

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 30th October, 1958.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE.

WINES.

Purchase by Government Instrumentalities.

1. Mr. BRAND asked the Premier:

What was the total value of—

(a) locally produced wines;

(b) Eastern States and overseas wines purchased during the year ended the 30th June, 1958, by the following Government instrumentalities:—

(a) State Hotels;

(b) State Shipping Service;

(c) Railway Refreshment Service;

(d) other?

Mr. HAWKE replied:

	£
(a) State Hotels	(a) 2,816
	(b) 4,918
(b) State Shipping Service	(a) 82
	(b) 63
(c) Railway Refreshment Service	(a) 1,345
	(b) 3,586
(d) Parliament House	(a) 187
	(b) 54

VEHICLE LICENCE FEES.

Allocation of Money Received.

2. Mr. BRAND asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What amount was collected from vehicle licence fees in the metropolitan area during the 12 months ended the 30th September, 1958?

(2) What proportion of this sum was paid to metropolitan local governing bodies?

(3) Will he give details of the allocation of the balance remaining, including payments to special funds, together with details of each of those funds; their principal purpose; the amounts disbursed through them, and the balance standing to their credit at present?

(4) Can he state the approximate amount collected from vehicle licence fees by local governing bodies outside the metropolitan area?

Mr. GRAHAM replied:

(1) The amount was £1,051,387 15s. for the 12 months ended the 30th August, 1958. As the final distribution for the previous 12 months is made on the 31st August, a figure for the 12 months ended the 30th September, 1958, is not readily available.

(2) £459,370.

(3) (a) The Metropolitan Area Railway Crossings Fund Account — £17,290 15s. for providing, maintaining and repairing railway road crossings including subways, overhead bridges and level crossings in the metropolitan area. Balance at the 30th September, 1958—£28,263.

(b) The Consolidated Revenue Fund —£70,000. There is no credit balance on this account as the amount is paid into Consolidated Revenue.

(c) Main Roads Contribution Trust Account—£117,205 7s. 8d. in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Main Roads Act which provides that the funds may be used for the purpose of improving certain roads specified under the Traffic Act and the improvement of such other roads in the metropolitan area as may be determined by the Commissioner of Main Roads from time to time. Balance at the 30th September, 1958—£134,843.

(d) Metropolitan Traffic Lights and Signs Account—£40,000 for the provision and maintenance, in the metropolitan area, of lights and signs for the direction of traffic. Balance at the 30th September, 1958—£58,101, almost all of which is committed under programmes already approved.

(e) Maintenance Metropolitan Traffic Fee Roads—£147,597 for the repairing of the metropolitan roads specified in the Traffic Act such as Stirling Highway, Canning Highway, the Causeway, etc. Balance at the 30th September, 1958—£97,920.

(f) Regional Roads — Metropolitan Area—£110,149 for the purpose of defraying expenses incurred in connection with the taking and preparation of land for the purpose of providing and developing approach roads to the Narrows Bridge or regional road development in the metropolitan area. Balance at the 30th September, 1958—£135,149.

The funds referred to in items 3 (a) to 3 (f) inclusive are administered by the Commissioner of Main Roads.

(g) The Police Department—£17,123 8s. 4d. being accommodation fees on short term licences, and payment for two years of an amount authorised for the keeping of the Metropolitan Traffic Trust Account. This amount is paid into Consolidated Revenue.

(h) The Police Department — £101,603 2s. 6d. being the cost of collection of licence fees, certified by the Minister, pursuant to Section 14 (2) (b) of the Traffic Act, which amount is paid into Consolidated Revenue.

(4) Collection of traffic fees outside the metropolitan area by—

	£
Road Boards (for year ended the 30th June, 1957)	675,499
Municipal Councils (for year ended the 31st October, 1957)	139,788
	<hr/> £815,287 <hr/>

These are the latest figures available.

NORTHAM FOOTBRIDGE.

Provisions of Tender Form.

3. Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

(1) Will he table a copy of the tender form in respect of tenders for the new footbridge at Morrell-st., Northam (Contract No. 793, CE File 14129/52)?

(2) Is it correct that the tender provides for alternative sums—

(a) with timber obtained from the contractor's own supplier; and

(b) with timber obtained from the State Building Supplies?

(3) If so, what is the reason for the alternative tenders and what will be the basis of acceptance—

(i) if alternative (a) is lower than alternative (b);

(ii) if alternative (b) is lower than alternative (a);

(iii) if (a) and (b) are the same?

Mr. HAWKE replied:

(1) Yes, for one week.

(2) Yes.

(3) To allow a check to be maintained as to the ability of the State Building Supplies to provide effective competition against private suppliers. The basis of acceptance of tender would be—

(i) alternative (a) would be accepted subject to other things being equal;

- (ii) alternative (b) would be accepted subject to other things being equal.
- (iii) alternative (b) would be accepted subject to other things being equal.

Nos. 4 and 5. These questions were postponed.

ROAD FROM RAVENSTHORPE TO ELVERDTON MINE.

Distance, and Sealing.

6. Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What is the distance from Ravens-thorpe to the mine at Elverdton?

(2) How much of this road is bitumen, and how much unsealed?

(3) In view of the very heavy traffic on this section of road, when is the unsealed portion likely to be sealed?

Mr. TONKIN replied:

(1) Six and a half miles.

(2) Half a mile sealed with bitumen; 1½ miles primed; 4½ miles unsealed.

(3) The build-up of traffic from Ravens-thorpe to the mine is being watched. Pro- vision has been made on the current pro- gramme of works for sealing 1½ miles of primed road. Consideration will be given to further sealing work on the 1959-1960 programme of works.

HAIRDRESSERS.

Breaches of Factories and Shops Act.

7. Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) Is it a fact that the secretary of the Master Gentlemen's Hairdressers' Associ- ation of W.A., informed the Chief Inspec- tor of the Factories and Shops Department of breaches of the Factories and Shops Act under the following dates:—the 4th Aug- ust, 1958; the 22nd August, 1958; the 28th August, 1958; the 19th September, 1958; and the 29th September, 1958?

(2) If so, have the complaints been ack- nowledged, and what action has been taken?

Mr. W. HEGNEY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) All letters have not been individually acknowledged; but since the 4th August, 1958, 15 patrols have been made, and two successful prosecutions have been launched. Intensive patrols are still being maintained.

Nos. 8 and 9. These questions were postponed.

DOMESTIC AND HOME SCIENCE CENTRE.

Establishment at Bunbury.

10. Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Will a commencement be made on the building of a new domestic and home science centre in Bunbury during this finan- cial year?

(2) If not, what is the future intention of the Government in regard to same?

Mr. W. HEGNEY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

W.A. TOURIST BUREAU.

Total Expenditure and Revenue.

11. Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Lands:

What was the total expenditure, revenue, and cash collections of the W.A. Govern- ment Tourist Bureau during each of the financial years 1956-57 and 1957-58?

Mr. KELLY replied:

	Total Expenditure.	Revenue.	Cash Collections.
	£	£	£
1956-57	39,215	14,700	338,455
1957-58	41,844	17,973	373,511

Revenue is the total commission earned paid into Consolidated Revenue.

Total expenditure includes subsidies to approved country tourist bureaux totalling £2,054 in 1956-57 and £2,378 in 1957-58.

GOVERNMENT OFFICES.

Grouping in Central Area.

12. Mr. BRAND asked the Premier:

(1) Has a report been received yet by the Government from the committee ap- pointed earlier this year to consider the grouping of Government offices in a cen- tral area on the lines recommended in the Stephenson report?

(2) Will a decision on the question be reached before the end of the year?

Mr. HAWKE replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Most likely.

GERALDTON HARBOUR.

Alterations and Plans for Extension of Life.

13. Mr. BRAND asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What alteration or reconstruction is proposed to provide improved harbour facilities at Geraldton?

(2) In the preparation of plans, what regard has been paid to the difficulty, as reported, of extending the life of the wharf because of severe scaling and erosion of the concrete?

Mr. TONKIN replied:

(1) Harbour accommodation and facilities are considered adequate to satisfy port trade for the next 10 years.

(2) The repairs to the wharf are well advanced and are expected to prolong its life for a further 20 years.

Reinforced concrete technology has changed substantially throughout the world since the wharf at Geraldton was constructed. The scaling of concrete on marine structures built at the same period has occurred in many parts of the world.

Future designs will not follow the same pattern as the existing structure.

SAFETY HELMETS FOR MOTOR-CYCLISTS.

Position in Western Australia.

14. Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Does he know that the National Safety Council is advocating the use of safety helmets by all motorcycleists and their pillion-riders?

(2) Are there sufficient helmets available in Western Australia conforming to the accepted standard?

(3) Is provision being made for the use of safety helmets to the accepted standard by traffic police in the metropolitan area, and by traffic inspectors in country areas?

(4) Is any action being taken to make it an offence to sell a substandard safety helmet in Western Australia?

Mr. GRAHAM replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) I have no information.

(3) Police officers engaged on traffic patrol duties are required to wear safety helmets of accepted standard. I am given to understand that a move is being made for suitable helmets to be obtained for traffic inspectors in country areas.

(4) No.

TRAFFIC REGULATIONS.

Breaches by Pedestrians.

15. Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) How many pedestrians have been prosecuted under the Traffic regulations for breaches from—

(a) The 1st July, 1957 to the 31st December, 1957;

(b) The 1st January, 1958 to the 30th June, 1958?

(2) In each of the periods mentioned what penalties have been imposed on the offenders?

(3) Is it intended to strictly enforce these regulations in the future?

(4) If not, why not?

Mr. GRAHAM replied:

(1) (a) Nil.

(b) 18. Cautions administered during the period have been 169.

(2) (a) Nil.

(b) £10 10s.

(3) Yes.

(4) Answered by No. (3).

INMATES OF "SUNSET."

Amounts Charged, and Effect of Pension Rises, etc.

16. Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Health:

(1) What are the respective figures for charges made to inmates of "Sunset"—

(a) immediately before the last Commonwealth pension increase;

(b) after the last Commonwealth pension increase?

(2) What was the amount of the pension increase?

(3) How much of the increase has been taken by the department in the form of extra charge to the inmates?

(4) Are any further adjustments of charges contemplated in the near future; and if so, what are the contemplated adjustments?

(5) What amounts additional to the basic charge are charged to those who have income other than old-age pensions, and how are these amounts calculated?

(6) Are any inmates called upon to pay more than the basic charge because of assets they have accumulated although they might not have income in addition to old-age pension?

Mr. NULSEN replied:

(1) (a) £2 12s. per week.

(b) £2 17s. per week.

(2) 7s. 6d. per week.

(3) 5s. per week. Maintenance charges for pensioners in "Sunset" are assessed by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, which deducts the maintenance charge from the pension and pays it direct to the department. The balance of pension is then paid by the Social Services Department to the pensioner. Thus, this increased deduction was determined by the Department of Social Services.

(4) No.

(5) Non-pensioners—maximum of £4. 7s. 6d. per week, which is the amount of the old-age pension.

Part-pensioners with other income—treated on merits with maximum of £4 7s. 6d. per week.

(6) No.

WATER SUPPLIES.*Improvements to Bridgetown Scheme.*

17. Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Is he aware that some residents of Bridgetown were unable to get a satisfactory supply of water from the Bridgetown water scheme last summer?

(2) What work has been carried out to improve this reticulation system?

(3) Will he keep this matter under observation with a view to carrying out further work if necessary?

(4) When will a larger dam be built at Mill Stream?

Mr. TONKIN replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) High level tanks have been erected in the two unsatisfactory areas.

(3) Yes.

(4) Construction of a dam on Mill Stream will be listed for consideration in the 1959-1960 draft Loan Estimates.

Improvements to Donnybrook Scheme.

18. Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) What work is to be carried out on the Donnybrook town water supply during the current financial year?

(2) Of the work envisaged for this year, how much has already been completed and how much remains to be carried out?

(3) What relief from water shortages can be expected during the coming summer?

Mr. TONKIN replied:

(1) A bore will be equipped with pump, some houses in the south-west corner of the town will be reticulated and water will be available from a standpipe.

(2) Work has not yet commenced.

(3) See No. (1).

METROPOLITAN PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICES.*Decline in Patronage.*

19. Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Was he correctly reported in "The West Australian" of the 28th October, 1958, to the effect that the decline in patronage of metropolitan passenger services, excluding the railways, had been more noticeable in Government services than in private operators?

(2) If so, is there any explanation for this trend?

Mr. GRAHAM replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The matter is being investigated.

No. 20. This question was postponed.

RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK.*Allocation of New Money Through Agency Section.*

21. Mr. HEARMAN asked the Treasurer:

Can he indicate what proportion of the sum of £2,924,560 of new money made available since the Government came to office, to the Agency Section of the Rural and Industries Bank, was used—

(a) to establish new farms;

(b) to assist existing farmers;

(c) to establish new secondary industries;

(d) to assist existing secondary industries;

(e) for any other purposes, if any?

Mr. HAWKE replied:

(a) £55,000.

(b) £180,416.

(c) £180,950.

(d) £2,505,369 (including £2,330,932 for Chamberlain Industries).

(e) £2,825.

CHILD WELFARE.*Appointment of Officer at Albany.*

22. Mr. HALL asked the Minister for Child Welfare:

(1) Would he give consideration to the appointment of a permanent child welfare officer at Albany?

(2) If not, would he give consideration to the appointment of a part-time child welfare officer at Albany, if a suitable person can be obtained in Albany?

Mr. HAWKE replied:

(1) Consideration has been given to this suggestion and it will be further considered early in 1959.

(2) See answer to No. (1).

DISCONTINUED RAILWAY LINES.*Priority of Inquiry by Royal Commissioner.*

23. Mr. BRAND asked the Premier:

(1) Is it intended that the Railways Royal Commissioner (Mr. A. G. Smith, S.M.) will inquire into the question of re-opening each one of the sections of line referred to in the rail discontinuance motion?

(2) If so, will he state the order or priority in which inquiries will be made into the various sections?

(3) Will Mr. Smith submit interim reports as he completes his inquiries into each section, or will he submit a consolidated report at the conclusion of this part of his investigations of the railway system?

(4) When is it expected the first of these reports will become available?

Mr. HAWKE replied:

(1) The Royal Commissioner's terms of inquiries are in accordance with the motion successfully moved by the Hon. L. A. Logan, M.L.C., in the Legislative Council on the 29th November, 1957.

(2) The Royal Commissioner's itinerary has so far been arranged as follows—

Next week—Ajana-Yuna districts.

Commencing the 18th November—Burakin-Bonnie Rock, to be followed by—Mukinbudin-Southern Cross-Bullfinch districts.

As early as practicable thereafter, other districts will be examined.

(3) and (4) This depends on results of his inquiries as they proceed.

No. 24. *This question was postponed.*

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

EDUCATION.

Inaccuracies in Reply to Question.

1. Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Education:

On the 27th of August the Minister gave me certain information in response to a question. On the 21st of October he had occasion to write to me indicating that the information given me in reply to my question was, in part, incorrect. In view of the considerable discrepancy between the answer given to my question on the 27th of August, and the figures given to me in his letter, will the Minister make an explanation to the House which can be incorporated in Hansard?

Mr. W. HEGNEY replied:

I will be pleased to comply with the hon. member's request. I wrote to him, pointing out the error, and apologising for it. I will have a reply ready on Tuesday and will submit it to the House.

COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS.

Appointment.

2. Mr. HEARMAN asked the Premier:

(1) When and by what means will applications for the position of Commissioner of Railways be invited?

(2) Is it intended to call applications outside Australia?

(3) When is it anticipated that the position of Commissioner of Railways will be filled, as envisaged in the legislation passed earlier this session?

Mr. HAWKE replied:

The hon. member was good enough to supply me with a copy of his questions. The answer to each of them is, that the matter is receiving active consideration.

HAIRDRESSERS.

Breaches of Factories and Shops Act.

3. Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Labour:

Reverting to question No. 7 on the notice paper, I understand that complaints have not yet been acknowledged. Will the Minister inform the House as to what complaints have been acknowledged, and on what date?

Mr. W. HEGNEY replied:

I am afraid I cannot oblige the hon. member off-hand. I would like particulars of his question with reference to the complaints that have been acknowledged. The reply given to the hon. member's previous question was factual.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Third Reading.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 3).

Second Reading.

THE HON. W. HEGNEY (Minister for Labour—Mt. Hawthorn) [3.20] in moving the second reading said: Hon. members will note that this Bill is designated No. (3) which implies that there have already been two amending Bills introduced during the session in respect to this legislation. The Bill deals with only one particular matter, and that matter has been included in two other Bills which were dealt with during this session—namely, those relating to long service leave and workers' compensation.

I do not know whether I am in order in stating that for the time being another place has rejected a Bill which contains the very provision now under discussion. I do not think that that House is serious in insisting on the amendment it has made, which amounts to a deletion of the provision contained in the Bill before us. The Bill to amend the Workers' Compensation Act has passed through the third reading in this House and it will be transmitted to another place in due course. What happens to it remains to be seen.

Certain amendments to the Industrial Arbitration Act are set out in the Bill with which we are now dealing. Anyone reading it superficially will get the impression that, irrespective of the circumstances, all taxi-drivers will be regarded as employees; but that is not the case. I would refer hon. members to Section 61 of the Industrial Arbitration Act, relating to jurisdiction and procedure. Under that section the Court has the power and jurisdiction, of its own motion, to do certain things. The amendment in the Bill, if

agreed to, will be superimposed on the power and jurisdiction referred to in that section. Section 61 reads, in part, as follows:—

The Court shall have jurisdiction—

- (a) on its own motion to deal with and determine all industrial matters, and to prevent, settle, and determine all industrial disputes, pursuant to this Act . . .
- (c) to determine and declare in a particular case that a cessation or limitation of work, or refusal to work, or a refusal or neglect to offer for or accept employment, does not constitute a strike;
- (e) to exercise powers conferred by any other section of this Act but not expressly mentioned in this section.

The Bill seeks to add another paragraph to the section I have just read out; and during the Committee stage I shall move to alter that paragraph to read (f) instead of (g). That paragraph is as follows:—

for the purpose of an award or industrial agreement to declare that a person

who is engaged in plying for hire or in the delivery of goods or in the transportation of passengers with any vehicle the use of which is obtained by that person under a contract of bailment, whether made before or after the coming into operation of this paragraph, in consideration of the payment by that person of a fixed sum, or a share in his earnings, for the use of the vehicle,

shall,

where the work in which the person is so engaged is work for which, by an award or industrial agreement a price or rate has been fixed for persons performing that work,

be deemed,

for the purposes of this Act, to be a worker

Then the paragraph indicates when the other party is deemed to be an employer. It goes on—

unless those persons establish, or either of them establishes,

to the satisfaction of the Court or, as the case may be, to the satisfaction of the Conciliation Commissioner,

that the contract of bailment was a bona fide contract and was not entered into for the purpose of avoiding the operation of this Act.

By studying this provision closely, hon. members will realise that in a case where a taxi driver has hired a vehicle from a principal, if it can be shown that a contract was entered into to overcome the terms of a particular award, then the court, on application by either party, will have the power to determine the issue; in other words, it will have the authority to determine in any particular case whether the hirer is an employee or an independent contractor. I might say that the provision under discussion has been lifted from a New South Wales Act. It stems from a position that has arisen over the past few years, where investors or principals hire out vehicles to others.

