

Hon. J. CORNELL: So long as that is the case, I support the Bill. If it only applied to automobiles, it would be different.

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

House adjourned at 9.14 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 28th November, 1945.

	PAGE
Question: Housing, as to board homes at Kalgoorlie and Boulder	2266
Bills: Adoption of Children Act Amendment, 1A.	2266
Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment, 1B.	2266
Public Works Act Amendment, 3A.	2266
Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment, 3A.	2266
Marketing of Eggs, 2A.	2267
War Service Land Settlement Agreement, Com.	2271
Local Authorities (Reserve Funds) Act Amendment, 1A.	2274
Justices Act Amendment, 1A.	2274
War Service Land Settlement Agreement (Land Act Application) 2A., Com., report	2274
State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment, Council's Message	2274
Industrial Development (Resumption of Land), Com.	2275
Financial Emergency Act Amendment, 2A., Com.	2280
Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act Continuance, 2A., Com.	2282
Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board), Council's Message, Assembly's request for Conference	2282
Annual Estimates: Votes and Items discussed	2283

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

QUESTION—HOUSING.

As to Board Homes at Kalgoorlie and Boulder.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Premier:

1, How many dwelling houses have been erected by the Workers' Homes Board in Kalgoorlie and Boulder respectively during the past 12 months?

2, To how many has approval been given for their erection?

3, Is it a fact that the Eastern Goldfields have not received a fair quota of houses, on a population basis, compared with other portions of the State during that time?

4, If so, will he see that the position is rectified?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) In common with many other places it has been difficult to promote acti-

vities in workers' homes building beyond the approval stage during the past 12 months. Ten approvals have now been given.

(3) and (4) Allocations are made on a basis of need and the need is established in Boulder and Kalgoorlie.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Adoption of Children Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Social Services.

2, Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Labour.

BILL—PUBLIC WORKS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [4.35]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [4.35]: I would like to ask the Minister what is the nature and extent of the consideration which he mentioned last night was to be extended to those who have filled temporary positions in the Public Service.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville—in reply) [4.36]: The consideration that will be extended to those who are temporarily employed in the Public Service will be in accordance with the regulations. We cannot do more about the matter.

Hon. N. Keenan: Will the Minister allow the temporary officers the same privileges for leave as permanent officers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They will get pro rata leave, provided they are retired.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—MARKETING OF EGGS.*Second Reading.***THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**

(Hon. J. T. Tonkin—North-East Fre-mantle) [4.38] in moving the second reading said: For several years prior to the war, producers were very anxious for some workable legislation to be introduced governing the marketing of eggs, legislation which would embrace means whereby the lower price received for eggs exported might be shared by all the persons in the industry. It is well known that one of the principal complaints under the system of marketing before the war was that very wide and violent fluctuations in the price did occur at short intervals. It was not unknown that the price of eggs might vary even during one day in the market. I have heard of instances that occurred during 1939 and 1940 where the price of eggs varied as much as 7d. per dozen within a few days. Speculation in eggs during the flush period caused falls in price to as low as 8d. a dozen, when the export parity was approximately 1s. This fluctuation in price was caused by the surplus of eggs from time to time, there being a greater quantity available than was required for local consumption. Very small surpluses of only a few cases of eggs resulted in a considerable fall in price, affecting many thousands of dozens of eggs which were received.

In 1938 a Bill was submitted which proposed to overcome the difficulties experienced in the marketing of eggs, but for various reasons, one of which was the method under which the eggs were to be controlled, the producers did not look with favour upon it. The Government showed its interest in the marketing legislation by not opposing the Bill which was introduced by a private member. On at least two occasions the Government made special financial arrangements to enable the producers to conduct the poll provided for in the Act. For three years an effort was made by the producers, in co-operation with the agents, to conduct a voluntary egg stabilisation scheme whereby the producers forwarding eggs to agents were prepared to contribute approximately ½d. a dozen to provide funds that would enable small surpluses to be removed from the market and stored for release at a more favourable time. This voluntary organisa-

tion of producers carried out effective work and did succeed, to some extent, in preventing violent fluctuations from occurring. But it was hampered in its operations because the scheme did not embrace all producers. There was a proportion that did not assist by making any contribution.

The position was made more difficult after the outbreak of war owing to the doubt in regard to the existence of adequate shipping facilities. This threw a heavy financial responsibility upon the agents, so much so that they were loth to continue, and the Government notified the Government at the end of 1941 that they would be unable to continue purchasing eggs except at a heavy discount which meant that the producers were faced with large losses unless something was done to meet the situation. Members will realise that there was great difficulty with regard to the export of eggs in shell. The Government immediately guaranteed the agents against loss so that the producers would not suffer, and also to provide payment to the growers of at least 11d. a dozen when the indications were that, without this action being taken, the price would probably have been 6d a dozen. So members can well imagine what this action meant to the producers. The Government immediately entered into negotiations with the Commonwealth for some scheme whereby a market could be provided for the surplus eggs, and it undertook to provide the land and also pay half the cost of the erection of a suitable building for the installation of the egg drying plant that has been instrumental in enabling a profitable return to be made to the growers since that year.

As the war developed and greater calls for food were made by the Services within Australia, so it became increasingly evident that the Commonwealth would have to make provision for the handling of eggs produced throughout Australia in order to answer the range for the Services and overseas demand to be met, and in order that all producers and consumers in Australia should share equally in the difficulties and in the advantages that might accrue from the marketing. Consumers all over the Commonwealth made complaints, as did the producers, because of the wide variation that existed in prices. In some States there were large numbers of Service personnel resulting in an extraordinary demand for eggs in those States with consequent higher prices than in the States

where there was not such a demand. The result was a wide variation in prices throughout the Commonwealth. Not only that, but a shortage of eggs was caused in certain States resulting in the almost complete inability of the civilian consumers to obtain supplies.

To overcome these problems the Commonwealth Government established the control scheme now in operation for the purchasing and marketing of eggs. This was done on the 3rd July, 1943. It had the effect of pooling the total eggs of the Commonwealth, and arranging for payment to the growers at prices approved by the Prices Commissioner, reasonable quantities being allocated to the Services and to the civilian population. The main principles of the control scheme which is now operating are, firstly, that the scheme shall be a self-supporting one without subsidy from the Commonwealth Government; secondly, that a uniform price shall be paid to producers throughout the Commonwealth; thirdly, that moderate prices throughout the year are more profitable than excessively high prices during a period of shortage, and, fourthly, that country eggs shall be purchased on the same basis as those of the metropolitan producers.

In all States except Western Australia and Tasmania egg marketing boards were in operation. An attempt was made to continue the existing set-up in Western Australia, but it was found necessary for the controller of eggs to take over certain candling and grading floors where the receiving and handling of eggs could be carried out according to the regulations. It was thought that that was in the best interests of both the consumers and the producers. In Western Australia, where pulping was being done under what were considered unhygienic conditions, the controller constructed an annexe to the egg-drying plant wherein he installed a modern pulping machine. The building was erected under the same conditions as was the egg drying plant. It will become the property of the State when the present Commonwealth system of control ceases. The equipment for the actual cracking of the eggs and pulping is valued at about £300, and it will remain the property of the egg control authorities.

In arranging for the handling of the large quantity of eggs that has been com-

ing forward, it has been necessary for the controller of the scheme to build up certain assets represented by cases, machinery, office equipment, candling benches, platforms, lifting trucks etc. The capital value of these assets will approximate £20,000. The growers have clearly signified their wish that a system of control of marketing should continue when Commonwealth control ceases, which it is expected to do six months after the date fixed as the end of the war.

Mr. Watts: When is that likely to be?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am unable to say. It depends on the date actually fixed as the end of the war. The control will cease six months after that date.

Hon. N. Keenan: Is it not supposed to be six months after V.E. day?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have heard a number of suggestions as to what it will be, but I have had no authoritative information.

Mr. Mann: You really do not know?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not know.

Mr. J. Hegney: You do not know either.

Mr. Mann: I have a pretty good idea.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is pointed out that the continuance of the control and marketing of eggs should not be against the interests of the consumers. As the price to the consumer during the flush period would depend upon the export parity price, as in pre-war years, it would be in the interests of the producers themselves to prevent any excessive price during the lean period. This would be dealt with by the storing of eggs by the board. The principle of storing a commodity when there is a surplus available and releasing it at some other suitable period, has been adopted with regard to all sorts of products quite successfully for some time. When Commonwealth control ceases, it will be necessary for some authority to step in and make arrangements for taking over the assets and running the business. Even if we did not propose any such marketing scheme, the whole business could not be cut off on the day when control ceases. There would be a quantity of eggs available in the shell, in pulp or in the form of the dried commodity, and those assets would be available. It would have to be someone's business to step in and take control of the commodity. In

any case, provision should be made for the continuance of some authority.

I hope to prove it is desirable that we should constitute this authority to step in when Commonwealth control ceases and that the authority should control the proper marketing of eggs in the interests of the producers. This authority could step in and undertake the functions I have just outlined and the work could be done in any one of the four following ways:—

By a legally constituted marketing board, upon which the producers should have representation; or

by the State Government itself arranging to conduct the business on behalf of the growers; or

by the business being taken over by some co-operative company; or

by selling the business to one or more agents, which would mean, in effect, a reversion to the old system.

As the producers have indicated clearly to my predecessor and also to me, they are unanimously in favour of a properly constituted marketing board, upon which the producers will have representation, being set up for the purpose of continuing the control and marketing of eggs. It may be asked, "Why do you not make use of the present Act?" My reply to that is that the present Act is unworkable. It is a measure very similar to the old Onion Marketing Act, which I was able successfully to point out to the House could not function, and in consequence we substituted new legislation. The existing egg marketing legislation has the same disadvantage in that it provides that the eggs become the property of the board immediately they are laid. This means that the board would be responsible for any losses that might occur between the time the egg was laid and the time when it got to the floors. Producers do not look favourably upon that legislation and that is why, when polls were taken, they refused to agree to the operation of the Act. The measure also made no provision for the candling or grading of eggs, for the board to own any property or to pulp or dry eggs or for the operations that are at present being carried out under the existing form of control.

I therefore have brought to the House this Bill, which is not nearly as formidable as it would seem. It appears to be somewhat lengthy, but it is a straightforward measure. The clauses are simple, and I think mem-

bers will be agreeably surprised when they come to deal with them to find there is not nearly the quantity of work as would appear at first glance at the size of the measure. Under the Bill it is proposed to set up a board that will be constituted of two producers' representatives elected by the producers themselves, one producer nominated by the Government, two consumers' representatives nominated by the Government and a chairman who will also be nominated by the Government.

Mr. McLarty: Why does the Government want to nominate the producer? Why should he not be elected?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The object is to safeguard the producers themselves. The hon. member knows the vagaries of elections and that the result of an election is not always what is desired.

Mr. Watts: We will frankly admit that that applies sometimes.

Mr. Mann: Especially to the last elections.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If the Government nominates a producer to the board, it will nominate a man who will be quite satisfactory and it is almost a certainty that such a man will be acceptable to the producers generally. On the other hand, it is quite possible that as the result of an election, especially if held in the initial stages when full interest was not taken in the matter, some producers' representatives would be chosen who were not satisfactory to the producers generally. Whilst in my view it cannot possibly do the producers any harm, it could easily do them a lot of good. It is proposed that eggs shall be sold only to the board or to a licensed agent, but producers owning 20 adult fowl or less are to be exempted from the operations of the board. Permits will be granted to producers under certain conditions authorising them to sell direct to consumers and permits will also be issued to storekeepers under certain conditions authorising them to purchase eggs from unlicensed growers, thus providing a market for the producers in country districts. It is proposed to confer on the board authority to purchase and own property necessary for the transaction of its business and the marketing of eggs. The board will also be given authority to borrow for the purpose of establishing its business on a proper basis.

and the Bill will provide authority for the Minister to approve of loans or advances to the board to enable it to carry on its proper functions. It is not proposed in the Bill that any poll shall be necessary before the Act comes into operation. Since the institution of the Commonwealth scheme for the control and distribution of eggs, the producers have done a very fine job indeed in meeting the calls made upon them by the Government for increased production.

An extra number of producers have been encouraged to join the ranks of poultry-farmers and the result has been a very steep increase in the quantity of eggs produced in Australia. In fact, the production throughout the Commonwealth has increased from 56,000,000 dozen in 1942 to approximately 100,000,000 dozen last season and an estimated production of 110,000,000 dozen during the current season. In Western Australia production has increased at a similar rate and has shown an annual increase of approximately 18 to 20 per cent. during each of the last three years. That huge increased production has naturally brought with it a number of resultant difficulties, particularly now that the war has ended. The Commonwealth powers for controlling the marketing and processing of eggs were obtained under National Security Regulations and, as I have already pointed out, it is anticipated that within a comparatively short space of time, that control will cease. So unless some provision is made by legislation in this State not only for continuing operations within the State but also for ensuring means whereby the huge surplus of eggs, which may be as much as 70 million dozen in the Commonwealth, can be handled without the risk of interstate competition ruining local prices, we believe that the local industry would face disaster, as can readily be imagined.

Mr. McLarty: Is power given under this measure to control production?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No; the board will endeavour to market all the eggs that come forward and will follow the lines that were adopted during the war years with regard to drying, pulping and so forth, but I would say that inducements would not be held out to producers to increase production; neither would new producers be encouraged to enter the industry unless it became clear that there was still

a market available for all the eggs that could be produced.

Mr. Mann: There is a world market for eggs at the present time.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Of course there is, but I am speaking of what is likely to happen in future. The huge increase in production has caused difficulties in the industries that have been servicing the poultry industry. For example there has been difficulty in the case-making industry. There has been such a demand for cases by various industries, including the fruit industry, that the supply has not been nearly sufficient. There has also been difficulty in the matter of tin-making and the provision of packing material. During the last two years particularly, great difficulty has been experienced in this State in providing cases, fillers and tins from local production, and so importations have been necessary.

