure of compensation will have to be made lest their present enthusiasm is dampened by personal losses.

This also applies to value of clothes ruined in fire fighting. The point raised by Mr. Thorn could be overcome possibly by inducing local authorities to provide efficient equipment. This would occur if reduction in premiums were effected as soon as the district was "O.K'd." by the inspector. Local authorities are not likely to provide complete equipment in the interests of the underwriters, but they would no doubt in the interest of the ratepayers.

I hope you are successful, as very shortly the boards will be unable to secure these excellently-suited 4 x 4 Army vehicles at such low prices.

In 23 years in the country I have witnessed many a launching of schemes to benefit something or other and I have been on show committees, hospital committees, etc. The bush fire fighting organisation at Bruce Rock is by far the most sensible and impressive idea I have known. It is to everyone's benefit, of course, but mainly to the insurance companies. The whole thing may subside if it is not given proper recognition. Yours truly, H. L. McGuigan.

That letter will give members a certain amount of information from a man who is in close contact with one of the best equipped country fire brigades. In the area I represent, there are brigades of one sort or another in all the centres. In York there is a large quantity of light equipment which is located around the district and the people there are in process of acquiring a vehicle and equipping it on similar lines to the trucks of fire brigades seen at the recent show. Narembeen is taking similar action. Cunderdin and Meckering have a number of pumps and other equipment distributed through the district. In each of those areas considerable public funds are being expended for the equipment of the brigades.

As regards the underwriters, I know one who does probably more crop fire insurance than any other and he is strongly in favour of this proposal. If Parliament does not accept the Bill, it will be necessary for the Government to take some action because I am certain that requests will be received from country areas that it will be impossible for it to ignore. The only alternative proposal I can think of is a system of bush fire brigades on similar lines to the brigades constituted under the Fire Brigades Act. Under that statute, the insurance companies are called upon to pay five-ninths of the cost, the Government pays two-ninths and the local authority pays two-ninths, but the insurance companies are very hostile to that set-up. They

complain that the Fire Brigades Board incurs all sorts of expense for its large organisation and brings down a budget each year and, no matter what the cost may be, they have to pay five-ninths of the cost based on the proportion of business each transacts.

I understand from the insurance companies that they much prefer this set-up to anything on the lines of the Fire Brigades Board. I make that point in case anyone thinks that the insurance companies will fare worse under this proposal than they might under some other: I have every confidence in submitting the Bill to the House. I believe that it can be made to work. The Minister told me privately that he has now withdrawn his objections, as he thinks the measure can be safely allowed to pass. I am certain that, with the will to do so, we can make this a useful piece of legislation and that it will be the means of encouraging bush fire brigades all over the country.

Mr. Marshall: What about your colleagues in another place?

Mr. PERKINS: I am hoping to get their assistance, too.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It might come to a conference.

Mr. PERKINS: The real object of the Bill is not to save a few shillings that might be obtained in the way of rebates on premiums, but to encourage the establishment of proper bush fire brigades all over the State.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Hill in the Chair; Mr. Perkins in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of principal Act:

On motions by Mr. Perkins, clause amended by inserting in line 4 of Subsection (1) of proposed Section 35A after the word "district" the words, "or any part thereof" and by inserting after the word "district" in line 3 of Subsection (2) the words "or any part thereof."

Mr. PERKINS: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of Subsection (3) of proposed new Section 35A after the word "district" the words "or part thereof" be inserted.

The difference in the wording of this amendment is due to the advice of the Parliamentary Draftsman.

Amendment put and passed.

On motion by Mr. Perkins, clause further amended by striking out in Subsection (5) of proposed new Section 35 the words "a forest officer appointed under the Forests Act, 1918-1931," and inserting the words, "any field officer of the Forests Department" in lieu.

Mr. HOAR: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subsection (3) of proposed new Section 35B after the word "harley" the words "flax, meadow hay" be inserted.