I am given to understand that these principals carry on the business as a sideline and charge £20 to £25 a week for the hire of a vehicle. The owner-drivers of taxis—those owning their own vehicles and who are not regarded as employees in any sense of the term—are perturbed at the hirers having to pay such a large amount per week, and having to work excessive hours to meet the hire charge and living expenses. In such cases it is considered that the court should have the power and jurisdiction to determine the exact relationship between the parties, and whether in fact the relationship of employer and employee, or independent contractor and principal exists.

Mr. Court: Up to date you have emphasised the relationship of this Bill to taxi-drivers only, but it is not confined merely to taxi-drivers.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The position is the same in the case of any person hiring a vehicle for the transport of goods. Hon. members will recall what happened in the taxi industry some years ago when excessive prices were paid for plates. As a result of the policy adopted by this Government in the last few years the evil which existed has ceased. I am advised there is great concern among taxi-drivers over the position obtaining today. The Transport Workers' Union is also very concerned. I believe Parliament should pass this Bill so as to enable the court to determine any such issue, when it is asked to do so.

I repeat, and I emphasise, that all taxi-drivers will not automatically be regarded as employees. There is a difference between the owner-driver and the hirer who, because of economic circumstances, has agreed to pay a high rate for a vehicle, in the hope that he will be able to dodge the social services and earn a livelihood. But I think that if hon. members made inquiries, they would find that I am not exaggerating the position; and this is a very reasonable, practical, and sensible attempt to try to remedy the situation. However it will not be in the hands of the unions, employer or employee—as the case may be; but the Arbitration Court itself will be the authority to determine

whether a particular person engaged in any way in connection with the provisions of this Bill will be regarded as being a contractor or employee.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: How will it help the taxi-driver?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I am glad that that reference has been made, because I have just been indicating, probably indirectly, that some persons through economic circumstances have taken on the running of vehicles, provided by others, at a hiring fee of £25 a week. I mentioned that owner-drivers are perturbed about the long hours these people to whom I have referred have to work in order to meet that £25 and also earn the union rate of pay or even the basic wage; and some have not been able to do so.

The hon. member for Cottesloe has asked how this will benefit the person we have in mind. If the position which I have outlined does obtain, it will be that in a particular case—not general cases; these cases will have to be dealt with individually—the Arbitration Court will determine whether the person is an employee or an individual contractor. If he is considered to be an employee, he will be entitled to the benefits of the appropriate award.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: You are trying to help the owner-driver?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The person who owns his own vehicle is not under any obligation to pay £25 to an investor; but, as I said, some of these people who take on the hiring of cars are not making anywhere near the basic wage. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Court, debate adjourned.

CITY OF PERTH PARKING FACILITIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th October.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [3.33]: This Bill, as I understand it from the explanation given by the Minister, seeks only to tidy up a provision in respect of the City of Perth parking laws so that the City of Perth will not be subject to unfair litigation due to a lack of definition in the Act should there be, for instance, any damage through a sign erected in connection with a parking scheme, and I consider the amendment is both desirable and necessary. I therefore support the second reading.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [3.34]: I obtained the adjournment of the debate on this Bill, but happened to be on the telephone when the Order of the Day was read.

The SPEAKER: We know that.

Mr. HEARMAN: I have had a look at the Bill, and do not think there is any need to delay the House any more. 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.

ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 3).

Order Discharged.

On motion by the Premier, Order discharged from the notice paper.

WHEAT INDUSTRY STABILISATION BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th October.

THE HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [3.36]: The object of this Bill is to carry into effect for a further period of five years, the wheat stabilisation scheme on very similar lines to those which have operated for the last five years. There was, of course, a referendum of Australian wheat-growers before legislation was enacted to bring the scheme into operation; and if my memory serves me right, the poll in favour of the proposed stabilisation scheme was 94 per cent. of the wheatgrowers of Australia—a very substantial majority indeed. It may have been 94 per cent. of those who actually voted; but in any event, I believe I am right in saying it was a 94 per cent. poll in favour of the proposed scheme.

It is perfectly true, I think, that under the scheme in the intervening period, the wheatgrowers of Australia—I think I can rightly say, particularly those of Western Australia—have made a very great contribution, running into many millions of pounds in fact, in favour of the consumers of Australia; because, of course, there was a time when—and for a period of the five years, too—the wheat of Australia, and particularly Western Australia, where we have so large a proportion available for export, could have been sold at prices far more advantageous financially to the wheatgrowers than were those that could be obtained under the scheme.

I do not think, though, that there is any real heartburning on the part of the wheatgrowers of this State in respect of that aspect of the matter, as long as they are not continually told that they are being subsidised by the community, because if they are continually told that, they can quite easily retaliate by saying that they have subsidised the community in accepting some millions of pounds less for the wheat than they would have had it been handled on the Western Australian export basis.

It is an unprofitable argument and one in which I do not like indulging, but the fact is that when one hears this subsidy being trotted out every now and then, it is as well that the other aspects of the case should be brought into relief. Were my friend the late hon. member for Moore here, I have no doubt he would—as he did on many occasions during his lifetime in this House—produce to the House the relevant figures on this question; and from his vast experience in the wheat industry—far greater than my own—and his close contact with the operations of wheat disposal in the course of the last decade, it is crystal clear that the figures he produced would be reasonably accurate.

I can remember the last occasion upon which the late hon. member for Moore made reference to those figures, and I recall the expressions of surprise in this Chamber at the very large amount that he referred to on that occasion. Be that as it may, the scheme has operated very satisfactorily, in my opinion, for the great majority of wheatgrowers, and I believe that the great majority of them are in favour of its continuation, as it has the various features which give the industry a margin or aspect of stability which is not always apparent in the operations of primary producers, and which it is desirable there should be, so long as we can ensure that it is reasonably fair and advantageous to them in all the circumstances of the case.

It is possible, I have no doubt, to make some criticism of the attitude of the Agricultural Council of Australia in regard to the proposed renewal of this legislation. I do not intend to go into that at all, because it seems to me that, whether those criticisms are soundly based or not, the fact is that a decision has been made. It has been gone into very carefully by those representatives of the wheatgrowers of the community of Australia, as well as by the Agricultural Council itself. It is not likely that any attempt will be made to make the alterations that have been mentioned as desirable although not actually fundamental to this proposition; and it seems to me that it is in the best interests now, of the wheatgrowers of Australia—which includes, of course, those in our own State—that the stabilisation scheme and the necessary legislation should be carried into effect and passed as rapidly as possible.

I understand that the scheme which came into operation in 1953, actually expired on the 30th of last month; and in consequence, there is at present no statutory provision governing the continuation of this scheme. Therefore, it is desirable, as the Minister said the other night, to pass this legislation without delay; and, in those circumstances, I propose to support the second reading of the Bill.

MR. NALDER (Katanning) [3.43]: I do not intend to delay the measure, but to give it my support, because the wheat-growing industry is so important to Western Australia, especially at this time when the Commonwealth is passing through a period of lessening prices for our primary production. In these circumstances, the wheat industry, with its fixed price of approximately 14s. 6d. per bushel, is one of the saving factors in our economy. I feel sure that with the good season which we are no doubt going to enjoy, wheat will be one of the greatest factors in stabilising the finances of this country.

We all know how important wheat is in our economy and, as the Minister said the other night, the number of acres sown this year has risen throughout Australia. Owing to the wonderful seasonal conditions that are being experienced practically throughout the Commonwealth, and especially in Western Australia, our wheat crop is going to mean a lot to the farming community and to the State as a whole. Members representing country electorates have, from time to time, emphasised that fact, and I know we are all happy to think that there is one side of our primary production which is certain to be in a sound position this year.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.5 p.m.

Mr. NALDER: I would like to continue with my comments and stress the value of this industry to the State. I also wish to say something from the point of view of railway haulage, and the fact that the wheat industry will be the employer of quite a lot of seasonal labour. The Railway Department will certainly be called upon to haul what is expected to be an all-time record harvest, provided the season finishes as well as it has continued up to the present time.

The one point that will be of interest is that some of the railway services on these lines have been discontinued. I believe that in some of the areas where the railways are not functioning, there is going to be an enormous quantity of wheat harvested; and it will be interesting to see just how the wheat is to be transported from those centres to the nearest railway line for carriage to the ports. The point is that this wheat harvest is going to be quite a money spinner; and, as the Minister made some figures available in this respect, it is not necessary for me to reiterate them. This Bill should be passed because it is required by the large majority of farmers in Australia, as has been stated by the Leader of the Country Party.

It is important to the farmers, because there is much work to be done—and I speak with some knowledge of the position at the moment—in reference to re-fencing; the continuation of sinking dams for water supplies; and the construction of sheds, such as those required for shearing, and those for

the storage of grain. Because it is evident that farmers are becoming more grain and fodder-conscious; they are storing quantities of fodder and grain for use during the period when there is a shortage of natural pastures in the field.

This tendency must be encouraged, because it is a cheap insurance to have such reserves on hand in case there happens to be a period of severe drought, as we experienced in the last autumn. So the fact that we are to have a good wheat harvest this season affects many people. It affects not only the country people but the city people as well. Because we are to have such a good season, I am sure we will find its effect will extend further than the areas where the wheat is grown.

It will be interesting to see of what value this wheat harvest will be to the Government from the point of view of finance to the railways. I think, as a result of this, that it will be proved necessary to give some serious consideration to the reopening of some of the lines that have been closed, especially those on the outskirts of the wheatgrowing districts of the State. I do not wish to delay the Bill. I support the second reading, and I hope the measure will be carried at an early date to enable it to come into operation at the shortest notice.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [4.9]: I support the Bill. As the previous legislation in Western Australia in regard to the stabilisation of the wheat industry has expired, it is desirable that this measure be passed as soon as possible. I think it is advisable, in all cases, to have a referendum of growers in reference to any stabilisation scheme, but in the limited time available to me to make inquiries since the introduction of the Bill on Tuesday evening, I understand that the great majority of growers in Australia adhere to the principles of stabilisation. Since this measure will, for another five years, continue the stabilisation system which has existed in the past, I will certainly support it wholeheartedly.