Mr. J. Hegney: Will not that right itself in a year or two?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It might, but we cannot say when. Last year no fewer than 40,000 cases had to be made by the control authorities by hand because local machinery was inadequate to cope with the situation. The Commonwealth has made contracts with the British Ministry of Food for the purchase of surplus eggs from Australia until 1948. Because of this, it is believed that when the present Commonwealth control ceases, it will be necessary to organise some central authority to arrange for the marketing of pulp, egg-powder and surplus eggs so that each State will obtain its fair share of the Australian market. An examination of the position is now being made by the producers' representatives and also by egg boards in all the States with a view to safeguarding the future marketing of eggs, and provision is made in the Bill for us to join such central organisation if it is considered by the Government to be in the best interests of the producers of this State.

I repeat that the Bill is not nearly as formidable as it appears. I regret that I have had to bring it down so late in the session. I would have deferred its introduction until next session had I been sure that the existing control would have continued and that no difficulty would have arisen, but because of the possibility of

Commonwealth control ceasing before we would have time to pass the necessary legislation to enable control to continue, I have been obliged at this late hour of the session to bring the Bill forward.

Mr. Read: Are members of the board paid a remuneration?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Mann, debate adjourned.

BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Schedule:

The CHAIRMAN: An amendment had been moved by the member for Katanning as follows:—

That at the end of Subclause (1) of Clause 16 of the schedule the following proviso be added:—

Provided that the holder of every such perpetual lease shall have the option (which may be exercised at any time after five years from the granting of such lease) to acquire the fee simple of the land comprised in the lease by paying in cash to the State the full amount of the valuation of the holding as originally determined under Clause 6 of this agreement and any amount necessary to satisfy any claim of the credit authority.

Mr. WATTS: Pursuant to the suggestion made by the Premier last evening, I have had another amendment drawn and, with the object of moving it, I ask leave to withdraw the amendment now before the Committee.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to Clause 16 of the schedule:—

The provisions of this clause shall be reviewed at the expiration of five years from the date of this agreement, and upon such review the Commonwealth and State may, by mutual agreement, vary the provisions of this clause by providing that a holding held on perpetual leasehold may be converted at the option of the holder and upon terms to be mutually agreed upon by the Commonwealth and the State into an estate in fee simple.

This abandons the idea of a compulsory provision in the agreement enabling lease-

holders, upon payment of the full amount owing, to convert their leaseholds into freehold. It will enable consideration to be given to the matter at the end of five years from the date of the agreement and, what is more, clearly indicates the view of this Chamber that some alteration should be considered at that time.

The PREMIER: The new amendment meets the objections I had to the former amendment. I think it is quite reasonable to propose a review at the end of a stated period. Had the original amendment been included, I think it would have held up the passing of the agreement and its acceptance by the Commonwealth, perhaps for six months or more. The amendment will give returned men a very clear indication, without any pretence at all that, at the end of a period, the question of whether they are to be allowed to exercise an option will be considered. Speaking on behalf of the Government, I see no reason why the proposal should not meet with the approval of the Commonwealth as a provision to be considered at a later date.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: There is much merit in the suggestion that people should be able to transfer from leasehold to freehold. We are all familiar with the adage that an Englishman's home is his castle and that he wants free and undisturbed possession of it. In regard to soldier settlement, however, it must be remembered that the State, together with the Commonwealth, has already written down the value of the property for the benefit of the soldier and incurred a liability partly as an act of justice to those who defended and fought for this country overseas. If we permitted conversion to freehold, a soldier after having held a block for four or five years, might sell and give to someone else the benefit accruing from this expenditure by the Commonwealth and State, in the proportions of three-fifths and two-fifths, and I do not think we can stand for that.

We are making big concessions to soldiers as a reward for their services, but after the State and the Commonwealth have brought a property to a state of productivity and written down the capital, somebody else should not be permitted to step in and make money out of it. A soldier might not have done much on his holding in the five years and to say that he should be entitled to the unearned increment is something that we should

not countenance. That would be entirely against the spirit of the scheme, which is designed to give these men who have done so much for us some reward for their services. The land might have cost £1,000 or £2,000 and we might say that because the productive capacity is only £750, we will write it down to that figure. I am not very favourable to the amendment.

Mr. WATTS: The objections raised by the member for Geraldton hardly enter into this amendment, though they might have been tenable in regard to the amendment that has been withdrawn, because it made a definite proposition that the lease should be convertible on certain specified terms.

The Premier: That is what I objected to.

Mr. WATTS: The present amendment suggests that a lease might be converted to freehold on terms agreeable to the Commonwealth and the State. Therefore the member for Geraldton is merely submitting that in five years the Commonwealth and the State might agree upon some proposal that is necessarily outrageous. This would be extremely unlikely. At the same time I submit that it is a curious outlook that the country having decided as an act of justice and part of its duty to confer a benefit on men who have served us, should subsequently turn around and say that in no circumstances shall they make a profit out of it. Surely the whole point of offering him some benefit at this juncture is in order that his after-life may be lived in a measure of comfort and contentment; and if, under any reasonable system to which the Commonwealth and State in five years both agree, subject to such reasonable restrictions they agree upon, he does make a profit, surely there can be no objection to that.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: It should be value that he has contributed towards.

Mr. WATTS: Then why give him something now by writing off some of the amount which the property is costing the country? Because we consider he is entitled to that something in exchange for the hiatus in his life, and that his loss of occupation for many years in civil life, and loss of opportunities which, had he been in Australia, he would have had, must be compensated for.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: So long as he keeps it himself.

Mr. WATTS: This amendment does not make any provision for giving it to him on any terms. It affords an opportunity for the future consideration of that subject.

Mr. THORN: I do not hold the opinion held by the member for Geraldton. This is a soldier settlement scheme, and I presume it will remain as such; and I am hoping that under the control that is set up, if at the end of five years the Commonwealth Government and those associated with it decide to allow this privilege of the soldier to convert the property to freehold, the board will see that another soldier settler goes on to the property. I hope that will be so, and that he will have some say in the profits that the present occupant will make. I do not see the dangers in this amendment that the member for Geraldton does, and I do not agree with his remarks about privileges to the soldiers. I consider the soldier is being given his just dues, what he has been promised by the Commonwealth Government—or a part of it.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The amendment expresses an obligation to review the position. What the result of the review will be is entirely a matter for the Commonwealth and State to arrive at. So it does not bind one or the other in the least respect. If this provision is added there is to be a review at the end of five years. That review can be formal or of a comprehensive character. I presume that if an alteration is made it will be made by mutual consent and will be part and parcel of the arrangement between the Commonwealth and the State for soldier settlement.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. SEWARD: Paragraph 18 of the schedule makes provision for the establishment of an authority to investigate and determine such matters arising between a settler and the State as the Commonwealth and the State agree may be referred to it for determination. I think that those who have had experience of the workings of the Agricultural Bank will readily realise that quite a number of matters may arise in dispute between the settler and the State. If we are going to confine those matters only to such as the Commonwealth and State may refer to the authority for determination, I am afraid we are looking for trouble. It will be better to create some authority and give the settler the

right to approach that authority on any matter about which he is dissatisfied. I therefore move an amendment—

That in lines 2 and 3 of Clause 18 of the schedule the words "such matters arising between a settler and the State as the Commonwealth and State agree" be struck out and the words "matters in dispute between a settler and the State which" inserted in lieu.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. SEWARD: The latter part of the paragraph reads, "The form and constitution of this authority shall be agreed upon by the Commonwealth and the State." I consider that Parliament should set out the constitution of this authority, which should contain some members having a local knowledge of conditions in particular districts. If a settler complained that he could not make a reasonable measure of progress, there would be members of the constituted authority to guide the appeal board as to whether the submission was genuine or not. Provision is made that he shall have technical and expert advice. I can recall an instance in which a settler whom I know very well went to his mortgagees and said he did not want to continue growing wheat but wanted to grow oats. The mortgagees would not consent and said that he must continue to grow wheat. But he had been losing money, so he walked off his property. We require someone with local knowledge to assist the board in matters of that kind. I move an amendment—

That at the end of Clause 18 of the schedule the following words be added:—"but shall contain a majority of persons having a practical knowledge of land settlement who are not public servants."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is admitted that all sorts of disputes may crop up between the State and settlers, and I agree that is why it would be inadvisable to have to have an agreement between the State and the Commonwealth that there was a dispute. As a dispute crops up, if there is not a permanent authority—and I do not think there should be one—there should be an authority created, even in a district. It would be advisable to have on that authority a man who would be representative of the particular district but I

am not agreeable to loading the authority against the State.

Mr. Watts: I would not say that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have said it.

Mr. Watts: I do not think it is a fair statement.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is just as fair as it is for the hon. member to cast aspersions on employees of the State. He said, "Who are not public servants." If we have a public servant, holding a high position, who may be an expert in the matter entailed in a dispute that arises, surely if it is thought advisable to put him on that committee, that can be done.

Mr. Watts: There is nothing to prevent it. He would be in a minority and could still be a public servant.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The amendment says that there shall be a majority of persons who are not public servants. If we have a committee of three, which I think is sufficient, there would be a representative of the district, a representative to deal with the matter from the State's point of view, and an independent chairman, and I cannot see anything wrong with that authority, which is what I visualise. We do not know what disputes will arise, particularly in the first year or two, between the settler and the State. I can see nothing wrong with the kind of committee I have suggested. The Government cannot accept the amendment.

Mr. WATTS: I cannot see anything wrong with the amendment. I assume that the authority would consist probably of three members. The amendment says that the majority shall not be public servants, so one of them can be a public servant, and that gives the State representation, the State being a party to the dispute.

The Minister for Lands: Would not a magistrate be a public servant?

Mr. WATTS: One of the members will presumably be a person with a knowledge of the district concerned, and of its conditions, under which the settler is working. The third will presumably be an independent member, and should not be a public servant. If he were a public servant the State would then have two representatives out of three, and I think that is the distinction the member for Pingelly wishes to make.

The Minister for Works: Would you regard a magistrate as a public servant?

Mr. WATTS: Yes.

The Minister for Lands: Then we could not have a magistrate as a chairman.

Mr. WATTS: No, but I can think of half a dozen other convenient people whom even the Minister would accept, if I named them, who are neither magistrates nor public servants. I think the proposal of the member for Pingelly is the fairest possible. It would not prevent the Government having representation, and it provides for the other party to be represented, and for a third member, who is to be independent. I am surprised at the Minister's point of view and cannot subscribe to it.

The PREMIER: We should not tinker with the agreement in this manner. With the things that may be said to the detriment of public servants, we have a very efficient public service in Western Australia and in the set-up to control this authority there will be men who are experts in their different lines, charged with great responsibility. They will have opportunity to be familiar not only with the overall picture, but with individual problems. Two members in the front bench opposite were, at one time, civil servants.

The Minister for Works: Not too civil.

The PREMIER: I think they would find unwelcome a suggestion that, when they were civil servants, they were unfit to be on a committee of this type, but now they have assumed authority and ability to deal with these problems in a proper manner. This authority will have to confer, as it is now conferring, with people in the districts, and with all sorts of authorities in the districts. That course is to be followed strictly, administratively, so that the best advice can be obtained. It is not always necessary to have outside advice on the committee, but it is always a wise provision to co-opt the services of persons who can give good advice. I think it would be wise to leave it to those who have the responsibility to add to their numbers by placing the proper persons as and where necessary.

Amendment put and negatived.

Schedule, as amended, put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Local Authorities (Reserve Funds) Act Amendment.

2, Justices Act Amendment.

(On motion by the Minister for Lands).

Received from the Council.

BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT (LAND ACT APPLICATION).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th November.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [5.42]: The Minister, in introducing this Bill, did not waste much time, nor do I intend to do so. This Bill is to make provision in the Land Act for perpetual lease for the purposes of land settlement. That is all it provides for and it is complementary to the other Bill and most necessary. If the Commonwealth Government does agree to the amendment previously agreed to in the other Bill it will necessary, in five years' time, also to amend this measure. I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council notifying that it insisted on its amendments Nos. 1 to 6 now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Labour in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendments insisted on by the Council and disagreed to by the Assembly are as follows:—

No. 1.

Clause 2 (page 2):—Delete the words "one or more" in line 7.

No. 2.

Clause 2:—Delete the words "one or more" in line 8.

No. 3.

Clause 2:—Delete the words "a local authority or" in lines 12 and 13.

No. 4.

Clause 2:—Delete the words "a friendly society or" in line 14.

No. 5.

Clause 2:—Insert the word "undertaken" in line 16, the word "only."

No. 6.

Clause 2:—Delete the words "local authorities separately or with friendly societies separately or with any number of local authorities or with any" in lines 17, 18 and 19, and substitute the words "a number of local authorities or a."

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The original proposal was to allow local governing bodies and friendly societies to do business with the State Government Insurance Office. The Council's amendments provide that they shall only deal with pools constituted of local governing bodies or friendly societies. No separate local governing body or friendly society will be able to do business with the State office if these amendments are agreed to. That is the crux of the whole thing. The Bill was brought down at the request of local governing bodies, most of which were in a pool. In view of the insistence of another place that these organisations must form a pool before they do business with the State Government Insurance Office, there is nothing more to be said. I move—

That the Assembly no longer disagrees to the amendments made by the Council.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (RESUMPTION OF LAND).

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after Clause 2 had been agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

Mr. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That after the definition of "Committee" a further definition be inserted as follows:—"Industry" includes every trade or business having for its object the manufacture of marketable products or things."

I move this amendment because the Bill itself does not define what is meant by "industry."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member has not given me anything to reply

to and has advanced no reasons for his amendment. Any attempt to define the term "industry" will have a narrowing influence upon the operations of this legislation, and it may easily have a detrimental effect upon the purpose which the Government has in mind. I admit that the proposed definition is fairly wide but, even so, it is doubtful whether it would be wide enough in practice. I would prefer that the term should not be defined rather than it should be defined in a way that will have a limiting effect that the hon. member himself would not desire. I am not very strong in my opposition to the amendment, but I ask the Committee to consider whether it is wise in all the circumstances to embody it in the Bill. It may have the effect of shutting out from the benefits of the measure some undertaking which should be covered by its provisions.