The reason is obvious. The flax growing areas in my district are reasonably well protected by fire brigades; but unless they are included in this Bill they will not derive any advantage from the reduction in the premiums. This remark applies also to meadow hay. I am pleased to know that the member for York has no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. PERKINS: I move an amendment—

That a new section be added as follows:—

"35C. If in the opinion of the Minister the bush fire brigade of a local authority at any time is not of a reasonable standard of efficiency, the Minister may by notice published in the "Government Gazette" declare that any approved area within the district of such local authority shall, as from a date to be specified in such notice, cease to be an approved area for the purposes of this Act, and accordingly the provisions of section thirty-five B of this Act shall as from such specified date cease to apply to any crop situate within such area except in so far as regards crops on which insurance has been effected prior to such specified date."

This amendment was drawn by the Parliamentary Draftsman and I think it covers adequately the matters on which I spoke at some length on the second reading.

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

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

**STANDING ORDERS.***Report of Committee.*

Mr. PERKINS: This report, I think, needs very little explanation. Members have long been aware of the limitations imposed by our Standing Orders when, for some reason, a member may be speaking at tea-time on some matter and it is desired to adjourn the House at that time. As the Standing Orders read at present, it is impossible for such a member to continue his speech at a subsequent sitting. Members are also aware that difficulties arise from time to time when it is known that there is a desire to adjourn the House at a particular hour and a member wishes to speak on some subject but knows that the time available is too brief to enable him adequately to cover it, and therefore is reluctant to speak at that juncture. That has been causing complications in the work of this House for some time.

The amendments to the Standing Orders appearing in the report are more or less self-explanatory. The wording of the report is quite clear and there should be no misunderstanding about it. I would draw attention to the implications of the second amendment, which provides that a member who is granted leave to continue his speech must be prepared to carry on immediately the resumption of the debate is called. The alteration does not enable a member to be interrupted in his speech by another member intervening in the discussion. Members should be clear on that point. As indicated at the bottom of the report, the procedure suggested is taken from the practice in South Australia. From the information available to the Standing Orders Committee, the system has worked quite well elsewhere.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would ask the hon. member to move the two proposed alterations separately.

Mr. PERKINS: The first Standing Order dealt with is No. 157, and the recommendation is that after the word "discussion" in line 2, the words "or by leave being granted to a Member then speaking to continue his remarks at a future time" be inserted. I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the recommendation agreed to.

Mr. PERKINS: The next Standing Order dealt with is No. 158, and the recommendation of the committee is that the following words be added:—"but a Member who is granted leave to continue his remarks, if he fails to so continue immediately on resumption of the debate, shall not speak again at any subsequent stage of the debate." I move—

That the recommendation be agreed to.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I am not sure about this recommendation. A member might want to take part in the debate at the Committee stage. I have no objection to a member's not being given the right to continue his remarks on the second or third reading at some subsequent period if he is not prepared to do so when the resumption of the debate is called, but the Bill may be a big one and he may wish to take part in the discussion in Committee. I would like to know from the Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee whether the wording of the amendment would prevent him from doing that.

Mr. PERKINS: My interpretation of the point raised is that the term "debate" relates to the second reading and has no reference to the Committee stage. If the member for Leederville looks at the other Standing Orders, he will find that is the only interpretation that can be put on the amendment.

Question put and passed; the recommendation agreed to.

Report of Standing Orders Committee adopted.

**BILL—NEW TRACTORS, MOTOR  
VEHICLES AND FENCING  
MATERIALS CONTROL.**

*As to Manager's Withdrawal—Point of  
Order.*

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. A few moments ago, this House appointed the member for Canning to serve as manager at a conference with another place. I consider that the whole procedure was irregular. Earlier in the evening, the member for North-East Fremantle was appointed one of the managers and before this House can appoint anyone else it must give the member for North-

East Fremantle permission to withdraw. The question should have been put, "Is it the wish of the House that the member for North-East Fremantle be permitted to withdraw?" That was not done, and I claim the procedure was irregular.