I regret that time has not enabled me to make as much research into the measure as I would have desired, especially as on this occasion it would have been timely to inform the House of the great contribution which the wheatgrowers of this State have made towards the stabilisation of the wheat industry in Australia during post-war years. In most, if not all of the other wheatgrowing States, such as New South Wales and Victoria, the production of wheat has decreased gradually, until the stage was reached last year when it was necessary for the growers in this State to provide portion of the wheat requirements of those two States. This was done by the Western Australian wheatgrowers at great sacrifice; that is, by disposing of their wheat at the home consumption price.

The wheat industry in the State has remained stable over the last few years. The hon. member for Katanning has told us that the coming harvest will be an all-time record; and that it has been estimated by a fairly reliable authority that it will amount to 58,000,000 bushels. This production will indicate to some degree the efforts being made by Western Australian wheatgrowers to keep the wheat industry stable, not only in this State but throughout the Commonwealth.

The Bill before us is complementary to Federal legislation and that in the other States of Australia. More would have been said about the Bill had it been introduced earlier in the session, when hon. members had more opportunity to make greater research into the matter. I support the measure, and trust that in the interests of the wheatgrowers, the plan will result in the stabilisation of the wheat industry; and that it will contribute, as it has done in the past, towards increased primary production, thus bringing about a sound economy.

MR. MAY (Collie) [4.13]: I want to make one or two references to the measure, which I am supporting. It is on all fours with the previous stabilisation plan. So far as this State is concerned that plan proved to be very satisfactory, and I have no doubt that the one referred to in the Bill will prove likewise.

Here, I would like to make a suggestion to the Minister for Agriculture. At present the wheat position of this State presents a wonderful picture. I have been connected with the wheat industry since 1911, but I have never seen a harvest as promising as the coming one. In view of the beautiful picture presented by the growing wheat in the wheatbelt area, along the Midland line and the Wongan line, I suggest to the Minister that he take this opportunity to give hon. members here a chance to see the promising harvest this season. If arrangements can be made, hon. members will get some idea of what the wheat harvest will mean to this State.

I suggest that hon. members, particularly those representing metropolitan electorates, be invited to go on a tour through the wheatbelt; that can be done over a week-end, without disturbing the work of Parliament, in the same way as the McLarty-Watts Government arranged for a tour of inspection through the Rocky Gully and Albany area to see what was going on in respect of war service land settlement. I venture to suggest that at least 50 per cent. of the hon. members here will not see the picture unless some such opportunity is given them.

Arrangements will have to be made quickly because the crops in the north are ripening very rapidly. If the Minister agrees, the arrangements will have to be made for a tour within the next two or

three weeks. Hon. members who are not connected with primary production will thus be given the opportunity to see what amount of wheat this State can produce, and what value the crops will be to the State.

MR. LEWIS (Moore) [4.17]: Like the hon. member for Vasse, I support the measure, but regret it has been introduced late in the session. Of necessity it must be looked upon and passed as a matter of urgency. A few nights ago I referred to the wheat industry; and in passing, I mentioned the cost of production which, for this year, has been assessed at 14s. 6d. per bushel, based on an estimated yield of 15½ bushels per acre.

It is in regard to the cost of production that I want to address the Chamber. I heartily support the other provisions in the Bill, which I have examined to find some reference to the cost of production, because that is a vital matter to the wheatgrowers. The only reference I can find is the clause dealing with definitions, which states—

“guaranteed price,” in relation to wheat of a season, has the same meaning as that expression has in the Commonwealth Act.

In looking for a definition in the Commonwealth Act, I found it was in the Wheat Industry Stabilisation Act, 1958. Unfortunately, there is not a copy of that Act available. I understand, from what has been published, that that information is available, but the Minister did not make any reference to it in his speech. The figure, as I stated previously, is 14s. 6d. per bushel, based on 15½ bushels per acre.

The wheat interests of Australia, as represented by the Wheatgrowers' Federation, claim that this figure is totally unrealistic and is not related in any way to the averages of the past 10 to 15 years. Had it been related, the yield would have been based on 14.8 bushels per acre, and on that basis the cost of production would have been much higher than 14s. 6d., which was the figure arrived at officially. The suspicion appears to be well founded, because the 14s 6d. is just an arbitrary figure. By a process of mathematics it was decided, in order to arrive at 14s. 6d., that the total cost of production be divided by a divisor which, in this case, was reckoned to be 15½ bushels. I understand that one of the factors taken into consideration in arriving at the cost of production was the depreciation on farming machinery, and that the value of the machinery which it was estimated a wheatgrower might need to purchase was in the vicinity of £4,000.

I have made some research into the cost of machinery; and, for the time being, disregarding the cost of the higher-range or greater-sized machinery and taking that

size which the average wheatgrower would need, I find a Chamberlain Countryman tractor, the sort that both the Premier and I would recommend that wheatgrowers should buy, would cost £2,495. A 14-disc Chamberlain plough would cost £670; a 20-tine Chamberlain scarifier £390; a 20-run combine £600 and a 10-ft header £1,670. The last two items are not made by Chamberlain Industries. The total cost of this machinery is £5,825; and if we add the cost of a farmer's truck, we find the total capital value of the machinery is nearly £7,000, or almost double the figure the Bureau of Agricultural Economics considers to be adequate for the growing of wheat.

My purpose in mentioning this matter is to impress upon the Minister, or endeavour to, the need for a more realistic approach to the cost-of-production figure which will apply, not this season, because it has been fixed, but for the season beginning on the 1st November, 1959. With those few remarks, I support the Bill.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [4.23]: I would like to join in the volume of support for this Bill, but add a small note of warning. I particularly want to deal with the subject mentioned by the hon. member for Moore—the formula for the cost of production.

This is a matter on which I have spoken before, and it is one of which we should all have knowledge. The formula which is used is a highly involved one; and, whilst it is a reasonable guide to the cost of producing wheat as the main crop, on an average farm, it is not particularly realistic, and tends to produce a position whereby everybody who grows wheat feels he should be entitled to recover the full cost of production.

The cost-of-production figure used includes many items which are not cash costs but imputed costs. It includes such items as the salary—if one likes to put it that way—of the owner of the property and interest on his total investment; not just interest on the amount of money borrowed but on the total money invested—that is the land value of the farm and the current value of the machinery. The result is that many wheat farmers honestly believe they are entitled to a return over and above the cost of production as produced by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

Actually an investor who invested in an average wheat farm operating at cost of production would be doing very nicely. It would be a fine investment on a business footing; and if guaranteed, as the wheat-grower is, as to return, it would be almost equivalent to having money invested in Treasury bonds at a high rate of interest, the only risk being that in any particular year the farm may happen to be one that

got less than the average in relation to rainfall, or more than the average in relation to pests.

There are two other points I wish to mention. The first is the cost of freight on wheat and superphosphate, as these are items that enter into the cost-of-production figure. The fact that we in Western Australia encourage our farmers to grow wheat and use superphosphate, by giving them a freight rate which is completely unrealistic, is something that operates to the detriment of the State's finances. If freight rates on wheat and superphosphate were raised to no less than the average of all States, then our railways would be in a better cash position than they are, and would have a lower deficit. As freight rates would enter into the cost-of-production calculation in the following year, the net result to the farmer would be nothing. In other words, it would be an improvement to the State to raise the cost of freight on these two items.

I know the farmers would cry, because they would appear to be losing money. However, the actual fact is that the freight rise would enter into the following year's cost-of-production figure. I would not like the job of explaining this to the farmers, particularly if each one had to be told individually.

Mr. Bovell: Apparently the hon. member for Leederville does not seem to have a favourable opinion of farmers.

Mr. Roberts: No opinion of them.

Mr. JOHNSON: The inane interjections of the two hon. members opposite do not worry me in the slightest. I have given the facts. The other point I wish to raise is whether we are wise to underwrite an industry in this manner for a long period of time. One of the problems in the U.S.A. at present derives from its policy of support of farm prices to such an extent that that country has very large amounts of wheat and sundry other products in store. In fact, a figure which I saw showed that country had enough wheat in store from its past harvest to meet the total demand of the whole world for two full years even if no more wheat were grown.

I would like to sound a note of warning: that we may be unwise in supporting wheat at a price over and above that which the consumer outside Australia is prepared and able to pay for it. I would like the farmer who grows wheat to realise that, whilst this is very good for our internal economy, it may conceivably be raising future difficulties for us. The turning point in our last depression was the point at which the price of wheat became competitive with the price of rice.

I remember being in Bunbury at the time the first Chinese boat came to load wheat for China and I think the price at

the wharf was 1s. 6d. a bushel. It was some low figure anyway; and that was the turning point in the downward trend of wheat.

It appears that there is a danger that there will be an accumulation of wheat stocks in the world—including Australia—which will be a threat to the wheat producer. I am not opposing the Bill, but I do want to sound the warning that the wheat industry should be prepared for the situation and examine the long-term future and not the season-to-season future. The season-to-season progress is something which we are very pleased to see, especially at a time when we are having considerable difficulty with wool marketing. In Western Australia there seems to be a very good harvest; but as I said, there is a danger that there will not be an effective customer demand for the whole of that harvest. If we have two or three good years here, and other wheat-producing countries have similarly good harvests, there could be a complete glut which would result in the scheme breaking down under its own weight.

A detailed examination of the future should be made, and I believe that some of the wheat producers should give serious consideration to moving into another field of production, such as woolgrowing. I cannot imagine the price of wool going much lower, because I think there will be some pressure brought to bear for the introduction of a world-wide scheme of orderly marketing that will keep wool at a reasonable price. I do not think for a moment that anyone would suggest it is a reasonable price at present, in relation to the cost of wool garments.