Mr. ABBOTT: I still think the amendment should be made. The Bill is so worded in this regard that no one can understand what the word "industry" means.

The Minister for Works: It has a general meaning.

Mr. ABBOTT: It should be accurately defined so that everyone may know what it covers.

Mr. DONEY: The word "industry" is intended to denote some phase of secondary industry. It is a very variable term and requires a definition.

The Minister for Works: I am not objecting very strongly to the amendment.

Mr. DONEY: Industry could be regarded as the work of one person or a group of persons engaged in primary or secondary industry.

The Minister for Works: I think you have convinced me.

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

Clauses 4 and 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Applications by certain persons for acquisition of land for industrial purposes:

Mr. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That after paragraph (a) a new paragraph be inserted as follows:—" (aa) That after he acquires the said land he will be able to establish and carry on the said business, and."

I want to ensure that any applicant who goes before the Committee has some foundation to indicate that he will be able to

carry on the business he claims to be able to carry on, if he is able to get the land. This would avoid wildcat schemes.

The Minister for Works: I agree.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That a new subclause be inserted as follows:—“(3) Every applicant shall state in his application whether he desires to acquire an estate in fee simple or a leasehold estate in the said land.”

The applicant should state in his application whether he wishes the land to be freehold or leasehold. That is a matter which ought to be known at the time he makes his application.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have no objection to the amendment.

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

Clause 7—Application to be considered by Committee:

Mr. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (2) after the word “whether” the words “the applicant has established the facts referred to in paragraphs (a), (aa), (b), (c) and (d) of Subsection (2) of Section 6 and whether” be inserted.

This clause provides that on receipt of an application made under the preceding clause, the Minister shall refer it to the committee to be appointed, which may either recommend or reject it. Provision is made for an appeal to the local court. My desire is to set out clearly the grounds which must be taken into consideration by the proposed committee and by the court.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I feel sure the proposed committee would do what this amendment would expressly call upon it to do. However, I have no objection to the matter being set out clearly in the Bill. If the amendment is carried, the word “same” in line 5 ought to be struck out and the word “application” inserted in lieu. I suggest to the member for North Perth that if the amendment is agreed to, he move a consequential amendment along the lines I have suggested.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. ABBOTT: I appreciate the Minister's suggestion. I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (2) the word “same” be struck out and the word “application” inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (3) the words “shall call upon the applicant” be struck out with a view to inserting the following words:—“and may call upon the applicant or other person who, in the opinion of the committee, is able to give any relevant information.”

The applicant might be a company and consequently could not be summoned to attend personally. In addition, it might be advisable for the committee to summon other persons who might be able to furnish it with relevant information.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am in agreement with part of the amendment; but if we do not make it obligatory upon the committee to call the applicant, the committee may not do so, and it is altogether desirable that the committee should. I suggest to the member for North Perth that he allow Subclause (3) to stand as printed, but that there should be added to it the words “and may call any other person who in the opinion of the committee is able to give any relevant information.” This would be in accordance with the wish of the member for North Perth, and at the same time would preserve the provision making it obligatory upon the committee to call the applicant. I have no objection to the idea expressed in the amendment; in fact, I think it a move in the right direction. I oppose the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subclause (3) the following words be added:—“and may call upon any other person who in the opinion of the committee, is able to give any relevant information.”

Amendment put the passed.

Mr. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That at the end of paragraph (a) of Subclause (5) the following words be added:—“and to any person appearing on search of the register book at the Land Titles Office to have any estate or interest in the said land.”

By this means any person interested in the land will receive notice from the Land Titles Office.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This amendment is really preliminary to others

to be moved by the member for North Perth. I might not take serious objection to the amendment if it were the only one of its kind, but there are several others to be moved and the acceptance of this would more or less involve the acceptance of the others. By studying the Bill members will realise that it already provides many safeguards and for many authorities to be consulted before any land is compulsorily acquired. The Bill has been so framed because it is considered advisable, in a matter of this kind, to provide a fair amount of checking and safety even though in doing so the machinery provisions of the Bill may appear to be wide—perhaps unnecessarily so. If we accept this and the other amendments the Bill, if it becomes an Act, will have a tendency to be more or less unworkable. There would be an almost endless number of people to be advised and given the right to appeal. It might take a lot of time before any one application could be finalised. For these reasons I propose to vote against the amendment.

Mr. ABBOTT: I do not think it is necessary for this amendment to be linked with the remaining ones. This is to give anyone interested in the land—the registered proprietor or a lessee—the opportunity of being heard. The Minister says that great precautions have been taken to give everyone interested an opportunity to be heard, but then he limits the provision to the registered proprietor. Very often the registered proprietor is not even the owner of the land. The real owner is not to be given an opportunity to appeal.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (b) of Subclause (5) be struck out.

This amendment forms the crux of my amendments. The Bill gives the registered proprietor of the land the right to appeal, but it gives a local authority merely the right to have any of its objections considered by the board. All it can do is to put its objections, together with reasons, in writing and send them to the committee. Its redress is then ended. Local authorities are very interested where land is compulsorily resumed for industrial purposes. If the amendment is carried they will be given the opportunity to have their objections considered by a magistrate. The people who are vastly

interested in the locality are to be given no right of appeal. The subsequent amendments will have the effect of giving the local authorities the same right of appeal as the registered proprietors have, to the magistrate.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The committee to be set up under this Bill will consist of the Director of Industrial Development, the Surveyor General and the Chairman of the Town Planning Board. It might be considered that the Director of Industrial Development would have some bias in the matter of compulsory acquisition of land for industrial purposes. Even if that could be said of him it could not be said of either of the other two members. The Surveyor General would have no bias in that regard, but might have a bias in the other direction. The Chairman of the Town Planning Board would have a bias in the direction of the Town Planning Board's opinions and in the direction of the opinions of the local governing authorities concerned, if those opinions were based on good foundations.

Mr. Doney: If that is so you have deliberately appointed a board that is biased against you?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We have deliberately appointed a board that is not biased in the direction of recommending the acquirement of land for industrial purposes irrespective of other considerations. If the board were appointed in such a way that it would recommend favourably in almost every instance. The Government does not desire that, but is anxious that this legislation shall be operated along the lines of obtaining only the land that is considered desirable from most points of view. I am positive that any representations made to the committee by a local governing authority would receive the utmost consideration. Under the Bill the registered proprietor of any land will be able to call witnesses to support his case. He could call representatives of the local governing authority, or even of the Town Planning Board. If we allow the right of appeal to the Town Planning Board and the local authorities, the appeals might very well be endless.

The same objections can be raised here as are raised on the amendment defeated a moment ago. We must also remember that the views and rights of local authorities must not always be held to be paramount in a matter of this kind. Local authorities might

have their own particular reasons for opposing the acquisition of certain land. If they had the right of appeal they might pursue it to the limit of the law without giving any thought to the question of the State's industrial development. Their view would be purely local and parochial. I hope we will not hedge the method, outlined in the Bill, around with too many restrictions because, as I said earlier, the method of investigation and of arriving at the final decision, as contained in the Bill, is on an extremely conservative basis. The Government did it deliberately because it was anxious that the interests of everyone concerned should be considered, and that the person or persons directly associated with any land recommended to be acquired should have the right of appeal to a local court.

Mr. Abbott: Not anyone! You have already objected to the real owner having the right.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have objected to people who have a secondary or tertiary interest having the right of appeal. If we agreed to that it would set up an impossible position. If such a condition obtained the intention of legislation of this description might just as well straightaway be abandoned.

Mr. ABBOTT: The Minister's argument is very illogical. He says he considers there should be an impartial tribunal of inquiry, which he regards as reasonable, but then he goes on to say that the local authorities shall not have that right. The Government is rather favourably inclined to judicial decisions just at this stage. Is there not a Royal Commission considering a railway matter? In that instance the Government is not guided by its experts regarding the issue, but is having a public inquiry. Is it not much more important in a case like that under review at present that a local authority should have the advantage of a judicial inquiry?

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	..	19
					—
Majority against	..	..			4
					—

AYES.	
Mr. Abbott	Mr. Perkins
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Read
Mr. Hill	Mr. Sheara
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Lealle	Mr. Watts
Mr. Mann	Mr. Willmott
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Doney
Mr. North	(Teller.)

NOES.	
Mr. Cross	Mr. Panton
Mr. Fox	Mr. Smith
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Styants
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Telfer
Mr. Holman	Mr. Triest
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Wise
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Withers
Mr. Needham	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Nulsen	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Clauses 8 and 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Authority to Governor to resume land for industrial purposes:

Mr. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That in lines 6 to 9 of subparagraph (a) of paragraph (i) of the proviso the words "and also may include such further amount not exceeding ten per centum of the amount of the said costs and expenses as the Governor may determine," be struck out.

The paragraph sets out that the purchase price in connection with the resumption of land shall include all the costs and expenses, inclusive of compensation, the costs of the transfer and conveyance of the land, and also will include an additional amount not exceeding ten per cent. of the costs and expenses as the Governor may determine. I cannot see why the land should not be sold at cost, which would include any expenses incurred.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If my advice from the Solicitor General were in line with the views expressed by the member for North Perth, I would unhesitatingly support the amendment; but the advice I have received is otherwise. It is necessary for some provision to be made enabling the Government to recover the actual expenses incurred in connection with such matters, and the Solicitor General advises that that would not be possible under the conditions suggested by the member for North Perth. The Government will be providing a special service for persons desirous of acquiring land for industrial purposes. In the majority of instances, such individuals or companies will be well able and anxious to pay.

Hon. N. Keenan: Perhaps well able, but surely not anxious to pay.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think they will be anxious to pay the costs outlined in the clause. I am prepared to meet the member for North Perth by agreeing to limit the further amount of costs to five per cent. instead of ten per cent., which I think would be a reasonable compromise.

Mr. ABBOTT: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 of subparagraph (a) of paragraph (i) of the proviso the word "ten" be struck out and the word "five" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (ii) of the proviso be struck out.

The clause provides that the Government may sell land at such price and terms as it thinks fit and then proceeds to set out that the Governor may grant a lease at such rent and upon such conditions as he may deem right. Paragraph (ii) sets out that where the Governor elects to grant a lease of land to anyone, the term of the lease and the rate of rental reserved thereunder "shall be so fixed that the total rent payable under the lease during the currency thereof shall not be less than the amount of the purchase price of the land would be if the freehold estate therein were transferred or conveyed to the said person" and further that the lease may include a provision giving the lessee an option later to acquire the freehold estate of that land. No useful purpose would be served by the inclusion of paragraph (ii), seeing that if it is deleted the clause will already provide the Governor with the power to lease under any terms considered desirable.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It would not be advisable to agree to this amendment. A lease of such land would be granted for a long period. It would be most unfair to give a lease to a party proposing to establish an industry if the lease covered a comparatively few years only. In fact nobody would want the land. Where the land is taken for industrial purposes a permanent industry will be established, and consequently the term of the lease must be a long one. So it is necessary to provide that the term of the lease and the rate of rental shall be fixed in such a way as to

enable the Government to receive from the lessee an amount not less than would have been received had the land been sold on a freehold basis. This part of the Bill aims at protecting the person or company taking the land, because it will ensure the land being made available for a long period.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Clause 11—Authority to Governor to acquire and dedicate land to industrial purposes:

Mr. ABBOTT: Two systems are provided in the Bill for acquiring land for industrial purposes. We have dealt with one. The second system covers those cases where the initiative is taken by the Government, and the Government may act on the recommendation of the committee. No right of appeal is provided for a private owner; nor is he to be given any notice; nor is the local authority to be given any opportunity to put its views before the Government. I cannot see the use of the earlier provisions if the Government is free to follow the procedure under this clause. What could happen is that somebody might tell the Minister he wants land and the Minister could say, "I will submit it direct." Nothing else would be necessary. The procedure should be as if an application had been submitted in writing under the provisions of Clause 7. I move an amendment—

That a proviso be added as follows:—

Provided that before making any such recommendation the committee shall cause at least thirty days' notice in writing of its intention to make such recommendation to be given to the local authority in whose district the land is situated and to the Town Planning Board and to the registered proprietor of the said land and to any person appearing on search of the register book in the Land Titles Office to have any estate or interest in the said land and thereupon the provisions of subsection (5) of section seven shall, so far as applicable, apply mutatis mutandis in respect of such land.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have no objection to the principle being applied to the land referred to in Subclause (2) subject to an amendment. I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the words "to any person appearing on search of the register book in the Land Titles Office to have any estate or interest in the said land and."

Then the wording will be similar to the provision in Clause 7 (5).

Mr. ABBOTT: In view of the previous amendment, I agree with the Minister.

Amendment on amendment put and passed; amendment, as amended, agreed to. Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 12 to 16, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [8.12]: I support the second reading of the Bill. I would point out that this is a measure which at the present time is not inflicting nor can it inflict any hardship on a mortgagee. This is a remnant of the Financial Emergency Act of 1931, and the remnant provides only for a maximum rate of interest of 5 per cent. or a 22½ per cent. reduction on the rate of interest stated in the mortgage, whichever is the greater. In consequence, it will be seen that the continuance of the Act for a further period is most unlikely in existing circumstances to inflict any hardship on any mortgagee. It will not restrict the rights of a mortgagee to proceed in default of payment. It has none of the attributes of other legislation which was passed at or about the same time. At present it is extremely unlikely that anyone would be able to invest money on mortgage at more than 5 per cent., and therefore the mortgagee who, prior to the Financial Emergency Act of 1931, was on an 8 per cent. mortgage, so far as the Act is concerned, would be able to claim £6 4s. 6d. per cent., and thus is probably in a more desirable position—if one regards the position as being desirable—than he would be were the mortgage entered into at the present time.