Mr. Speaker: My ruling is that if any objection is taken, it must be taken at once. The hon. member did, at the time, voice some objection and was given my decision, but he did not move to disagree.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: On another point of order! You gave no ruling on the matter, Mr. Speaker. I cannot take exception to a ruling until one is given. I am asking for a ruling now; and if it is not as I desire it to be, I will know what to do. How can one object to a ruling that has not been given? It is farcical.

Mr. Speaker: I object to the use of the word "farcical," and ask for a withdrawal.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I will withdraw and say that it is irregular.

Mr. Speaker: I took action at the time, as requested, and there was no motion to dispute my decision.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Then I must move that your decision now be disagreed with, because this House must do its business properly, and until you give a ruling no-one can take exception to it. You allowed the member for Canning to be appointed one of the managers at a conference with another place before the member for North-East Fremantle had been given permission to retire. The matter was not one for decision by the Minister or anyone else in this House; it was the property of the House, and the permission of the House should have been given to the member for North-East Fremantle to withdraw as one of the managers to the conference. I therefore move—

That the House dissent from the Speaker's ruling.

Question put and negatived.

## **BILL—WHEAT POOL ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [10.11] in moving the

second reading said: The Wheat Pool came into being in 1922 and from that date operated voluntary pools to the decided advantage of wheatgrowers in Western Australia.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Did you say 1922, or 1932?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I said, 1922. It was incorporated by an Act of Parliament in 1932. Since 1939 it has acted for the Australian Wheat Board as sole broker for the sale of wheat within Western Australia, one of its paying agents, and one of its shipping agents. Since the pool's inception, the undistributed final small fractions of less than  $\frac{1}{8}$ d. per bushel from each of the voluntary pools and the investments of these fractions have built up a substantial fund. This fund has already proved of great value to wheatgrowers. One instance of this was when experimental work was done in the early stages of bulk-handling in this State, and when Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. was formed.

The reserve fund was used to the full at that time, and wheatgrowers in Western Australia are reaping the benefit today. The trustees, however, feel they may be restricted in their choice of investments. It is becoming more and more the policy of those with money entrusted to them to find an outlet in such securities as safe industrial shares, but, under the Wheat Pool Act, as it stands, the trustees cannot invest the reserve funds in such securities. Some superannuation trust funds and life insurance companies, which are particularly conservative, invest their funds in the shares of reputable companies. The trustees wish to take advantage of any good, suitable investment whether it be shares, bonds, debentures, real estate or any other investment which they may think beneficial for the wheatgrowers of Western Australia. In regard to that part of the amendment dealing with real estate, the trustees already have the necessary power in the Wheat Pool Act. The present amendment merely states this in unambiguous language. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. T. Tonkin, debate adjourned.

**BILL—NEW TRACTORS, MOTOR  
VEHICLES AND FENCING  
MATERIALS CONTROL.**

*Council's Message—Time for Holding  
Conference.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the Assembly's request for an alteration of the time fixed for the conference from 2 p.m. to 11.30 a.m.

**BILL—POULTRY INDUSTRY  
(TRUST FUND).**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [10.9]: in moving the second reading said: This Bill is the result of a request by representatives of the Poultry Farmers' Association of Western Australia. It provides for the creation of a trust fund, to be raised by a levy upon eggs marketed, and will be used in the interests of the poultry industry. Under the Bill, the maximum allowable contribution is one penny for every 30 dozen eggs marketed. A committee to be known as "The Poultry Industry Trust Fund Committee" will be constituted and consist of three members appointed by the Governor. Two members will be nominated by the Poultry Farmers' Association and approved by the Minister, and the other person will be a representative of the Department of Agriculture, nominated by the Minister. It was the expressed desire of this association that two members of the committee should be nominated by that body.