Real thought should be given by the marginal producer of wheat to the future of the industry, and to his own future, because there is a very real possibility that it may be necessary for him to leave the industry. If the marginal producer finds himself squeezed out of the industry the average producer, on whose activities the cost of production will be based, will be a more efficient man.

The end result of that movement will be a change in the cost of production, leaving a fresh group at the margin. It is a matter of real concern; and I raise it not because I am opposed to farmers or country interests, but because I think a warning should be given that the future is not necessarily rosy because there is—what the Liberals would call—a socialist system behind it.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Agriculture—Meredin-Yilgarn—in reply) [4.34]: I desire to thank hon. members opposite for their co-operation in this matter, thus enabling the Bill to proceed to a further stage, and also for the remarks that have been made in regard to this measure. The hon. member for Vasse and

the hon. member for Moore both expressed concern that the Bill had not been brought before the House much earlier to enable them to go carefully into its details.

Of course, the matter has proceeded expeditiously; but it was necessary for the complementary legislation in the Commonwealth sphere to be passed before copies were made available to this State. There were certain other factors which had to be dealt with upon receipt of the Bill before it was finally ready for submission to the House.

As a matter of fact, I introduced the measure some days before it was even printed. I would like to say to the two hon. members to whom I have referred that the machinery of this Bill has been in operation for 10 years; and if they had desired to make a specific study of any phase of it, they could have referred to the statute, because it has been in operation the whole time they have been here. There is, perhaps, some excuse for the hon. member for Moore, because he was only recently elected; but a similar measure to this one, with the exception of a few alterations, has been in operation for two five-year terms.

Again I would assure hon. members, if any further assurance is needed, that the whole of the machinery of this Bill has been most carefully analysed by the Wheatgrowers' Federation, which was in constant touch with the Australian Agricultural Council during the whole of the deliberations when the legislation was being considered. As a matter of fact, there were a number of conferences with the Australian Agricultural Council; and it was not until unanimity was reached on all the points embodied in the measure, that the Bill was finally presented to the Federal House.

When speaking in support of the Bill, the hon. member for Collie made some comments as to the possibility of hon. members seeing more of the State—and particularly the farming areas—at the present time, when it is looking its very best. I assure him that some thought has been given to that possibility, but further thought is necessary. However, a decision will be made very soon if we are going to do that; and I assure the hon. member that the matter is a very live one at the present time.

There was some comment by, I think, the hon. member for Moore in connection with the cost of production. It must be realised that the formula is a very involved one indeed. I do not know whether many hon. members have had an opportunity of perusing the method by which the cost of production is arrived at; but I can assure those who have not, that it is most involved; and I agree with the hon. member for Leederville that the examination which takes place in determining a cost-of-production price is far

wider than is really necessary. I feel that if there is any complaint about the cost-of-production basis, it would be that it errs on the generous side rather than, as the hon. member for Moore seems to think, that the producers are being deprived of something to which they are entitled.

I feel that the formula is a most generous one, and it was the subject of quite a considerable amount of discussion by the members representing the six States, before it was finally accepted. I believe that sooner or later it may be found necessary to arrive at a sounder basis upon which this wheat price can be determined.

Because there are some differences of opinion, even among Ministers, as to whether the formula is correct; and although it has been difficult to fault the statistical examination, there appear to be some avenues whereby a closer examination might disclose that the scheme should, perhaps, be more firmly based than it is. The basis upon which the formula is now arrived at is that on which the cost of production price over the previous five years was based, and the same reasoning covers the home consumption price.

I would say also that, in the matter of arriving at the cost-of-production basis, if the formula could be regarded as strictly correct there would be little complaint concerning the figure arrived at, from this point of view: that a close examination was undertaken on 450 Australian farms, and so a very wide variety of circumstances was involved in bringing about the final decision. I assure the hon. member for Leederville, also, that a detailed examination of the future of wheat is at all times in progress; and I suppose some of the keenest brains in the world—in regard to wheat—are engaged in that activity. Therefore, in sounding a warning, I have no doubt that while there may be some reason for doing so, it is not urgent or it would have been put forward by those who know the wheat industry so thoroughly.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Sewell in the Chair; the Hon. L. F. Kelly (Minister for Agriculture) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5—put and passed.

Clause 6—The Western Australian Wheat Board:

Mr. BOVELL: I desire the assurance of the Minister that it is not the intention of the Government to disturb the status quo in regard to the personnel of the board, and that it will continue under this legislation.

Mr. KELLY: That assurance is given. There is no intention or likelihood of any alteration.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 to 23, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Standing Orders Suspension.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Agriculture—Merredin-Yilgarn) [4.48]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the third reading of the Bill to be taken forthwith.

THE HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [4.49]: I have no objection to the motion. I understand that the Minister desires to have this legislation passed in order that it may be dealt with as soon as possible in the Upper House, and thus avoid a further day's delay. As it is a special request, and in order to get the Bill on the statute book as soon as possible, we have no objection to the suspension of Standing Orders.

Question put.

The **SPEAKER:** I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. There being no dissentient voice, I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE HON. W. HEGNEY (Minister for Labour—Mt. Hawthorn) [4.50] in moving the second reading said: This is a very small bill, and it deals with only one principle, a principle with which I think both Houses will agree. In 1954 the Government introduced a measure to give the State Government Insurance Office the right to engage in all forms of insurance. That Bill, which was on the same lines as the one recently defeated in another place, was rejected; and, later in the same session, the Government introduced a measure to enable the State Government Insurance Office to carry on with what is generally known as the school children's insurance scheme. The scheme was implemented by the State Office and is still in operation.

Some time ago a private insurance company entered that field and it was able to offer a more extensive cover than the State Government Insurance Office could offer because of the restriction on its operations.

In other words, the State Government Insurance Office was restricted to the insuring of school children during school hours, while they were at organised games and when they were travelling to and from school. The private office has offered insurance cover for 24 hours a day, seven days of the week; and the object of this Bill is to enable the State Office to insure on the same basis.

To clear up any misunderstanding that might arise, if any hon. member has the idea that the State Government Insurance Office has some preferential treatment over any other office in regard to this field, I would like to quote one of the regulations made under the Education Act. This regulation provides—

That no canvassers for business have the right of entry to school premises for the purpose of trying to sell their wares to either pupils or teachers.

The Federation of Parents & Citizens' Associations is the initiator of this scheme, because that body communicated with the State Government Insurance Office and requested it to undertake this form of insurance. The federation was able to obtain the co-operation of school teachers in the implementation of the scheme, and that co-operation was given entirely on a voluntary basis. I understand that this private insurance office offered commissions to State school teachers, and that is objectionable to the teachers concerned and to the department. No representative of the State Government Insurance Office enters any school for the purpose of seeking business. Originally school children's insurance was effected through the parents and citizens' association; and all that this Bill seeks to do is to enable the State office to provide insurance cover for school children on the same basis as the private company referred to.

Itinerant photographers have a habit of going around the schools and wanting to take group and individual photographs of school children. The department frowns on this sort of practice, and the regulations preclude it from being carried on. Where such action is taken, it is without the authority or approval of the department, and is usually the result of teachers not fully understanding the provisions of the regulations.

Mr. Court: What premium is proposed for this 24-hour-a-day cover?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I know that the hon. member would not like political interference with the State Government Insurance Office.

Mr. Court: It is nothing to do with political interference. I asked you a question.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: That matter will be left to the State Government Insurance Office to work out. I am sure that the

manager of the State office has some premium in mind; but, of course, it will be necessary to wait until the Bill has been passed before that figure can be made public. Under the present legislation the office cannot undertake a 24-hour cover. I think the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will agree that the State Government Insurance Office works on a business-like basis, and that the manager would have regard to all the circumstances from the Government's point of view. However, that is a minor consideration, because we have the utmost confidence in the manager of the office; and I am sure that the business, as all hon. members will agree, is carried on in an ethical and sound manner. I have much pleasure in moving—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Court, debate adjourned.

MARKETING OF EGGS ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINU- ANCE) BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th October.

MR. WILD (Dale) [4.57]: This is a very small Bill, but it has far-reaching repercussions as far as the industry is concerned and, in fact, as far as the whole of the egg-consuming population of Western Australia is concerned. We believe in orderly marketing. Legislation such as this has been on the statute book since 1946; and, as I have said on so many previous occasions in this House, I am certain that the industry would not be able to function if there were no orderly marketing.

As one reason for the introduction of the Bill, and extending the life of the board by 10 years, instead of the normal period of five years, the Minister said that it was necessary to raise a certain sum of money in order to erect a new floor for the W.A. Egg Marketing Board; and, to use his own words—

The main feature to be observed, however, is that the tenure of the board is a limited one under the Marketing of Eggs Act; and to safeguard the Government, it would be necessary to amend the Act so as to extend the life of the board for a sufficient period, which would not be less than ten years.

I cannot quite understand why the Minister used those words. I do not know whether he meant them, or whether he did not say what he meant to say when he talked about safeguarding the Government. With any industry, if one wants to borrow £1,000 or £5,000, one approaches the Department of Industrial Development, and its representatives look at the

project. If they are satisfied that it is one which is capable of improvement and expansion, the advance is usually agreed to by the Government, either through the Rural & Industries Bank or as a straight-out guaranteed loan. If the Department had reason to believe that there was a doubt as to whether that industry would keep going, the loan would not be granted; but no statutory period is laid down for the life of the industry in question—it could be two years, five years, or 50 years. However, that does not enter into the question.

I quarrel with the Minister's intention to extend the life of this legislation for a further 10 years, because it will deny the members of Parliament in both Houses an opportunity to criticise or applaud the actions of the W.A. Egg Marketing Board should they see fit to do so at any time.

We have a classic example of such a position with the wheat stabilisation legislation being again brought before the House today. This Act has to be reviewed every five years by the Commonwealth Parliament, and it has to have the approbation of every State Parliament. Therefore, on this occasion, each hon. member will be able to rise in his place and criticise, should he so desire, what has happened in the past.