But I question the advisability of limiting the continuance of the Act to the 30th September next. I am going to ask the Minister to accept an amendment to extend the Act to the 31st December of next year, and I shall do so because I hope to convince him that the request is not unreasonable. As I have indicated, the continuance of this legislation for a further three months will not hurt the mortgagees—the lenders—whose

mortgages were dated prior to the 31st August, 1931, because it does not restrict their rights when the mortgagor is in default; it merely restricts the rate of interest. The hon. gentleman expressed the opinion that it will be fairly easy to adjust, by the raising of fresh moneys, such loans as are outstanding at present to which the Financial Emergency Act applies. I am in no position to prove at this short notice that that is not so; but I feel in my own mind that there is very grave doubt whether it is so or not. I am myself acquainted with a number of mortgages that were taken out prior to the 31st August, 1931; and I doubt, in view of all that has happened in the meantime—although the interest has been paid at the reduced rate provided and the people are still carrying on their various avocations—whether it will be easy to raise money at present rates of interest prior to the 30th September next.

I have in mind one particular instance on which I propose to spend a few moments because I think the Minister will see, if this is not an isolated case—and I have no proof that it is not—that it would be well to give the extra period of three months so that an examination could be made of the position. I say that because I know perfectly well I can make such inquiries and give such publicity to the matter as possible in six months equally as well as in 12; but we know it would be very difficult, if it were found necessary, to pass new legislation before the 30th September. Hence my suggestion that the extra three months can do no-one any harm and may do a measure of good. If at the end of the period in question, I am not able to offer the Minister other examples than the one in my mind, I will abandon the argument in regard to this measure, if he feels disposed not to renew it any further. But, for the reasons I have given, I hope he will accept an amendment providing for continuance to the 31st December.

To come back to where I started, the case I have in mind is rather an unfortunate one. It is in respect of a mortgage of over £12,000 on a farming property of approximately 7,000 acres held by persons who are undoubted as to their bona fides. If I were to tell the Minister their names, he would probably agree, because he may know them. The mortgage was incurred in

these circumstances: On the death of the proprietor in 1928, nearly £2,800 was owing. By his will, he directed that certain of his family were to be granted a legacy of £1,000 each and that the other two members of the family were then to have the property in their own right. They borrowed £4,000 to pay the legacies after they had borrowed £2,800 to pay Federal and State probate and succession duties. The Minister will see that the debt was then in the vicinity of £10,000 as against £2,800 left behind by the original proprietor. Subsequently, and most unfortunately, and just before the passing of the Financial Emergency Act, one of the two who became the joint proprietor of the property died, and a further claim was made for probate and succession and estate dues. In consequence, the total liability that had to be cleared up was approximately £12,000, and that was raised in one mortgage from a well-known insurance company. The rate of interest was fixed at so much per cent.—from memory, I think it was £6 10s. per cent., but I am not certain—plus an increase to be calculated in proportion to any increase in income tax that there might be on income derived from interest on mortgages.

As everybody knows, very substantial changes have taken place in the income tax laws; and, in consequence, were the Financial Emergency Act not applying to the property today the rate of interest that would be chargeable would be in the vicinity of eight per cent. under that mortgage. In addition to that, values of properties of that type have very considerably depreciated. The operations of the Federal Sub-Treasury in persisting in making their valuations on the alleged state of affairs that existed in February, 1941, at a time when there had been virtually no sales in the immediate past, and under the management of valuers, too, who seem to have been engaged in a process of deflation and certainly not reflation or inflation have resulted in the values of this type of property being very considerably reduced. It is questionable in my mind whether the full amount of £12,000 necessary to repay that debt could be raised. In any event, as I understand the position, it would have to be submitted, so great is the amount, to the Commonwealth Treasury, under National Security Regulations, because one is able

to raise mortgages only for a very limited sum under those regulations, without such consent.

In a case such as that it will be readily seen that it is not going to be easy to deal with it if the protection afforded by this Act is lost, unless we make certain that some other means can be found to cope with the position, of which I am very doubtful. Otherwise, we are going to inflict considerable hardship on people of that kind. That is one case where I am fairly intimately acquainted with the circumstances. There are others of which I am not without some knowledge and regarding which I have a strong suspicion that the same or similar circumstances apply.

The Premier: You believe, however, that the words "and no longer" should in fact apply at that date?

Mr. WATTS: I think it would be reasonable on the 31st December, unless I can establish to my satisfaction that it should go on longer. My feeling is that I want to be certain of what we are doing. I am not certain tonight. I am putting up a case as I fear it to be. I hope in the next few months either to establish to the Minister's satisfaction that it is as I fear, or else to abandon my objection altogether. I ask, in order that that may be done—and if it is to be continued further, we may have time to pass legislation; and if it is not, we have done no harm—that the date, the 31st December, should be inserted rather than the date, the 30th September. Were deserving people who might have lent money in the position that they were likely to lose it by the continuance of this measure, the Minister might have strong arguments against those I have used. Obviously that is not so, because it is merely a question of interest not being less than five per cent. Five per cent. today is probably the maximum rate one would be likely to get on a mortgage of this character. Consequently there can be nobody suffering from the mortgagee's side as this is a Bill which only concerns interest; but there may be people suffering on the mortgagor's side and I have endeavoured to give one instance where I am certain that inconvenience at least, if not suffering, will certainly take place.

The Minister for Lands: What applies to this will apply to the next Bill, I suppose.

Mr. WATTS: I may express some views on that, too. I am interested in this

measure at the present moment, and I think I can safely say that I am more interested in this one than in the other.

Mr. Smith: Is not the maximum five per cent. under this Bill?

Mr. WATTS: No. It is five per cent. or 22 per cent. less than the rate charged in the mortgage, whichever is the greater. Thus eight per cent. becomes £6 4s. 6d.; seven per cent., £5 9s. 6d.; and some rate, about £6 10s., becomes five per cent., and it cannot fall any lower. I propose to support the second reading; but for the reason I gave, I am going to move the amendment I mentioned, and I hope the Minister will give it favourable consideration.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Continuation of Act:

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 the word "thirtieth" be struck out and the word "thirty-first" inserted in lieu.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Government has a lot of sympathy with the proposal, but it is desirous of having this measure finish next year. I am afraid that if it is amended in this way it will look as though the Government proposes to continue it after next year. I suggest that the Leader of the Opposition make it the 30th November, and that would be an indication that the Government proposes to finish up on that date. That would give the Leader of the Opposition two more months.

Mr. Watts: I will compromise.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the hon. member will do that, we are prepared to agree.

Mr. WATTS: I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 the word "September" be struck out and the word "November" inserted in lieu.

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

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—MORTGAGEES' RIGHTS RESTRICTION ACT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [8.30]: This measure was brought down in 1931 to protect mortgagors. I am glad to know that conditions now permit this Act to be dispensed with this year. By supporting this measure we will ensure the end of this legislation by next September. It was striking to hear, in the Minister's remarks, as to that part of the Act which provided for the protection of smaller mortgagees who were suffering under great hardships and who could not collect certain cash, that such people made no complaints. The Minister announced that though the legislation had been in force for some time, not one single application had been recorded to take advantage of it. If that is so, surely this legislation can be dispensed with now, without harm to anybody, except that it may cause some consternation among the larger investment and trustee companies, which may feel that it is at present protecting their interests. I support the measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Continuance of Act:

Mr. WATTS: Consistent with the other amendment carried on the former measure, I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of Subclause (2) the word "September" be struck out and the word "November" inserted in lieu.

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

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (PROMOTIONS APPEAL BOARD).

Council's Message.

Message from the Council notifying that it insisted on its amendments Nos. 3 and 6 now considered.

In Committee

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The first of the amendments insisted on by the Council is as follows:—

No. 3. Clause 5, (1):—Delete the paragraph (b) of the proviso.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Legislative Council has agreed not to press some of the amendments which it previously wanted made to the Bill, this Committee having not agreed to those amendments. However, the Council insists on amendments No. 3 and 6. Amendment No. 3 has to do with that part of the Bill which aims at preventing any non-unionist from exercising the right of appeal under the Bill. There was considerable debate here on this principle and I move—

That the Assembly continues to disagree to the Council's amendment.

Question put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN: The second amendment insisted on by the Council is as follows:—

No. 6. Clause 16 (1):—Delete the words and parentheses "(not being a legal practitioner)" in lines 32 and 33.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This amendment deals with another matter that has been fully debated here, that of the prohibition in the Bill against legal practitioners appearing before the board as agents for any employee appellant or employee recommended for promotion. I move—

That the Assembly continues to disagree to the Council's amendment.

Question put and passed.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

Assembly's Request for Conference.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: 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 Perth, the member for Williams-Narrogin and the mover.

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

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1945-46.*In Committee of Supply.*

Resumed from the 22nd November; Mr. Fox in the Chair.

Vote—Agriculture £142,050 (partly considered):

MR. PERKINS (York) [8.40]: I desire to deal with one or two administrative matters in the department before tackling larger questions of policy. There have been many complaints from country districts of sheep-stealing, and a conference recently held at Quairading, representative of a large area, was attended by a detective member of the police force. The statement was made at that conference that the work of the Police Department and of individuals interested in combating sheep-stealing in agricultural areas was hampered by lack of copies of the Brands Register. I understand the register was last printed in 1926 and that information as to registered brands can be obtained from the Department of Agriculture on request, which means some delay. It is desirable that copies of the Brands Register be made available and I think they should be available at all police stations and road board offices. I understand it will cost approximately £300 to print the register. There were something like 40,000 cattle brands and 30,000 sheep earmarks on the register. Most properties will have had brands and earmarks registered and it is improbable that there will be many alterations in future, as to new registrations. Authenticated cases of sheep-stealing have been reported, and I think the Government should co-operate in the way I have suggested in combating this danger.

I refer next to the Midland Junction abattoirs. The Select Committee which reported on the killing facilities in the State last year recommended that provision for freezing should be added at Midland Junction as soon as possible to enable growers, who were not satisfied with prices received for stock at auction, to direct that the stock be killed and frozen on their behalf, giving them an opportunity to sell that stock under the Empire purchase agreement for meat. I am aware that there are difficulties in the way of the Government taking early action; but I hope the department is keeping this aspect in mind because since the report of the Select

Committee was issued, I have had talks with many interested producers of stock, who almost all agree that the fluctuation in prices from sale to sale, and within each weekly sale, is far greater than can be accounted for by any difference in the quality of the stock submitted at the sales. The provision of freezing facilities to enable stock to be killed at Midland Junction for export would give the producers an opportunity to have the stock killed on their behalf and treated for export at Midland Junction, if they were not satisfied with the prices being offered at the auction in the yard. In the report of the department, mention is naturally made of many matters. At page 4 of the report there is reference to the marketing of the various primary products which this State produces.

I desire to refer particularly to wheat. The State Government only comes into the picture, so far as marketing of wheat at the present time is concerned, in a limited degree. It may come into the picture in a much greater degree at some time not far distant in the future. If we are to have any stabilisation scheme for the wheat industry operating in the post-war years, it seems likely that this Parliament will be called on to pass some supplementary legislation. It is desirable that great consideration should be given by Parliament to the general position of the wheat industry. It is the most important employing industry in the State, directly and indirectly. It has a vital bearing on the financial stability of many public utilities. For instance, the Railway Department is vitally dependent on supplies for the industry and the actual wheat itself to maintain anything like a state of solvency.

It is important to the producers of wheat, to those who are concerned in the handling of wheat, and to all other people in the State, that the industry should be kept on a sound footing. At present, I am exceedingly doubtful whether it can be said that the industry is on a sound footing. There has been some apparent improvement since the pre-war years. During the period from 1930 to 1940 wheat prices were certainly lower. During the war we have had the acquisition scheme, which is administered by the Commonwealth Government. From the grower's point of view that scheme has not been entirely satisfactory. At present, as most members are

doubtless aware, there is a considerable dispute between the growers' organisations and the Commonwealth Government as to the return which the producers have received from the wheat delivered during the war years. As far as one can determine, the amount in dispute is approximately £10,000,000. That applies to the Nos. 5, 6 and 7 pools. There is an additional amount in respect of later pools. The main difference of opinion is with respect to wheat which has been used for stock feed. If the Commonwealth Government accepted the contention of the growers' representatives and paid full export parity for the quantity of wheat which has been used for stock feed and which has been distributed to stockowners at about 3s. 3d. a bushel, the No. 5 pool would realise about 4s. 4d. per bushel; the No. 6 pool, about 5s. 4d. per bushel; and the No. 7 pool, about 6s. 6d. per bushel.

Those prices are all f.o.r. at ports; to bring them to a siding basis, it would be necessary to deduct the rail freight, which in this State averages about 5d. per bushel. That is a very large sum of money for the industry to be standing out of, and it must have a vital effect on the prosperity of the State. It is a matter that affects the State Government indirectly, in that the State Government—as well as the State generally—will receive considerable benefits if the wheatgrowers in Western Australia get their full share of the £10,000,000 that is outstanding. When it comes to a question of stabilising the industry in the future, the State Government will have more than an indirect interest; it will have a direct interest, as it will be called upon to formulate certain plans and probably pass legislation to enable the stabilisation plan to function. In the period from 1930 to 1940, the wheat industry received something under £15,000,000 during five of those years; the average being about £3,000,000 a year. At the end of the period, the flour tax legislation was passed. That brings in about £3,500,000, when export wheat is 2s. 7d. per bushel at Williamstown. This was approximately the price obtained in the lower-price years.