The constitution of the committee is similar to that of the Fruit Growing Industry Trust Fund, which has proved excellent for the purpose of that Act. Subject to the general control by the Minister, the Bill will be administered by the Under Secretary for Agriculture. All costs of administration will be paid out of the fund. After the payment of administration charges, and fees and allowances of members of the committee, which are subject to the approval of the Minister, moneys in the fund may be used for any of the following purposes:—

(a) The payment of the whole or portion of the costs and expenses of measures taken to prevent or eradicate pests and diseases affecting poultry and eggs.

(b) The payment of compensation to producers in respect of the whole or portion of losses suffered by them as a result of measures taken to prevent or eradicate pests and diseases.

(c) The payment of the costs of the promotion and encouragement of scientific research for the improvement of poultry and egg production, and the transport of such poultry and eggs.

(d) The provision of financial help recommended by the committee and approved by the Minister for the association and its branches in the carrying out of its activities for the benefit of producers.

(e) Any other purpose, which, in the opinion of the Minister, will promote and encourage the poultry industry.

A recent outbreak of laryngotracheitis has demonstrated the urgent need for a fund of this description. In the absence of a fund to cover such losses, applications were received by the Department of Agriculture from producers who were badly hit. Because of this, the Government decided to make free of interest loans, repayable in five years, to poultry farmers who suffered such heavy losses through laryngotracheitis that they would have difficulty in carrying on. This policy has been carried into effect and loans advanced. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Rodoreda, debate adjourned.

*Sitting suspended from 10.18 p.m.  
to 3.45 p.m. (Thursday).*

**BILL—NEW TRACTORS, MOTOR  
VEHICLES AND FENCING  
MATERIALS CONTROL.**

*Conference Managers' Report.*

**THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:**  
I beg to report that the managers appointed by the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly to confer regarding the control and distribution of new tractors, motor vehicles and fencing materials met and came to the following conclusions:—

As to the Legislative Council's Amendment No. 4, relating to fencing materials—agreed to.

As to the Legislative Council's Amendment No. 5, relating to motor vehicles—not agreed to.

The remaining amendments are consequential on the foregoing and will take effect or be altered accordingly. I move—

That the report be adopted.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

*House adjourned at 3.48 p.m. (Thursday).*

## Legislative Council.

Thursday, 14th October, 1948.

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### PRICES CONTROL.

##### *As to Hay and Chaff.*

Hon. L. A. LOGAN (for Hon. A. L. Loton) asked the Honorary Minister for Agriculture:

Is it the intention of the Prices Control Board—

(1) To fix the prices for hay and chaff for the 1948-1949 season?

(2) If "yes" is the reply, what are to be the prices for—

- (a) wheaten hay, stooked, stacked;
- (b) oat hay, stooked, stacked;
- (c) wheaten chaff f.o.r. country siding;
- (d) oat chaff f.o.r. country siding?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) No. Hay and chaff were decontrolled by the Commonwealth authority in November, 1947, and are not controlled commodities under the State Prices Control Act, 1948.

#### CHARCOAL-IRON.

##### *As to Costs and By-Product.*

Hon. W. J. MANN (for Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham) asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What was the total capital cost of Wundowie charcoal-iron plant to the end of August, 1948?

(2) What was the total working cost since the inception to the 31st August, 1948?

(3) What is proposed to be done with the 600 tons of wood tar produced?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) £447,482.

(2) £74,762.

(3) Wood tar is being used in place of fuel oil and wood for heating and steam raising purposes.

### MOTION—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT.

#### *To Disallow Court Proceedings Regulations.*

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham:—

That Regulations Nos. 10, 11, 12 and 15, made under the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act, 1939-1948, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 3rd September, 1948, and laid on the Table of the House on the 14th September, 1948, be and are hereby disallowed.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [4.35]: In opposing the motion submitted by Sir Charles Latham, I regret that he is not present this afternoon. I shall not speak at any great length, but I could wish that Sir Charles were present so that I might tell him that when I heard his speech I was satisfied that he did not know much about these particular regulations. It appeared to