To sum up, the passage of the Bill before us would mean that unless an hon. member happens to be a member of the Government in office he will have no opportunity to say anything concerning the W.A. Egg Marketing Board except during the debate on the Estimates or on the Supply Bill.

Mr. O'Brien: You can move a motion.

MR. WILD: I know. But how far does that get us? It is the accepted principle in most Parliaments of the British Commonwealth that legislation of this nature should be brought before Parliament periodically in order that hon. members may make any observations on it, whether they be good or bad. It is an excellent move to grant money to the board to put its own house in order; but I balk at the idea of hon. members of Parliament being denied the right in, say, five years' time to criticise the actions of the board if we think such criticism is warranted.

Without a doubt, there is an urgent necessity for some alteration to be made to the headquarters of the W.A. Egg Marketing Board. At the moment the situation can be described only as being chaotic. The board is doing its best in most difficult circumstances to distribute fresh eggs to the consumers of this State, with half of its premises on one side of the road and the other half on the opposite side. To make matters worse, if the weather happens to be hot after the eggs have been candled, they have to be transported

to Robb's Jetty, Fremantle, to be placed in cool store. If one visits the board's premises one can see the fork-lift truck giving a shuttle service from one side of the road to the other, and often Kiernan's truck is waiting to transport the eggs to Robb's Jetty.

If the operations of the board were conducted under one roof, this would enable the eggs to be brought in from the producers and placed in a cool store at one end of the building; and then, after being candled, they could be placed in cold storage to await shipment to overseas markets or, alternatively, distribution throughout the metropolitan area.

The Minister has indicated to the House—and those in the industry have known it for some considerable time—that the market trust is contemplating making structural alterations to its premises in Marquis-st. Consequently, the day is not far distant when the trust will ask the Egg Marketing Board to vacate its premises so that they can be used by the trust for its own purposes. Therefore, for the benefit of the industry as a whole, it would appear that there is a pressing need for the board to look for some other premises as quickly as it can.

I would be glad if the Minister could enlighten me in regard to the following observation which he made when introducing the Bill:—

The board has gone into the savings which can be expected under various projects, and considers that the capital cost of the floors and cold storage at either Fremantle or Welshpool could be paid for in 12 years.

One could interpret that statement in many ways. However, I hope the Minister will agree with me when I say that if we, as a Parliament, are to agree to this legislation being extended for a further 10 years to control the organised marketing of eggs, then, for goodness' sake, let us put all our eggs into one basket!

Mr. Sleeman: Do you believe in having all your eggs in one basket?

Mr. WILD: I do in this particular instance; because, as I have frequently said, eggs are a perishable commodity, and they should be handled and kept under one roof.

Mr. Brady: It is not usually accepted as being a good policy to have all your eggs in one basket.

Mr. WILD: I agree with the Minister that that is so with most things; but in this case I think it is wise. Accompanied by other hon. members of this House I was afforded the opportunity of inspecting one of the receiving depots in South Australia. If my memory serves me right, I think it was Sandfords. I had hoped that a receiving depot similar to that would be established in Perth. In that depot the eggs came in at the receiving end to be

placed in cold storage. They were then taken out for a few minutes for candling and placed back in cold storage. As a result, when the eggs are distributed to the retail stores the Egg Board can guarantee that they are in a fresh condition.

By and large, the industry in this State is in a pretty bad way. Recently we passed in this House a continuance measure for the stabilisation of wheat. As a result of that legislation, the home consumption price for wheat is fixed, and poultry farmers—together with other consumers of wheat—pay 15s. 2d. a bushel into their sheds for it. Therefore, although those in the industry can always say, "I know full well I am going to pay 15s. 2d. a bushel for my wheat," the same cannot be said for the price which the egg producer receives for his eggs.

For some three or four months of the year, large quantities of eggs are sold overseas; but instead of the producer getting a stable price for his product, he obtains only about 3s. net per dozen for his eggs, despite the fact he has to pay a fixed price per bushel for his wheat. Admittedly, during other periods of the year, when the market is more favourable to the producer because there are a lesser number of eggs available, he gets about 4s. a dozen.

The point is that the poultry farmers, irrespective of the period of the year, always have to pay 15s. 2d. a bushel for wheat into store, no matter what they are receiving per dozen for their eggs.

I admit that in any business venture there will always be differences of opinion; and it is my considered opinion that there are at least three matters which the Minister and his officers should have a look at in the interests of the industry and the State as a whole.

The first one is the erection of egg floors in the country. Under the Marketing of Eggs Act it is incumbent upon producers to send their eggs to the board, whether they be in Geraldton, Mukinbudin or in the metropolitan area. In making the statement purely as an onlooker, I doubt the wisdom of what we are doing.

Quite frankly, I contend that the Minister and his advisers could have a look at this question in order to see whether we cannot possibly ring the metropolitan area, and say that beyond 50 or perhaps 100 miles from the G.P.O., Perth, the Marketing of Eggs Act does not apply. I would like to quote one or two facts in support of my contention.

I would first like to refer to the money that is extracted from the producers on every dozen eggs produced. The amount is a small one; but a farthing on every dozen eggs produced is put into a building fund, and the producers in this State, by and large, have always thought that that

money was going into a fund for the final erection of the floor in Perth for which we are legislating today.

Instead, that money was put into the erection of three floors in the country, and the figures very nearly prove that that was not a wise move. The information I have was given to me by the Minister this session—as recently as the 18th September. On that date I asked the Minister the following questions:—

- (1) On what date were the egg floors in the country erected, and at what cost?
- (2) What is the annual cost of running each of the country egg floors?
- (3) Have they all been run at a profit since their inception; if not, which floors showed a loss and what was the deficit?

I then went on and asked about the receipts. The Minister replied that the floor at Narrogin was built in December, 1948, and it has cost £4,000. The land and building for the Bunbury floor cost nearly £11,000. This building was erected in 1954. The building for the Geraldton floor was erected in June, 1955; and together with the land, it cost nearly £8,000. When one turns to the profit or loss that has been made at these three country floors, one sees from the figures that with the exception of the Narrogin floor, every one of the floors with the exception of one year each has, from its inception, shown a loss.

The floor at Narrogin showed a profit in the first four years of operation, but showed a loss in 1957-58. The Bunbury floor showed a profit in the first year of operation, but it has shown a loss during the last five years. That at Geraldton showed a profit for 1956-57, but it also has shown a loss over the last five years. One has only to look at the quality of eggs coming from the country into the metropolitan area to see what I mean. The circumstances, of course, are unavoidable, because the farmer comes into the town once or twice a week, and his wife may take one or two cases to the train; and the interval that elapses between the time they go to the train and the time they reach the metropolitan area indicates the state of the eggs when they arrive at the floor in Perth.

For the purpose of my argument I have the figures of the Western Australian Egg Marketing Board as published in the "Egg and Fowl", which is the journal of the Poultry Farmers' Association. I have deliberately selected one of the hot months of the year to indicate the quality of the eggs when they arrive in Perth. I have taken the month of December last year.

The figures I am about to quote are in relation to eggs that come here by rail and those produced locally. In order that hon. members might appreciate what I mean by these figures, it may be as well

for them to realise that on today's prices the producer receives 4s. 9d. a dozen for a 16 lb. pack egg. That is a big egg. If the egg is of export quality he receives an extra 2d. a dozen. So naturally it is in the interests of the producer to try to produce fresh eggs, and to get them to the board as quickly as possible. If they have good shell texture, etc., then he receives the extra 2d. a dozen.

I will now quote the figures for the eggs received from local sources for the four weeks ended the 31st December. There were 49.78 per cent. export eggs among those received from local sources. Among those that came in by rail, there were 3.55 per cent. export eggs.

Mr. Lawrence: Those are export eggs.

Mr. WILD: Yes; they are the top-grade eggs. Let us have a look at the figures for the second-quality eggs. The number of second-quality eggs from local sources amounted to 10.60 per cent., and those coming in by rail amounted to 39.78 per cent. The more I consider these figures, the more I am convinced that we should have a good look at this matter, because there are large quantities of eggs coming in, particularly from the Narrogin floor, to the Perth market, a large proportion of which must be converted to pulp.

Mr. Lawrence: Would you say the rooster is to blame?

Mr. WILD: When there are 200 or 300 miles to be covered, it is not easy to get eggs down to the egg-grading floor in a good condition.

Mr. W. A. Manning: They should have cold storage plants on the egg-grading floors.

Mr. WILD: These figures would not refer to the eggs received at the country egg floors but those brought to the city from the country by rail. There is no need for me to mention names, but there are some hon. members sitting behind me who, last year, or the year before, when this legislation was being debated, supplied me with some of the egg cheques received by their farming constituents.

Mr. Sleeman: The ones behind you would not know which came first, the chicken or the egg.

Mr. Brand: The people on the other side think the egg did.

Mr. WILD: The hon. members to whom I have referred supplied me with these egg cheques to indicate that the men in the country are getting little or nothing for the eggs they send down to the board; and from the general expressions of opinion that one hears, I think that, by and large, the farming community would be just as happy if it were not necessary for them to send their eggs to the board. But the Act says they must, and down to the board the eggs go. The result is

that the board is becoming cluttered up with second-grade eggs, which is has to pulp.

Mr. Lawrence: What would it do with them?

Mr. WILD: In the olden days I believe there was a degree of interchange between the storekeeper and the farmer. I mention that point because I feel it is something at which the Minister and his advisers should have a good look. It is possible that they may be able to advance some arguments for the continuation of this practice; but when one looks at the quality of the eggs coming on to the market from the country, and considers what the people are getting for them, one feels it is something which ought to be investigated.

Mr. Lawrence: If the second-grade eggs have to come to the metropolitan area, where does the storekeeper in the country get his supply from?