Members will realise that during the period from 1930 to 1940, had the flour tax legislation been operating from the beginning of the period, the wheat industry would have received considerably more

benefit from that legislation than it did receive by way of bounty direct from the Commonwealth revenue. I make that statement in order to correct a rather widespread impression which is held, particularly in the city, that during the depression period the rest of the community was called upon to subsidise the wheat industry in some degree. Actually, had the community during that period from 1930 to 1940, paid the Australian price for its flour, which it has been called upon to do since the introduction of the flour tax legislation in 1938, the wheat industry would have received more under that legislation than it actually did receive by way of bounty from the Commonwealth. Since the introduction of the flour tax, the Commonwealth wheat acquisition scheme has been brought into being, and the world's wheat position has altered. Export wheat prices have risen considerably, until at the present day the export value of Australian wheat f.o.r., Fremantle, is 9s. 6d. per bushel. The increase has been a steady one. At present, the consumers of products of the wheat industry in Australia are receiving a substantial direct benefit from the flour tax legislation, or by virtue of the policy set out in that legislation, as they are still only paying the same price for their bread as they paid for it in the depression years, when the export price of wheat, f.o.r., Fremantle, was down as low as 2s. 3d., 2s. 4d. and 2s. 6d. per bushel.

Figures extracted showing the effect of the flour tax legislation on the industry and on the consumers of Australia, indicate that, owing to that legislation, since the export price of wheat rose to the figure of 5s. 2d. at Williamstown—on which figure the flour tax is based—the industry has paid more back to the consumers of Australia than it has received in benefits since the introduction of the flour tax legislation. The sum which the wheatgrowers of Australia have recouped to the flour consumers of Australia under that legislation now amounts to approximately £500,000 in excess of the benefits received. That is the position at the moment. I now come to the position as it affects the State Government particularly. The organised wheatgrowers of Australia desire that the wide fluctuation in the value of primary products, particularly wheat, should be avoided in the future, if it is possible to do so. That

is why they ask for a stabilisation plan. If that objective is to be attained, it will require some action on the part of the State Government. The Constitution will not permit of the Commonwealth Government attaining such an objective without the co-operation of the State Government.

I have given that background of the wheat industry so that we can form an estimate of what we should aim at under a stabilisation scheme. The position will be different for the next few years, apparently, as export prices will be high. I would like some discussion to take place in Parliament as to the form that stabilisation scheme may take. We have the objective clearly set out by the organised growers of Australia. They desire the price to be stabilised and state they desire a return of at least the cost of production. That cost has been arrived at by the two growers organisations in this State after very careful inquiry. The P.P.A. arrived at the figure of 5s. 5d. per bushel at sidings. The figure arrived at by the Wheatgrowers Union is a little over 2d. higher; it amounts to nearly 5s. 8d. per bushel. It looks as if the minimum figure that should be aimed at should be not less than 5s. 6d. per bushel. I have no doubt that various suggestions will be made by the Commonwealth authorities when they come to consider this question in collaboration with the States.

I hope that the State Government, as advised no doubt by its Department of Agriculture, will stand fast to secure at least this minimum figure that I have set out. If the growers are not going to obtain that average cost of production, then approximately half of them will receive something less than fair wages for their labour and fair interest on their capital invested. If the figure is much below that a greater proportion of growers will receive less than a fair return for their labour and a fair return on the capital they have invested. At this stage we can only guess at what proposals will be put forward by the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. North: Your figures are based on price control.

Mr. PERKINS: That is the position as it exists at present. There are many rumours as to what proposals will be put up by the Commonwealth Government, but I understand that, in the not distant future

it will be holding a conference with representatives of the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation, when it is expected that some concrete plan will be put forward. But it seems to be anticipated by everyone that no matter what plan is prepared it will be necessary to seek the co-operation of the States. I know that the great majority of organised wheatgrowers desire a satisfactory stabilisation plan, if one can be established. No concrete plan for the future stabilisation of wheat has been set out yet.

Various suggestions, such as I have made here, have been put forward as to the basic principles with which such a plan should comply, but recently a plan has been formulated in connection with another section of our primary industries, namely, the wool industry. Under that plan the woolgrowers are to receive a certain minimum price which, I think, the majority of growers consider to be a reasonable and payable one in the circumstances existing. The plan further sets out that after the wool has been appraised, based on this minimum price arrived at by agreement between the Commonwealth and the Empire countries, anything that the wool can be sold for over and above that price will be regarded as profit and returned to the grower. I submit that that is a scheme that has been accepted as reasonably satisfactory by the growers and, apparently, the Commonwealth Government regards it as reasonably satisfactory. The wheatgrowers are entitled to ask that the same principles shall be applied to their industry. Some rumours of the plans that the Commonwealth Government has been preparing indicate that such proposals, in regard to wheat, are not on all fours with the plan dealing with wool.

The Minister for Agriculture: Dame Rumour is a lying jade!

Mr. PERKINS: That may be, but a rumour is often an indication of things to come. I, who represent many wheatgrowers, am taking this opportunity to set out some of the basic principles and asking that the State Department of Agriculture shall inform itself of the actual facts. The Minister will be in a much better position if he is called into consultation with the Department of Commerce if he is au fait with all phases of the industry in this State. I make the point that those engaged in the wheat industry expect at least equal treatment to what the wool industry is receiving.

If a plan for the stabilisation of the wheat industry, on all fours with that of the wool industry, were established, it would provide that a guaranteed price of not less than the cost of production, which the growers' organisations have estimated at about 5s. 6d. per bushel, should be fixed. Our Government should be prepared to ensure that for the wheat produced in Australia irrespective of what the export parity of wheat may be.

Mr. Triat: What about oversea prices?

Mr. PERKINS: If the plan is on all fours with the wool industry the growers will be entitled to receive full export parity for all the wheat over and above that needed for human home consumption.

Mr. Triat: Australia can compete in the wool market, but not in the wheat market.

Mr. PERKINS: If that statement is correct the growers should receive even more favourable treatment. If the growers can receive that treatment they will be reasonably well satisfied, and will be considerably better treated than they were in the period from 1930 onwards, of which I have immediate knowledge.

Mr. Triat: They have had good treatment since 1940.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not know that the wheatgrowers have. We certainly have not received treatment that fits in with the principles I have just enunciated. From 1940 onwards the wheat industry has been called on to subsidise the production of various forms of meat. The present position in regard to the No. 5 pool is that the deficiency on the wheat sold for stock feed—that has been paid for at 3s. 9d. per bushel, being 3s. 3d., cost to the pig feeder, and 6d. from the Commonwealth Government—amounted to £503,000. The increase necessary to bring breakfast food and power-alcohol wheat up to export parity at the time that the wheat was actually sold will, for that pool, amount to £37,000. In the case of the No. 6 pool the figure is £4,030,331. That is the deficiency on stock feed at the figure I have already quoted. The sum required to bring breakfast food and power-alcohol wheat up to export parity is £377,335. The figures for the No. 7 pool are £9,875,431 and £578,480 outstanding.

There is also an amount of wheat that went to New Zealand, and the total figures outstanding on the various pools are

£615,000 on No. 5 pool; £2,381,000 on No. 6 and £6,700,000 on No. 7. That is the money which the Commonwealth Government will have to make up to bring the price of stock feed and other concessional wheat up to export parity at the time the wheat was actually sold, after allowing for subsidies already paid by the Treasury. Arguments have been advanced that the growers were jolly lucky to receive the price that they did seeing that the market was so depressed when they sold their wheat! That argument would be all right had the wheat been paid for at the time it was sold by the Commonwealth Government, but it was not. It was put into store and has been paid for as it has been sold. All storage charges have been paid by the growers and any money which was advanced by the Commonwealth Bank to the Wheat Board in order to make the advances has carried the current rate of interest. So we have arrived at the position that the growers have had their wheat acquired, they have paid the storage charges and the interest on the money advanced, and they now expect to receive the full value of the wheat when it is sold. The Commonwealth Government cannot have it both ways.

I think the member for Mt. Magnet is in error in saying that the growers have received reasonable treatment since 1940. I will only agree that they have received reasonable treatment since 1940 if the Commonwealth Government makes the return for wheat that has been consumed as stock feed, breakfast foods and sent to New Zealand, at a concessional price, up to export parity; up to the figure at which that wheat could have been sold overseas if it had not been used for these other purposes. That is the position as we see it at the moment and that is why I am speaking tonight in an endeavour to lay down certain principles with which any future stabilisation plan must comply if it is to be satisfactory to the growers. I do not want to see the same treatment meted out to the growers in any future stabilisation plan as they have received under the Wheat Acquisition Plan as administered by the present Commonwealth Government. It is for that reason I make these remarks tonight. I hope the State Government and the State Department of Agriculture will make careful inquiries into the position so that if the Government

is asked by the Commonwealth authorities to co-operate in any stabilisation scheme for the wheat industry, it will see that the industry is not treated any worse than the wool industry has been treated.

I repeat that the basic principle in regard to the wool industry is that under the plan the growers are receiving a guaranteed price for their product, and anything over and above that basic guaranteed minimum price for which the wool can be sold, is returned to the growers. If the same principle is applied to the wheat industry, the minimum guaranteed price will be at least the cost of production, plus whatever the wheat realises on the overseas export market. If any of the wheat is used in Australia other than for human consumption, which is provided for under the flour tax legislation, the growers receive no bounty on it, but that should be paid for at the export parity price. The responsibility for making up the difference on any concessional wheat is on the whole of the people, because the wheatgrower should not be called upon to subsidise the other users of wheat. Whatever stabilisation plan we have in future, I think the growers will agree to carry on the wheat licensing control legislation. If in future we have a period of low export prices and an export parity comes below the home consumption price of flour within Australia, it will not be possible to handle an unlimited quantity of wheat and meet the guaranteed price on it. We should then restrict the production of all growers.

If that course is not taken and it is attempted to maintain a high fixed price within Australia, irrespective of what is happening on the export market, though a large stabilisation fund is built up, it is possible that so many people would go into wheat production and such a volume of wheat be produced as would break any such fund. I think most growers will agree that the licensing control legislation should be carried out to guard against that contingency. I hope the State Government and the Department of Agriculture will seriously consider the question, because the welfare and economy of this State are built more on the stabilisation of the wheat industry than on that of any other single industry.

MR. MANN (Beverley) [9.20]: I wish to compliment the member for York on his splendid review of the wheat industry. No man in this Chamber knows more than he about it.

The Minister for Works: What is this build-up for?

Mr. MANN: So often in this Chamber we criticise and condemn, but when we have an enlightened man who can help the Government, and particularly the Minister for Agriculture, I appreciate his ability.

The Minister for Works: There is something deep in all this.

Mr. MANN: The sincerity on this side is always evident. I hope the Minister has learned a lot about the wheat industry. Assuming his position without any previous experience of the industry, he has a lot to learn. I say that in a kindly way, because it is no easy job. We will assist the Minister as far as we can with the burden that he must carry.

Mr. Triat: Then give him the benefit of some of your wisdom relating to wheat.

Mr. MANN: Not being a wheat man, I cannot. Reference was made to the position of the meat industry, and from now on we will have a large number of fat sheep going to the Midland market. The Midland market has remained reasonably firm, owing to the shortage of trucks but, when the wheat traffic is finished, trucks will be available and there will be up to 8,000 or 20,000 sheep at Midland, with the result that the market will fall rapidly.

I can assure the people of the metropolitan area that though there is a fall of 7s. in the price at Midland today, they will get no benefit from it. I think the Government would be wise to instal refrigeration to handle the mutton that will be coming in. The meat available will not be of the type of dehydration, but of excellent quality. What are the objections to exporting ewe and wether mutton? Is it the gland trouble? This gland is supposed to have some effect on the sheep, yet the people of Australia consume that mutton and remain healthy. If there is any danger of decay where that gland is, it can be removed from the lambs when they are slaughtered. An incision can be made and the gland removed, and the chilling seals up the incision well.

If the people in the British Isles are starving at present for fats, why is not

some move made to handle this meat? Two large refrigerated cargo ships recently passed through Fremantle with not an ounce of frozen goods aboard for oversea, as the Minister knows. I sometimes doubt whether Australia is very keen on supplying the hungry people oversea with food. We are not meeting our commitments with U.N.R.R.A. or in the matter of feeding the starving people abroad. We live in one of the most marvellous parts of the world, and I assure members that with the collapse of European economic conditions this country of ours will feel the effects of the rebound. We will wake up to find that we have been living in a fool's paradise, thinking that whatever happened elsewhere we could not be affected. We are producing foodstuffs here in plenty while people in Europe are starving for fats. We can see fruit rotting on the ground and yet ships are leaving our shores en route to Europe, where the people are starving, with their holds almost empty or foodstuffs that we could supply. Apparently there is no definite attempt to deal with the problem. As to the mutton position there has been a large accumulation of full-mouth wethers and ewes on the aged side and that has applied throughout the Commonwealth.

Most people are not satisfied to eat anything but the best of lamb, but I can assure members that on the tables of the majority of the farmers will not be found young lamb, but mutton from full-grown sheep. City people have an idea that the country folk live on the choicest young mutton, but it is not so. I would like to see the situation tackled and a more orderly distribution of mutton arrived at. As a matter of fact, the export season is about finished for fat lambs and I advise the Government to go into the question while it is appropriate. I think that now is the time for it to be done, because in a month or two there may be an acute shortage of meat in this State. The butcher may have been able to buy at high prices, possibly ceiling prices, but I can assure the Committee that during the period of extremely low values he made more money than did any others connected with the industry. The butcher has gained because, under the National Security Regulations, no deliveries were permitted, and that enabled him to make tremendous pro-

its. I certainly advise the Government to go into this matter with great care.

Mr. Cross: The people did not like frozen mutton.

Mr. MANN: I can assure the member for Canning that, generally speaking, the people will have to accept worse than that if we have another hard year. We know that in the past they had to take dehydrated mutton, which should never have been sold to the public. There is no doubt that someone got a very considerable rake-off from that part of the business. Now I want to touch on the pig industry. No part of the world is more capable of producing a good quality type of pig than is Australia with its favourable climatic conditions. I recently attended a conference, the object of which was to ascertain what could be done to stabilise the industry. Unless the situation is carefully handled there will be a complete collapse in that respect. The pig industry is a dangerous, or at any rate a peculiar, one to handle. It is subject to diseases that can quite easily wipe out whole herds. We know what happened with regard to the outbreak of swine fever a few years ago. I would like to see the pig-raising industry stabilised as much as possible on a quality basis, with fair prices to both producer and consumer.

The position in Canada today with its extremely cold climate is interesting. The exports this year represented 12,000,000 carcasses, the equivalent of £70,000,000 in value, and by comparison with those figures members can appreciate how small the Australian export trade in that commodity has been. On the trip to the Eastern States I discussed the matter with other pig breeders who are operating on a fairly large scale, and when in Melbourne we had a deputation to the Director of Agriculture. I have returned fully convinced that the knowledge possessed by the Commonwealth Ministers and the Director of Agriculture regarding the situation in Western Australia, is frightfully vague. I was astounded to realise what the position really is. I understand that on an Australia-wide basis 30,000,000 bushels of wheat will be available this year for the feeding of pigs and poultry.

The Minister for Works: Oh!

Mr. MANN: New Zealand will be a large buyer of our wheat and any quantity that can be made available for export will find a ready market there. The maximum

quantity fixed for the export of pig meats overseas is 30,000 tons, and our home consumption is 60,000 tons annually. The part that rather frightens me is the scarcity there may be of feed. While Europe is not a mutton-eating section of the world the people are large consumers of pork and pork foodstuffs. Therein is an opportunity for us to expand our trade, because with the shortage of fat and meat generally, our pork will be much more palatable to them and certainly more favoured for human consumption than, for instance, is mutton. As I mentioned previously our export quota has been fixed at 30,000 tons. In my opinion there will be an acute shortage of pigs in Australia mainly because of the hard dry conditions that have obtained in South Australia and the northern portions of Victoria. The herds have been considerably reduced owing to those adverse conditions, and that points to the fact that we have been fortunate in Western Australia in that we have not suffered similarly. The requirements of the pig industry have been fully supplied in this State.

The Minister for Lands: Where have the pigs got to? I have not had pork for long time.

Mr. MANN: That draws attention to an interesting feature. If an opportunity were taken to secure stabilisation of the industry, the Minister for Lands, who I know enjoys his pork—

The Minister for Lands: Too right, I do.

Mr. MANN: He enjoys his pork whereas that food is decried by certain people in the world, of which he is certainly not one.

Mr. Leslie: He has not the right nose.

Mr. MANN: If the industry were stabilised, he would have every opportunity to enjoy his pork whenever he desired.

Mr. Triat: He could not afford to pay the price now demanded for pork.

Mr. MANN: I am concerned about the position of the industry, because it certainly requires stabilisation. On the other hand, we had it from the Director of Agriculture that the Commonwealth Government has no intention of commercialising the industry or of assisting it on a commercial basis. In other words, the industry must stand or fall by its own efforts. The question arises as to what will be the cost of wheat and barley to the pig producers. I agree with the contention of the member for

York. Why should the wheatgrower be forced to subsidise the poultrymen and pig raisers? Why should the wheatgrower be forced, in effect, to subsidise the provision of breakfast foods for the people. It is all wrong. The wheat producer is entitled to world parity prices for his commodity, and certainly should not be called upon to make sacrifices for the subsidising of other industries.

Mr. Triat: The pig breeder can afford to pay.

Mr. MANN: That raises the question of the basis of costs, which are certainly heavy in connection with pig-raising.

The Minister for Lands: So is the cost of a pork chop, when you can buy one.

Mr. MANN: Why should the wheat industry be required to foster other industries by supplying their requirements? If the Government is concerned about that phase, it should take action. I believe that if we were able to export large quantities of pigs the work created in Australia in connection with the breeding, feeding, slaughtering and curing would fully compensate the Commonwealth. It would prove more remunerative than the export of wheat overseas. We know there is a demand overseas for wheat in order to secure pollard and bran supplies. I would like Australia to take the stand that she would export a proportion of flour as well as grain. We know that the demand has grown for export flour much more than for pig meats. I hope that the position generally will be dealt with so that it can be appreciably improved. No doubt the States will be requested to pass uniform legislation with the object of stabilising the industry.

At the conference I attended in Melbourne an agreement was reached to the effect that that course should be adopted. I want to touch next upon one commodity that will be in short supply throughout the Commonwealth. I refer to chaff. In that respect I want to draw attention to the position of the farmer who will not cut hay but will harvest his crop. I will instance my own case. We cut 100 tons this year and a certain firm in this State bought hay under Government-controlled conditions and got a profit through the handling of the chaff. A cutter came in and cut 60 or 70 tons of chaff, which was prime. That chaff was left lying in the open and six inches

of rain fell on it. The chaff was without protection against the weather. Some of the bags rotted through and are still there. The chaff was destroyed and a great portion of the stack was destroyed and I received no compensation for it at all. I have lost easily £100 on the deal. Every farmer who sold his chaff there is losing as much as £200. I will be sufficiently charitable not to mention the name of the firm concerned, but there is one firm that has paid compensation on chaff and that is Sainsbury & Co. The firm I dealt with bought the hay, some in the stook and some in the stack, and promised to have it chaffed by January or February. Time went on and the hay was not touched and the damage took place. If an inquiry by Royal Commission or Select Committee is warranted on any subject, it is on the whole ramifications of the chaff business.

Mr. Doney: Were there any firms other than Sainsbury & Co. that paid compensation?

Mr. MANN: I understand that Sainsbury & Co. was the only one. Others denied liability. For years the chaff business in this State has been a racket from start to finish. I would never agree to cut an ounce of chaff again and I would not care whether stock was starving or not.

The Premier: Are not there some new firms, too?

Mr. MANN: This happened with quite a new firm and it had quite a long brand, too. Before the session finishes, I shall probably move for the appointment of a Select Committee to investigate the chaff position.

Mr. Cross: What, another Select Committee!

Mr. MANN: The appointment of a Select Committee would be justified. An appeal was made to farmers in this State to provide chaff for starving stock, not only here, but also in the Eastern States. The quantity of chaff shipped from Western Australia to save starving stock in the Eastern States was 30,000 tons, but there is no inducement for any farmer to cut chaff again. The merchant buys on an assured profit. The Prices Commissioner increased the price of chaff in about October by £1 per ton and the merchant who had 1,000 tons got a rake-off of £1,000.

The Minister for Lands: Why do not you form a co-operative society?

Mr. Cross: What about Westralian Farmers, Ltd.?

Mr. MANN: I do not propose to discuss Westralian Farmers, Ltd. or any other organisation. The chaff business is one that must be investigated because supplies here will be short and in the Eastern States they will be extremely short. If we should experience a lean season, we shall be in for a very bad time. Before the session ends, I shall probably ask for a Select Committee because I believe that a perfect ramp is going on for which the taxpayer has to pay. The chaff was bought at a price guaranteed by the Commonwealth, and I know that hundreds of tons of chaff have been damaged or that bales of hay have been left to rot. This damaged hay and chaff has had to be thrown out and the taxpayers have had to bear the cost.

I am pleased to hear that a new laboratory is being built. One of the most serious problems affecting a large portion of the State is sterility in ewes. A total of 2,000,000 sheep is involved. Years ago I imported 400 stud ewes from the Eastern States, but we have had to sell all our ewes on the fat stock market or as stores. Some of the prominent breeders in the Great Southern, including the Bungaree and other strains have had their studs ruined. By topdressing we have improved our properties but we have reduced our Merino breeds. Farmers in the whole of my area have now to buy from Bruce Rock, Quairading and suchlike places, and cannot get other than a full-mouth ewe with a chance of two lambs. This trouble affects not only the sheep brought to the district but also their progeny and is a most serious matter.

I hope something will be done to secure more veterinary surgeons for this State. Recently the department lost one of its veterinary surgeons who has gone into private practice. There is a shortage of students emerging from the Sydney University, and presently there is a danger of our being faced with the difficulty of having no veterinary surgeons at all. Part of the trouble is that some of our highly qualified men receive a salary of only £390 a year, which is a paltry sum. If any inducement were offered to those experts to go elsewhere,

my advice to them would be to go where the money is offering. We pay a slaughterman at Midland Junction, a youth of 17 possessing very little skill, £16 a week and similarly high pay is available to miners. Yet we expect a man who has had to study at a university for five years to work for a paltry £390. Dr. Bennetts has solved the braxy-like and toxic troubles and has saved the State hundreds of thousands of pounds. Dr. Underwood, the nutrition expert, has also done very valuable work, but these men cannot carry on successfully because they have insufficient help.

The Committee should realise that farming is no longer in the period when those engaged in it were regarded as hay seeds wearing whiskers on their faces and corks around their hats. Farming today is a highly technical job, although those engaged in it have to work 16 or 17 hours a day in the busy period, and I believe that science will play a yet bigger part in assisting this industry. The veterinary section of research work is probably the most important of all, and unless we have highly qualified men to advise our farmers, we shall meet trouble. I would like the Minister to tell us what chance there is of getting more veterinary surgeons for this State. If Australia cannot supply them, can they be obtained from the British Isles or America? Perhaps the Minister does not regard the lack of veterinary surgeons as being serious.

The Minister for Agriculture: We are providing for trainees already.

Mr. MANN: But during the training period, could not the Minister get some men from abroad? Otherwise we shall be confronted with still more problems. I shall listen to the Minister's reply with interest. I hope he will also make a statement as to the possible price for wheat.

The Premier: Which one?

Mr. MANN: No doubt the Premier will be generous enough to say a few words on these Estimates. The farmers are anxious to know what price they are likely to get for the current season's wheat. I could make a fair guess at it, but I shall keep my opinion to myself. I think when the price is known, the farmers will get a shock, and not a pleasant one at that.

The Premier: It will be all right.

Mr. MANN: There is slight comfort in that remark, but I would like the Premier, who is au fait with the position, to make a statement. Nothing is more irritating to the farmer than, after having devoted a long year of toil to growing and harvesting a crop, to have no idea what price he is to receive.

Mr. Doney: Do you think the Premier knows?

Mr. MANN: I have an idea that he does and, if he would make a statement, it would probably set the minds of the farmers at ease.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [9.45]: Before I proceed to deal with the Estimates, I am pleased to be able to inform the Minister and the Committee that in the district I represent we have once again this year a very satisfactory season. This remark applies particularly to the eastern and northern portions of my electorate, an area which at one time was almost regarded as a forgotten land and its inhabitants as a forgotten people. In the more southerly and easterly portions of my electorate the prospects are not as good as we anticipated at first. I am afraid the results there may be somewhat below the normal production. Seasonal conditions are of course responsible for that position. In addition many farmers were unable to get on with their seasonal programme owing to the lack of adequate farm machinery and tractive power. I take the opportunity to say "Thank you" to the Minister for his courtesy in paying a rather extended visit—as Minister in charge of another department, certainly—to my electorate. I hope that his visit was both instructive and informative to him. He saw the district at a time when it was about at its best. It is rather appropriate that the Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture are both under the one head.

The Premier: There is nothing new in that.

Mr. McDonald: School bags and wheat bags!

Mr. LESLIE: It is new so far as my association with Parliament is concerned.

The Premier: I had the two departments for six years.

Mr. LESLIE: It was before I became a member of Parliament. That is probably

why the Agricultural Department progressed to its high standard.

The Premier: I had the Police Department also.

Mr. LESLIE: I do not know that that benefited the other departments very much.

Mr. Seward: It lowered them!

Mr. LESLIE: Yes. I hope that as a result of the bringing together of these two departments under the one head, we will have an extension of education into the needs of the agricultural industry and into the importance of agriculture in the State's economy. That is why I say the two departments are properly associated. The member for York mentioned the difficulties experienced in the administration of the Brands Act in connection with sheep-stealing. I am not prepared to say that the losses which farmers are suffering are due entirely to deliberate stealing, as we understand stealing. I received several reports of these losses and made some investigations into them. As I was making inquiries, I received a letter from Mr. G. H. Herbert, a highly respected and well-known farmer in the Nungarin district. He also had devoted some attention to the problem, as he was involved in it personally. Although his letter is rather lengthy, I make no apology for reading it to the Committee, as I wish it to go on record. In that way it will be more readily available to those concerned with finding a remedy for the position. Mr. Herbert's letter reads:—

Sheep losses are being reported over widely scattered parts of the agricultural areas. Some of these losses are attributed to deliberate sheep-stealing; a few may be so, but other conditions are the principal causes of these reports.

Police officers have been sent to investigate these reports. Their hands are tied by the following facts:—That the Brands Act is not, and in some cases cannot, be complied with; that the Stock and Droving Acts do not, or are not applied; that dependence on a wool brand for identification is illusory under the conditions obtaining in those areas; that many flocks contain sheep with various earmarks as well as those with full ears; that in these areas wool brands rapidly become illegible and ultimately unidentifiable, and neither the farmer nor the investigating officer can be certain of identification. Investigators are further handicapped by the fact that a number of sheep-owners even in the older sheep areas, on well-fenced properties do not earmark their sheep, being well satisfied that a wool brand will protect them and knowing that is all that is required by stock agents and dealers. These clean-eared sheep are sold, go on to other farms, and ultimately some are lost or stolen, the

wool brand has lost its legibility, some are found, and who is to say who is the real owner?

Another snag is the fact that sheep are bought and sold without any document being given describing wool brands or earmarks. Sheep are transported by road, rail and road vehicles to country and metropolitan saleyards, sold under the hammer or by private treaty, and no description of them as travelling stock or stock sold is supplied by the vendors or required by the buyers, an impossible position for the investigating officer, as well as for the people directly concerned in the problem.

In the eastern wheat belt at the moment there is a spate of reported shortages. Few, if any, will be found to be the result of deliberate theft. Organised sheep-stealing as experienced in the Eastern States has not yet arrived in the West, although undoubtedly sporadic depredations have been committed.

The position can only be improved by enforcing the Brands Act and by compelling every stock agent, dealer or private person, selling or buying sheep to give and receive a waybill covering a complete description, including woolbrands and earmarks on the stock concerned. If all sheep, other than those described as lambs, suckers and weaners sold direct for slaughter, were refused acceptance for sale unless carrying both wool brand and earmark, we would be a long way towards a more satisfactory state of affairs in the industry. This alone would very materially close the disposal avenue of sheep thieves. It would also make it at least possible for agricultural buyers of sheep to identify or establish ownership with a greater degree of certainty.