Mr. WILD: In the case of those at Narrogin, they would get them from that town.

Mr. Lawrence: Through the board?

Mr. WILD: Some of them have buying permits and buy eggs locally in the country. If there is no legislation, we will get back to the old practice where the farmer brought in 15 or 20 dozen eggs to the grocer in return for which he got the same value in groceries. At present many more eggs are produced than are consumed in this State.

Mr. Lawrence: Surely eggs produced in the country would not be sent down to the board in the city and then be sent back to the country?

Mr. WILD: The next point I wish to refer to is the blackmarketing of eggs. This practice is operating in the metropolitan area, and it is very difficult to put one's finger on the offenders. I feel pretty certain—and the Minister who has been a poultry farmer must also know—that all the commercial poultry farmers and the egg board are aware of this vicious black-market.

Mr. Brady: You are not suggesting more controls?

Mr. WILD: I am putting forward this point for consideration. Personally I do not like controls; but what is the use of having only part control in an industry? It is better to have full control or none at all. Parliament has agreed that orderly marketing shall be the order of the day. As a producer, I contend that the board should be given the power to ensure that all eggs are channelled through the board.

Let us look at the position as it is. Every egg producer in the State is today paying 1s. 5d. into the board—1s. 0½d. for stabilisation and 4½d. for administration and

other incidental costs. One egg producer in, say, Belmont, may faithfully send all his eggs to the board, and from the price received have extracted 1s. 5d. per dozen; yet another poultry keeper—the one who has a flock of, say, 150 fowls and who probably works in the city—can sell all his eggs at the full market price. Generally, the latter takes a case of two or three dozen eggs with him to work, which he sells at the full market price of 5s. 4d. per dozen. He does not contribute anything to the industry..

Mr. Brady: That is private enterprise.

Mr. Brand: That is your sort of private enterprise.

Mr. WILD: Let us be factual about this matter. From figures published the other day, during the current year the egg producers in the metropolitan area have paid into the stabilisation fund no less than £182,156, to which was added another £21,000 paid by country producers. That sum has been placed into the stabilisation fund so that during other periods of the year the price paid to producers can be balanced. That is because 40 per cent. of the eggs produced in this State have to be exported overseas at a price of about 2s. 4½d. per dozen.

I submit that if commercial producers are compelled under the Act to contribute towards the stabilisation fund at the rate of 1s. 0½d. per dozen, then it is only right and proper that the other types of egg producers, including those who, in the main, run flocks of between 50 and 150 fowls and black-market, should make a similar contribution.

The trouble is not with the backyarder who keeps 12 fowls and sells perhaps a dozen to his neighbour. That is only black-marketing in a very minor way. The danger arises in the case of the poultry keeper with 50 to 150 fowls. Such a flock does not take very much looking after, and can be fed on scraps and wheat. All the year round these producers get the benefit of the full market price, but do not pay a penny towards stabilisation, which offsets the colossal loss suffered by the industry in respect of the export of eggs.

Many people have given thought to how this problem could be overcome. I do not know that I have a solution, but I want to make this suggestion to the Minister: There are about 30 hatcheries in the metropolitan area. The W.A. Egg Marketing Board should be vested with the authority to extract the names of people from the lists of customers who have been supplied with day-old chicks by the hatcheries. This would not entail any more work on the part of hatcherymen, because they already keep lists of their customers.

Hon. members well know that when a customer desires day-old chicks, he contacts a hatchery and asks for, say, 1,000 day-old

pullets for delivery in possibly late July. Upon receipt of the order, the hatcheryman refers to his order book; and if he is unable to supply them at that particular date he may say, "I am booked out for the late July hatch, but I can supply the chicks on the 7th July."

All orders are already being entered in books kept by the hatcheries. If my suggestion is adopted it will only be a matter of giving the Egg Board the authority to obtain from the books kept by the hatcheries information as to the purchasers of day-old pullets. If that is done, the board will be able to obtain the required information, and to check on purchasers of day-old pullets who are not sending their eggs to the board.

As anyone in the egg industry knows, approximately 50 eggs a day are obtained from a flock of 100 fowls. There is not a family big enough to consume 50 eggs a day, and the owner of those fowls can be suspected of disposing of his eggs illegally if he does not send them to the board. It is hard to give an accurate figure of eggs sold illegally, but thousands of dozens are being sold each week in the blackmarket in the metropolitan area.

The third suggestion I am putting forward relates to the price of eggs. For the benefit of the House I propose to read an article which appeared in "The Bulletin" of the 15th October, 1958, entitled, "A Lesson in Eggs." It is difficult to decide whether the price of eggs should be maintained at a high level, or whether it should be lowered in order to persuade people to consume more. In my view it is an elementary problem, because if eggs become cheaper people will eat more of them. If the price is maintained at a high level then obviously a smaller number will be consumed. Take the case of a basic wage earner on £13 15s. a week, with three or four children: How can his family afford to eat eggs for breakfast or to use eggs in cooking?

Mr. Sleeman: They cannot do so.

Mr. WILD: We all know that in years gone by the old English breakfast of bacon and eggs was a traditional meal. Even in this country over the years the people eat, if not every day, then very often, a meal of steak and eggs, chop and eggs, or bacon and eggs. How can the basic wage earner with three or four children be expected to pay 5s. 4d. per dozen for eggs? That is impossible. If eggs were sold for 4s. 2d. per dozen then the housewife would be able to afford four dozen instead of the three dozen she now buys.

I wish to read this article. It is not very long, but it is most interesting for the industry in this State, because it is something that quite a few people have

advocated. Unfortunately, however, members of the board have not seen fit to implement it. This article is headed, "A Lesson In Eggs" and reads as follows:—

A most interesting lesson on the law of cost and consumption has just been demonstrated in Victoria, but has been played down by all concerned, since the ideal of many of those engaged in competing for the Australian market is the impossible target of high prices and high turnover.

On September 1—
that is September of this year—

—the price of first-quality eggs was dropped to 4s. 2d. a dozen,—

Mr. Brady: What are you quoting from?

Mr. WILD: "The Bulletin" of the 15th October, 1958. The article continues—

—representing a drop of 2s. 1d. in little more than a month. H. O. Murray, the chairman of the Egg Board, explained that the new policy had the backing of the entire industry, and was a genuine attempt to test consumers' assertions (housewives' organisation, presumably) that it would not be necessary to export eggs if the local price was dropped. It may have been a genuine attempt, but there is no doubt it was forced on the board as the only alternative to heavy export losses.

Apparently the chairman was not one of those who believed in the ultimate success of the lower local price. A few days after the announcement he was expressing grave doubts whether the drop in price would increase sales.

There were also protests against the grocers' margin of 8d. a dozen, which the grocers have grimly declined to cut; complaints about inter-State rackets in competition with genuine interstate trade; renewed pleas for Commonwealth control, and, before the results of the new price could be determined, requests by poultrymen for higher prices and a high subsidy.

I will now read the most interesting feature in this article—

Five weeks after the price-reduction the Egg Board disclosed that sales had risen by 30 per cent., permitting an immediate reduction in the producers'-pool payments from fourpence to threepence.

What has happened is that the heavy losses on overseas markets have been cut substantially; the way the board puts it is that "our policy has benefited consumers in giving them a price-concession which in previous years has been enjoyed by consumers overseas."

The truth is that the housewives were right, and the board has been determinedly wrong for years.

That was done in Victoria and it was a savage cut from 6s. 3d. per dozen to 4s. 2d. per dozen in one month. I can well imagine the consternation in this State if we did the same thing. However, they had the courage of their convictions, and we should try it here. We have this leading article in "The Bulletin" saying that the Egg Marketing Board in Victoria reported that in five weeks the consumer demand went up 30 per cent. I am certain that that would be the position.

The same thing applies if we go to buy fruit. If bananas are 2s 6d a dozen we might buy six; but if they were 1s. 9d. a dozen we would stretch the extra little bit and buy a dozen. The same thing must apply with eggs.

As I said earlier, we in this State are forced to export 40 per cent of our eggs overseas and sell them to somebody else to eat for 2s. 4½d. a dozen, whilst the people in this State are forced to pay 5s. 4d. for top-quality eggs which are of the same quality as those we are exporting.

Mr. Sleeman: That applies in regard to other things besides eggs.

Mr. WILD: I know; but if we brought the price of eggs within the reach of consumers they would, without doubt, buy more and we would not have to export such a large quantity in order to get rid of our surplus.

I pass on these three suggestions to the Minister, and would like him to give them his consideration; and I request that he talk to his advisers about them. My suggestions may not all be right, but I am sure some would be. I am certain that the last point I raised is one that would go a long way towards overcoming the difficult situation in which the producers in this State find themselves today.

As I said earlier, I realise it is necessary that this money should be made available if the Government says the Egg Marketing Board is to have a further life of 10 years which will be, I presume, in the interests of the industry—and we must see that it is. It is necessary that large improvements be made on the organisational side as far as office accommodation, candling accommodation, and freezing accommodation are concerned, so that we will not have the divided control that exists today.

My friends opposite reminded me that we should not have all our eggs in one basket, but this is one occasion when I consider we should. I support the Bill.

On motion by Mr. Owen, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1958-59.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 28th October on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. Sewell in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £9,675:

MR. W. A. MANNING (Narrogin) [5.36]: I would like to contribute to this debate, particularly in view of the fact that the State Government this year has to spend the sum of £59,812,000, an increase of £2,758,000 over last year's expenditure. When we speak in figures like that, I think we need to be very sure that the money is going to be spent wisely.

I will not have the opportunity of covering all the ground, so I will concentrate on one or two points. First of all, I feel that the expenditure of this money should be spread economically and wisely over the State in order to develop it.

A few weeks ago I asked the Premier the question, "Which Minister holds the responsibility for decentralisation of population and industry?" The Premier replied, "All Ministers." I contend that what is everybody's job is nobody's job. I believe that is quite true at the present time, because everybody seems to leave it to the other person. That is quite evident from what is taking place.