As the Act stands today, it is out of date and utterly incapable of providing the actual requirements of our expanding industry, and a revision is necessary. The earmarks available are grouped under a schedule, which limits the application of a certain group of marks. The Act is primarily designed to make a duplication impossible. The actual operation of this system was probably quite satisfactory when new applications for registration were few and scattered over the State.

In an area new in itself, and new in sheep-owners, the regulations confine this new group to a series of earmarks in a given category.

The actual result is that similarity in adjacent flocks is inevitable. To modernise and provide for new sheep breeders' requirements, the State should be re-zoned with a view to permitting duplication of earmarks, remembering that Western Australia covers a large portion of our continent.

The Department of Agriculture and Parliament should take this matter up immediately, if only for the protection and peace of mind of those optimists who are again producing wealth from those marginal lands which have become to the State and the nation a white elephant.

That letter, because it amply covers the ground and deals concisely with the subject, I commend it to the attention of the Minister and his departmental officers. I endorse Mr. Herbert's remark that an

overhaul of the Brands Act and a determined attempt to see that its provisions are carried out are necessary at the present stage.

I want now to refer to one or two matters in the Estimates submitted by the Minister. To start with, the Minister and the Government are to be commended on the fact that the salaries of professional and technical officers and cadets show a substantial increase over last year. With regard to professional and technical officers, I suggest there should be an extension of experimental work and a re-introduction of the system which applied before the war of experimental work on some farms.

Mr. Needham called attention to the state of the Committee.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

Mr. LESLIE: Prior to that mild interruption, I was making an appeal to the Minister to extend the experimental work which is carried out on selected farms in various districts throughout the State. I know from experience that it is difficult to induce farmers, who are practical-minded men, to adopt practices and ideas, unless it has been shown definitely to them that those ideas and practices are of a practical nature. I believe that improvements in farming operations can best be achieved by experimental work successfully carried out in the farmer's own locality and under conditions that the farmer knows are normal average seasonal working conditions, rather than by experimental work carried out on specially-designed, specially-selected areas and under working conditions with which the farmer is not fully au fait, and which are not always normal to farming practice.

There is an item in the Estimates in connection with the purchase and agistment of heifers. I hope the Minister, in his reply, will be able to give us some information on this item, which provides for an estimated expenditure of £10,000, an increase of £5,000 over last year, in connection with the war service land settlement scheme. I would like to know under what terms and conditions it is proposed to make this stock available to settlers; whether the department is to be entirely reimbursed for the expenditure, or whether it is to carry the loss on its own account. There is, in connection with the rabbit-proof fence and the gates on it, an ever-recurring and

very sore point. I have made representations during the year, on behalf of road boards, for the department to provide motor by-passes on gates serving the main roads, the intercommunicating roads passing through the rabbit-proof fence. I regret to say that it is the practice of most travellers to pass through the gates and, whether they find them open or closed, to leave them open.

The Minister for Lands: Some go through them without opening them.

Mr. LESLIE: From seeing the condition of the gates I have known that that must happen. While that practice continues the vast expenditure of money on the erection of the rabbit-proof fences and the considerable amount required for their annual maintenance are merely so much money thrown to the rabbits. I believe that the fences will serve a far more effective purpose than they have if on those main roads motor by-passes are provided. That should be the responsibility of the Agricultural Department, in whose care the fences are. It has been suggested, as a result of representations I have made for the construction of these motor by-passes, that the department would have no objection to the local governing authorities at their own cost providing by-passes; but, as they would be part and parcel of the fences, it is the job of the department to bear the cost of installing the by-passes at the main gates.

I urge on the Government an intensification of its investigation into the salt problem in those districts where it is making its appearance and is extending. In some parts of the district I represent salt is making its appearance on high land; and the suggestion has been offered that it is due to impaction of the sub-soil below the normal seed-bed and that the sub-soil requires to be broken up, thus permitting all the salt to be carried away in solution as the water goes through it with normal rainfall, which is not very large. I ask the Minister to undertake an investigation of the deep-ploughing system which was applied some time ago in America. I have made some inquiries in various directions with a view to obtaining information about that experiment but have not been successful. I should say the information would be more readily available to officers of the department, and I would ask them to investigate

the process with a view to carrying out experiments in salt-affected areas in this State to see whether that would not be the remedy we are seeking in order to dissipate the rising salt and the extension of the salt problem.

I deplore the attitude of restriction on primary production which appears to be growing more and more prevalent throughout our State and throughout the Commonwealth. It is making its appearance more and more in official directions. I reiterate what I have said here before, that I believe that in the production of food-stuffs we have a problem not of over-production but of distribution. It may be a question as to how far the Department of Agriculture—and I believe that the Minister and his departmental officers can play a big and important part in this matter—are concerned in marketing and distribution methods. Today the world is clamouring for food-stuffs and yet in Western Australia we are crying for a go-slow policy for fear that we shall not be able to dispose, at some future date, of the food-stuffs that we should be growing now, and because the development that will be undertaken at present may become a white elephant in the future. If the problem is tackled in the right manner, with a view to altering the old system of distribution which made the farmer nothing less than a victim of speculation, we shall definitely not require to continue this deplorably pessimistic attitude that will restrict the normal development of the State and forbid its expansion in any direction.

During the session, I have had the privilege of drawing the attention of this Chamber to certain departures from normal agricultural ventures in my electorate. I allude, of course, to the growing of vegetables by Messrs. Brown and Sons at Wyalkatchem, and to the establishment of the split-pea industry by Mr. Sharman at Booralaming, near Dowerin. These are only two instances that I mention as showing a spirit of initiative and enterprise on the part of many of our primary producers, and a determination to break out of the old rut which impelled them to retain the ideas and practices that applied to their grandfathers. It is the job of the Department of Agriculture to encourage that spirit and to offer every inducement to primary producers to extend their operations into other fields.

The member for York and the member for Beverley mentioned the matter of prices. We must do everything possible to prevent even a suggestion that there is likely to be a collapse in the price of primary products if we are to maintain our output at ordinary standards. We must build up a sense of security for the future, based on the fact that producers will receive a payable return. Our Governments must be concerned with the development of markets, and endeavour to overcome the international difficulties which exercise such a restrictive influence on our production and which could quickly bring about another depression similar to that of 1930 and 1931. It is, therefore, vitally necessary that the State Government should collaborate with the Commonwealth Government in providing ways and means for the equitable distribution of our products.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [10.10]: I want to say a few words on this Vote, because, while it is always important, it is assuming at the present time an importance perhaps greater than at any time for many years past. We have recently gone through a period of six years during which the production and sale of our major primary products have been regulated in accordance with war conditions. The result is that when war broke out the first thing that had to be done by the Commonwealth Government, acting under its defence powers, was to ensure the stabilisation, or at all events the maintenance, of our major industries at a time when they might otherwise have collapsed. As a result, we have had the Australian Wheat Board, the Central Wheat Board and the Australian Meat Board, although I think the Australian Meat Board was formed prior to the commencement of the war. The other two organisations were creatures of the war period. The first major difference was that we sold our principal exportable primary products by international agreement rather than by the ordinary processes that had taken place up to that time.

The new procedure of sale, by international agreement, opened a fresh chapter in the disposal of the primary commodities of a country like Australia. During that period we had the fixed price paid by the Commonwealth Government on the acquisition of

wheat, commencing with 3s. 10d. f.o.b. when the war broke out in 1939, and passing on to the Scully prices, paid by the present Government at the moment and at present fixed year by year. In addition we have had the Washington Wheat Convention, which may be a landmark in the history of the wheat industry. If the recommendations of the Washington Wheat Convention of 1942 are adopted after the war, we shall have, through the International Wheat Council, some machinery for the orderly disposal of the wheat of the major exporting countries so that the exporting of wheat will be regulated according to the demand of the consuming countries and at a price which is fixed to be fair to the producer and at the same time to the consumer.

The Washington Wheat Convention is an agreement which is of fundamental importance and vital to the wheat industry of Australia. It has not yet been implemented by the subscribing nations, as was the intention. The idea was that after the war the agreement should be adopted by the various countries concerned. It is not easy to ascertain exactly what has happened to the Washington Wheat Convention. There are certain difficulties in co-ordinating freight charges as between the different exporting countries. That, I believe, is to be the subject of discussion between the various nations concerned. I come to the point of saying that the wheat industry is more vital to the stability and the living conditions of the people of this State than any other industry, but we have an astonishing lack of information as to the position at present.

We know that the Commonwealth Government has appointed a committee to consider the question of stabilised prices. We know that the system under which the wheat industry has been supported during the war years—namely under the defence powers of the Constitution—is about to end. We know that if the present arrangements are to continue it may be necessary to amend the Constitution in some respects to give marketing powers to the Commonwealth. As far as our State is concerned, the Commonwealth has that power in respect of our major primary products, under the Commonwealth Powers Act, 1943. It has full power to market abroad, by international agreement, our wheat and wool and certain other major export products.

What is our Government doing in the matter? It must be under consideration by the Commonwealth, but what is our view about the price? We all know of the recent inquiry by a committee of the Primary Producers' Association, which fixed the minimum payable price of wheat at 5s. 5d. per bushel. Is our Government making representations as to its view on the price that the wheat producer should receive? Can we have a comprehensive statement of the position up to the present, as affecting the wheat industry in this State, a statement of what the Government knows, what is being proposed and what are the arrangements for the future? I am prepared to believe that the future arrangements are not yet finalised, but I think the people in this important wheat exporting State should have opportunity to know the position to date and that we should make representations in the strongest terms to the Commonwealth Government as to our views on the stabilisation of wheat prices and the marketing of wheat oversea. All these things are in a catastrophic state of obscurity and, as far as I know, no comprehensive statement by the Commonwealth Government, which is now most concerned, has been made. I feel sure I will draw the sympathy of the Minister for Agriculture, who has yet to take up the threads of this intricate question, if I suggest that as soon as possible he might take the opportunity to tell the Chamber all he knows up to date; what his Government's views are as to the future of the industry, and so afford members an opportunity to discuss the matter and express their views.

The wheat farmer is experiencing a new technique in the handling of his product as the result of the war years. He has had a price which, though apparently not sufficient to give him a fair return, has been definite from year to year, and he has known that his wheat could be sold, because the Government has taken it over under the acquisition scheme. The farmer now wants a reasonable thing for the future. He does not want fluctuations in price up to perhaps 12s. per bushel which might mean a fortune for him if it lasted for three or four years, because he knows that it might then drop for several years to perhaps 2s. per bushel. He wants an assurance of

an income from his product sufficient to enable him and his family to enjoy a reasonable standard of living from year to year, and to budget and develop the farm in the knowledge that he will not be faced by a sudden fall in prices. All he asks for is a decent living. That is a reasonable attitude for the farmer to take and he appreciates today that the wheat sold oversea is bought by people, in other countries, who can afford only a certain price. He does not want to profiteer on the people in the homeland or in any other country. On the other hand, he believes such people will be prepared to ensure to him a price that will mean a reasonable living standard.

Mr. Perkins: In England they pay their producers a higher price than we receive for the export product.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes, but their costs are higher. The cost of producing wheat in Great Britain is higher and many of the technical processes practised here, such as stripping, are not possible in the same way in such a damp climate as that of England. We realise that to encourage and maintain national production of food those people are prepared to pay high home prices. In the marketing of our major primary products we have now arrived at a stage where we must make up our minds what we want and where we are going. The defence powers, under which we acted in the emergency at war, are now terminating, and we want a basis for peace. The wheatgrowers want to know what the Parliaments of Australia are going to do about it and, in particular, what are this Government's views on the matter. The sooner they know that, the better contribution those engaged in the industry can make for the guidance of the Government in the solution in this problem.

We have had a joint organisation scheme for wool, which appears to have been the best solution of the difficulty involved in the enormous carryover. That scheme is likely to operate for another 15 years or so and appears to guarantee to the wool-producers a price that will enable them to carry on. Under a constitutional power, of which I am not certain, but possibly it is the external power plus what remains of the defence power, the wool industry has been assured of marketing stabilisation for the next 15 years. Is that, or something similar, to be applied to wheat?

If it is not done promptly by the Commonwealth Government it may lose the benefit of the defence power under which the joint agreement has apparently been supported. What I have said has been invoked by what I know is in the minds of those in the wheat industry; that is the obscurity as to their future and lack of definite indications by Governments not only as to what plans they are making, but even what they have in mind.

The other aspect is that the estimated harvest for this year is some 20,000,000 bushels and, allowing for seed wheat and a margin over, the amount of wheat from the new harvest available for shipping by rail, commencing next month, is about 18,000,000 bushels. Of that quantity about 12,000,000 bushels will probably be exported oversea. That will be the available balance after meeting local demands. The position in this State at present, so far as I can learn, is that the flourmillers are taking 6,500 tons per week for making flour and are exporting flour on a large scale. There is a great demand for it; the flour is under contract to go to Great Britain, Ceylon, and various other countries. The requirement of the millers of 6,500 tons of wheat a week will continue for some time. The produce trade in this State requires approximately 1,000 tons of wheat a week for poultry food, bran, pollard, etc. Thus the millers and the produce merchants require 7,500 tons of wheat per week.

In the first three weeks of this month, the quantity of wheat brought from country districts to the seaboard has been approximately 7,000 or 7,500 tons a week. Therefore the quantity of wheat brought to the seaboard during the greater part of this month has been sufficient to meet the demands of the millers for the flour trade and the demands of the produce trade, and has left, I am informed, nothing at all for the export trade. Of the forthcoming harvest in this State, the transport of 15,000 tons a week for something over eight months will be necessary to move the harvest to the seaboard for export and to meet the requirements of millers and the produce trade. The new harvest will come in during the next few weeks.

There is much talk going on, as the Minister may know, about our shipping position. We have had references to ships going away empty. Ships have left empty, but

there have been reasons for that happening. There have been circumstances that have perhaps made it difficult to fill those ships, but the situation now facing this State, so far as I can ascertain it—I would like the Minister to make inquiries to ascertain whether my information is right or wrong—is that at the rate of transport of wheat from the country districts to the seaboard, we shall have practically no wheat to ship oversea. That rate will need to be stepped up to 15,000 tons a week from the country districts to the seaboard if we are to fill the shipping space that will be available. If we do not step up the transit of wheat from the country districts to the seaboard in the months just ahead, we shall either have to restrict the milling and produce trades or we may be able only partially to fill the ships that will be available. This is a matter on which I would like the Minister's views and inquiries because my information may or may not be soundly based.

There are two further factors, the first humanitarian and the second economic. Perhaps they impinge on each other. The demand for wheat for food in many countries of the world is, of course, acute. That fact cannot be over-emphasised. If we have the wheat in our country, it would seem a great pity if, by any want of exertion or organisation, the wheat remains here where it is so urgently needed to keep people alive in other countries. The second aspect is economic. I understand that the demand for wheat in many countries of the world at present is so great that almost any price will be paid for it. A price we may almost regard as fabulous will be willingly paid.

I do not think the farmers of this State would wish to profiteer on the extreme adversity of people in other countries. At the same time, if those countries are in need of wheat and it pays them to offer very high prices for it, we might well consider it due to our farmers that they should be enabled to take advantage of the good prices after having passed through many years with prices not at all payable. It is conceivable that the urgent demand—I do not say it will take place but I imagine it may occur if we cannot get our wheat away—may be filled by other exporting countries, and the opportunity to benefit by sales that would help the economic position of our farmers may be lost to them.

This is a subject of discussion by many people; I have had it from many quarters. I am sure the Government is impressed with the urgency of the problem, and I felt that I would like to bring 'it up and let the Minister know that it is regarded by some responsible people as a major problem that this State should solve by some means or other. If my information is correct, the reasons for the present situation I am not going to suggest. It is not my responsibility and I have not the knowledge to enable me to do so, but there has been some reference to it in this Chamber in connection with the transport of wool. The difficulties associated with the transport of wool may have some relation to the alleged difficulties associated with the transport of wheat. At all events, the matter is of sufficient interest to the State and to the wheat industry to require the attention of the Government and any information it can give to members.

The only other aspect to which I wish to refer is this: Members, including Ministers, have spoken from time to time of the position of the people in the British Isles. Information that is coming to us day by day suggests that the position is even worse than we thought. Men who are coming home from the Services are telling stories of very great privations which are being suffered by the people of Great Britain. I saw the other day that in South Australia, by a voluntary surrender of coupons and by other means, substantial foodstuffs and other sustenance had been shipped by that State to Great Britain. I have received some correspondence in this State urging that the same thing should be done here. When the matter was first mentioned some months ago in South Australia, I understand that the Commonwealth Government found there were difficulties in the way, and I have no doubt at all that it was not easy to overcome them. But I suggest to the Government, if it can see its way to do so, that a voluntary scheme, under which the people would surrender coupons or contribute foodstuffs of the right kind, would strike a very strong response from the people of the State. I know the difficulties of organisation, of shipping, of a hundred and one things, but if these could be overcome there would be a feeling on the part of many people of the State that they had not been found wanting in relation to the Old Country at a

time when the Old Country stood in such great need.

MR. TELFER (Avon) [10.38]: I would be wanting in my duty if I did not thank the Minister for the many courtesies which he has extended to me when I have interviewed him on farmers' disabilities. I found that he had a fine grip of his Ministerial office. In the problems that I have put before him I have received the kindest and most helpful consideration for my constituents. The report of the department is a very fine one and it does credit to the staff. I notice from the report that stabilisation of products should be one of our keynotes. To read such an observation in a public journal is a true indication of the way in which our Government is going. I think it is expected beyond all doubt by our Government that there must be a stabilised price for our wheat; a price payable to the grower must be one of the fundamentals. There is scarcely need to traverse that ground again, as I am sure the Government realises that that is so. For the moment, the wool problem has righted itself. It is pleasing for us to receive a stable price—although perhaps not a high one—for a number of years ahead.

In our meat problem we have something ahead of us that we must face up to. The saleyards at Midland Junction, as well as the abattoirs and cool storage accommodation, are in need of considerable overhaul. I would like the department to make a thorough investigation in order to secure the best possible knowledge of how to exploit to the full the advantages of any extensions that may be made at Midland Junction. I had the pleasure of going through the works at Robbs Jetty some weeks ago. They are a credit to the officers in charge. Their work has done much to relieve the meat position. With greater co-ordination between Midland Junction and Robbs Jetty, the price which farmers may receive for their meat should be considerably enhanced. Another matter of great importance and requiring attention is meat meal, which is used today for stock feed. These manufactured foods have a high protein value which is reflected in the stock put on the market. We should use all possible efforts to build up supplies of meat meal.

Going a little further afield, I now wish to speak of agricultural advisers. We had a fine group of officers at the Merredin Research Station. At Merredin on a recent Field Day the Departmental officers gave very fine lectures to a gathering of farmers. One thing is very noticeable; we have not the number of advisers that we had some time ago. I know that the Government is endeavouring to secure additional agricultural advisers and that the problem is to find suitable men. Nevertheless, I would ask the Minister to treat this matter as one of urgency. Veterinary science is another matter requiring attention. It is only by having these experts that progress can be made.

The pig industry is becoming well established. Farmers have been taught the right type of pig to put on the market. If sufficient agricultural advisers were available, other lines of specialisation could be exploited. The report of the department shows that the export lamb industry is definitely on the up grade. There is still room for improvement and extension as in the pig industry. May the department be successful in securing competent men to put in the field! Dr. Teakle was at the research station on a field day at Merredin and inspected some experimental deep ploughing to ascertain the potentiality of some of the saline lands in our lake country. I must pay tribute to Mr. Whitehead, of Hine's Hill, who has been associated with Dr. Teakle in some of these investigations. The progress they have made is a credit to them.

I notice from the Estimates that £5,000 was expended last year for grasshopper ploughing. That is one of the ever-recurring problems we are up against. I hope it will be handled in the same way in the coming season. As time is moving on, I will conclude by drawing attention to something of which the Minister is only too well aware; namely, that stabilised markets lead to sound economics, and sound economics lead to right thought in the countryside. In the countryside we have at present better farm husbandry than we have ever experienced previously. That has been achieved simply because our markets are stable; and that stability gives farmers the heart to go forward. With stabilised markets, we shall overcome many of our disabilities.

MR. BERRY (Irwin-Moore) [10.46]: I have listened with great interest to what has been said. The member for York brought forward a question which has been exercising our minds for some time; and that is the fact that, while we are receiving 4s. a bushel for portion of our crops at the siding, the price of wheat at terminal ports is about 10s. f.o.b. There seems to be a big discrepancy between those figures; and it is highly possible that, although people in country districts have already shown that they are prepared to vote Labour, and while they have admitted that Labour has done much for them, unless the price of wheat is increased at the siding, it will be easy to go to the country and point out that the Labour Government is doing something to them and not for them. That is a very important point; and there should be no further delay about what the price is to be at the siding this year, and also what the price of pig feed is to be. The member for Beverley spoke on the subject of pigs. I, too, am interested in pigs; I have a number of them, and there is great anxiety in my mind about the future stability of the industry and the economic desirability of keeping pigs.

The member for Beverley seemed to think it was essential for us to do all we can to send as much pig-meat as possible to England. He spoke of freezer ships going from here empty. That may be true, but bad if it is. It would be a good thing to bear in mind that England is in a state of financial embarrassment, and it would be cheaper for her to find her pig market much nearer home. That means that we in Australia must wake up and look around the Pacific for an extension of markets, or the opening up of a market which has beckoned to us for decades. The war is over; and I saw in the Press that people interested in countries like Malaya are being asked to return to those countries. People who have had any experience whatever of those countries in the past are being requested to return there voluntarily. There is a determination on the part of Great Britain to rehabilitate in a true and proper manner the resources it possesses in that country. Believe me, Great Britain is going to do it; and the American people are going to do it; and Australia is going to sit pretty and pretend she is the finest country in the world! She is going on with this

stupid "Hands Off Indonesia," and her silly striking, for which nobody outside Australia will pay; while that country up there at our very back door is looking to us to take some notice of the demands she will make upon us.

There is the outlet for Australia. I have brought that up before, and I bring it up again, but I seem to be beating my wings idly and futilely. There is our market. There is our opportunity. Fast-moving ships can travel in five days from Fremantle to Singapore. Further East, there is the possibility of expanding markets in China. The war has taught Asiatic people that they are not going without those things that we can produce and send them; and which war has taught them to use, but we keep our eyes closed, for some reason known best to the people in Australia. We are doing nothing of a very concrete nature to see that we have established there an agency controlled by the Government which will see that the products we have for sale reach that country in a proper condition or in a proper form for the benefit of those people, who will eat out Australia in ten minutes if given an opportunity. We have people coming from India to beg us to supply them with things. How many people from here have gone there to see what the people of India want? They want everything; even our wine. What have we done about it and what are we going to do?

There is an established market. There is our only chance of establishing a market, with economic conditions as they are at the moment; and it is incumbent on this country to realise that it belongs to the Pacific and not to the Atlantic; and that when we turn our eyes to the Pacific and take advantage of the opportunities offering there, half our agricultural problems will go. I would like to know that we have a future for our pig industry. I suggest that we would find it there. It is absolutely essential for Australia, as an agricultural country, to see that it has markets close by. Nor would I allow that Commonwealth crowd—the "other siders" as we call them—to go forward and snare away from this little State the opportunities which geographically belong to it. I would not have it, and if we are going to have it, we shall languish, and what our lot is will be what we have asked for and

deserved. I hope that very shortly we will find a method of increasing the number of available tractors. I trust we will soon find out how to overcome the tyre difficulty. That will probably be done for us by more enterprising people not resident in this country.

I hope, too, that we are not going to be plagued any longer in this State with black wire and black netting. They are the most heinous products sent to us in the country districts from city exploiters. There are complaints about them everywhere; and I understand that if we wish to buy wire, we still have to buy that rotten stuff! I hope something will be done about sparking plugs, which are being made in Australia and are of most inferior quality; so much so that I was informed the other day by a reliable authority that if I wanted to keep my tractor going, I had better buy a sugarbag-full. I thought that was too many, but I am taking home a dozen this week-end.

Those are the only contributions I want to make to the debate. I do want to impress on the Committee that there is an opportunity in the Far East if we only have the sense to take it. So far, we have not shown sufficient business acumen to be labelled with that particular sense. There is the market for Western Australia and probably Australia. There is nothing here we produce that they do not want. Times without number, people have come to see me and complained that our fruit lies on the ground in orchards and that they cannot buy it in the Far East where they want it. There is something radically wrong. We must wake up to the potentialities. We must dress our products sufficiently attractively for the people in those countries to buy them. Let us hear no more of this "Hands off Indonesia" tommyrot. Let us have fewer strikes in this excellent country so that we may take our place, in a competitive sense, with the other nations in the world and sell to them the products that we can produce so easily and satisfactorily here.

Item—Salaries, allowances, etc.:

Mr. McLARTY: This item includes the professional and technical officers, and I wish to ask the Minister what is actually being done in regard to the appointment of more veterinary officers throughout the State. According to the report we have

four field officers. The report refers to the death of one. We know that in a widely scattered State such as this we have many diseases, and some are peculiar to one part of the State. In the future when veterinary surgeons are appointed we should get specialists. This matter is important to the agricultural industry generally, and we should have some pronouncement from the Minister as to what the Government is trying to do to overcome the difficulty. The Minister would be well advised to give consideration to the recommendations of the Vermin Royal Commission.

Mr. WILLMOTT: It is very trying to have no veterinary officer amongst us. That is the position in my district. We had one man but he was shifted to Manjimup which was a long way from Margaret River, Karridale and Augusta. I hope the Minister will tell us what is being done in the matter of veterinary surgeons.

Item—General Expense of Administration, etc.:

Mr. WILLMOTT: The Minister knows I was very keen on the department buying heifers for future settlement. I talked the matter over with the Premier on one occasion, and I am pleased to see that the Government is buying heifers. What is worrying me is that some of the country on which it is intended to run heifers in the near future has been overrun with contagious abortion for eight or nine years. I hope the Minister will find out from the Chief Veterinary Officer whether these heifers will be affected by contagious abortion from those districts. It will be pretty hard if we are going to hand over heifers with contagious abortion to soldier settlers. If a heifer loses a calf in the early stages it is out of production for the rest of the season. I am glad to see that many settlers are coming into my electorate. These men must have proper cattle for dairying, and we must see that they get clean cattle.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The department is alive to the necessity for having sufficient veterinary officers. The possibility of obtaining these men has been explored, interstate and oversea. We are also making arrangements for trainees to come forward.

The Premier: The Army has not been very kind to us.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. We are getting men released within a day or two. A couple of our officers have been tied up in the Army.

Item, Research Stations:

Mr. McLARTY: Wokalup is mentioned here. Apart from a few experimental plots, this is the only farm in the South-West where any research work is being carried out. I do not know exactly what is being done there, but in view of the importance of research work, I would like the Minister to give us some information as to what is being done, what he means by research, and what future work it is intended to carry out at Wokalup.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The organisation of Wokalup is similar to that at all other research stations. It is intended to carry out research into problems that are likely to be peculiar to the South-West. For example, the growing of flax and the possible diseases of flax are being investigated there. In addition fodder grasses and their nutritional values are being given consideration.

Mr. McLarty: And animal diseases?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. The idea is that Wokalup shall be developed so that eventually it can be used in conjunction with other work that the Government intends putting in hand in connection with the shifting of subnormals for whom a colony will be established in that district.

Vote put and passed.

Votes—College of Agriculture, £13,134, Child Welfare and Outdoor Relief, £75,300—agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.6 p.m.