Previously in this House I have mentioned the desirability of setting up a ministry for decentralisation. For the information of hon. members I would like to give a few points in regard to the planning of industry and decentralisation of industry in Victoria. During the war years a committee was established to deal with decentralisation of industry as war-time policy to get industry away from areas where difficulty might have been experienced in the event of air raids. That is how it arose.

I know something of the functioning of this regional authority because I saw members of it some years ago in Victoria and discussed matters with them concerning regional council work; and here I have an article giving some of the details of their activities. It reads—

In more recent years the functions of these earlier Committees have been carried on as part of the broader activities of the Regional Planning and Decentralisation Division of the Victorian Premier's Department

Development of secondary industry in Victoria has been revolutionary in the postwar years . . . Vast expansion has taken place in practically every field, with local, British, American and European interests participating in the many ventures in both city and country areas.

In Victoria a Minister for State Developments and Decentralisation has been appointed; and the officers in his department, thoroughly versed in the resources of the State and the requirements of industry, are available to advise the industrialists, and are supported by a qualified statistical research group which also forms part of the division. The article continues—

Close liaison is maintained with both Commonwealth and State semi-governmental and local instrumentalities, as well as with the different banks, ensuring the expeditious handling of inquiries concerning town planning provisions, availability of sites, provision of services and the multitude of other matters with which industry is concerned in exploring the possibilities of a particular site

The basis of the work of the Division is the permanent movement of industry and people to the country towns and it realises that to achieve that end it is useless and a waste of public money and effort encouraging decentralisation of a type that cannot succeed.

Its objective is consequently to encourage industries of the type whose success will be assured and which, when their initial problems of establishment are overcome, will become self-sufficient.

It is in this "teething stage" that the Division is able to help the new industry still further, and where necessary, assistance can be given through a Decentralisation Fund in meeting such costs as the transport of plant and machinery from Melbourne and of moving its raw materials and finished products to and from its country site.

In addition, self-help is encouraged. To quote the article further—

As further encouragement to the development of industry in country towns, and at the same time to promote greater spontaneous local effort, the Government of Victoria this year launched a "self-help" scheme in finance through the Decentralization Division. Under this scheme the Government is prepared to provide capital equal to that subscribed by local people to finance a new industry. It must be satisfied, of course, that the industry will be capable of operating economically in the area selected and, further, the financial assistance is contingent on the industry itself providing at least fifty per cent. of the total capital required. This scheme has been acknowledged as being of substantial assistance to industries which have the necessary know-how but limited capital resources.

So it can be seen that in Victoria there is a definite scheme, with someone definitely responsible, and an organisation

of specialists who know just what they are about. They are therefore able to advise and help people.

Considering our own State, how many industries are established in the country areas? If we look round we find that practically every industry, with the exception of a few smaller ones, is established in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Hawke: That applies also to Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I know it applies to quite a number of places; but that does not make it desirable, and in many places the authorities are seeking to overcome that position. In the other States, this has been achieved to a far greater extent than in Western Australia. I think a very good plan could be evolved, based on the Victorian principles, under which we could ascertain the possibilities of distributing industries throughout the State, and there is no reason why we should not concentrate, in the first instance, on industries that would process the primary products of the particular area concerned. There is plenty of scope for that sort of thing to be done, because there are industries in this State that need assistance.

Some manufacturing firms establish country branches, but find that owing to the difficulties, particularly of freights and transport, their activities are hindered and they have to close down. When considering the establishment of new industries, I think we should not overlook those which are already established, and from which we might be able to derive revenue; and one of these that comes to my mind is the timber industry.

We wonder why this industry is slack. I was told a few months ago in Adelaide by a person constructing his own home that he was unable to buy jarrah flooring. I know the Minister has told me that he feels that the timber would be available, but that it was probably the price that was the difficulty. However, this person told me that he was unable to get the jarrah flooring, at a time when the industry in this State was looking for business. Whether it was a matter of scarcity or high price, is of no consequence.

An article appeared in the "The West Australian" on the 2nd September, 1958, part of which I will quote—

West Australian timber cost more to freight to Port Adelaide than it costs to ship timber there from the U.S.A.

It cost about 43s. 6d. per 100 super feet to ship West Australian hardwoods to Port Adelaide, but it cost only 18s. 11d. per 100 super feet to ship oregon from Seattle to South Australia.

It can be seen from this that the possibility of trade in this commodity is ruled out because we do not look after it.

There is no responsible authority to ensure that something is done to improve the situation. There is an attitude that these jobs are everybody's, but no-one is attending to them.

Recently I asked the Minister for Lands a question concerning the Closer Settlement Act of 1927, as to whether there was any reason why it had not been invoked, and he replied—

Yes. The Governments from time to time over the past 31 years have not considered it necessary and/or desirable to invoke the provisions of the Act.

Of course, that is evidently the case, because it has never been invoked; but it indicates that in addition to the past Governments, the present Government does not see any reason why the Act should be invoked, which seems very strange to me. The second question I asked was—

Does he consider that it is desirable to inquire into the suitability and requirement for closer settlement of any unutilised land which is defined in Clause 3 of the Act, as "Land shall be deemed unutilised within the meaning of this Act, if the land, having regard to its economic value, is not put to reasonable use and its retention by the owner is a hindrance to closer settlement and cannot be justified"?

To which the Minister replied, "Yes." He considered there was no reason why the Closer Settlement Act should be invoked; and when I asked him concerning the desirability of the provision on which the Act hinges, he said that it was desirable.

It is hard to reconcile those two answers, and I feel that something must be done to bring into production the land which is not being used. From the statistical figures of the State, we find that the total area of the holdings in the central agricultural division of the State is 12,991,622 acres. Of that area 2,078,053 acres are undeveloped, while the area uncleared and used for grazing, which means little use is made of it, is 1,685,060 acres. Therefore, out of nearly 13,000,000 acres, almost 4,000,000 acres is hardly used at all; and portion of the balance is only partly used. Something has to be done to bring that land into economic production.

I feel that to achieve this end some encouragement should be given, either through a civilian land settlement scheme or by the provision of funds for the civilian settler, so that the small man might be able to take up some of this land which the present owners cannot handle. It takes money to develop land, and the present owners of much of it are not able to carry out the necessary developmental work. Perhaps the problem could be solved by a scheme such as that which

operated under the old Agricultural Bank, and which enabled settlers to receive payment for work done on their properties.

The opening up of this undeveloped land has relation to the development of railways and their profitable running, as well as to the construction of roads, the provision of schools, school bus services, telephones and so on. Those services cannot be provided until the land is settled. There was a statement by Mr. Malsey published in "The Farmers' Weekly" of the 31st of July, where we read—

I feel that it may be well worth while to give some consideration in this regard to opening up land adjacent to railway lines that have been closed. If this were done it would likely ensure maintained production and activity on those lines which would result in making the lines payable propositions. Members felt that if it was not applied to lines which had been closed this type of scheme should be located along existing lines.

There is plenty of scope for schemes of that nature, but there are other important means of providing decentralisation. We hear that a hostel is to be built for native mothers and crippled native children; and I asked the Minister for Native Welfare whether it was advisable to segregate natives in that way. In reply he said, "Yes; at present there are certain cases for which no alternative exists." This means that natives can go into ordinary hospitals, but when it comes to the mothers with crippled children, they must be segregated. I asked what advantage there could be in bringing such natives to the city instead of catering for them in the country, and the Minister said the majority of people concerned required specialist treatment from time to time and that such attention was available only in Perth. He cannot have it both ways, and if the specialist treatment is available only in Perth, it is time it was made available in country areas.

Mr. Norton: Can you get the specialists to go to the country areas?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: If there were suitable hospitals in the country they would go there.

Mr. Roberts: Regional hospitals would be the answer.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: That is so. But why should we bring these people to Perth, when quite obviously the white people are treated in their district hospitals?

Mr. Marshall: The specialists will not leave St. George's Terrace.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: White people are treated in the district hospitals, but when native mothers with crippled children need attention they must be brought to the city.

Mr. Potter: Anyone requiring specialist treatment is brought to the city, irrespective of colour.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: It would be a strange set-up if all the people likely to require medical treatment—whether white or black—had to come to the metropolitan area—

Mr. Marshall: The Government is not responsible for this.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: It is, for having established the facilities only in the metropolitan area. It is an admission that we have not the medical facilities in the country, where they should be; and I can see that I am on the right track. In regard to decentralisation, I will deal with rail freights; and, as an instance, will cite the town of Williams, which is 182 miles from Perth by rail and 100 miles by road. Under the present system we are forcing the people of Williams to pay rail freight on 182 miles of railway, which involves not only extra cost but also delay—which is undesirable in the case of perishable goods—owing to the greater distance. By road they would have to travel only 100 miles.

Mr. May: Do you advocate doing away with that railway?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: No; I have a better suggestion than that. Where the distance of a town from the metropolitan area by rail exceeds the distance by road by more than, perhaps, 10 per cent., there should be an allowance on the rail freight so as to make it equal to the road freight. That would be a fair proposition in regard to the use of the railways as against the roads. Why should people be charged a rail freight that is almost double what the cost would be by direct line? It is not fair to the people of the district concerned.

I received a letter yesterday from the Boddington Parents & Citizens' Association, with regard to the selection of boys for the schools of agriculture. It states that the boys from that district are being selected and sent to Harvey, although they wish to go to Narrogin. At Harvey they are taught dairying, but the Boddington district is not a dairying district; and boys from that area desire to be taught sheep husbandry, which is taught at Narrogin. However, the Minister says that although these boys have applied to go to a school where they will learn sheep husbandry they must go to Harvey and learn dairying.

If a boy in the metropolitan area wishes to take up metal work, for instance, he is not told that he must take up cabinet making instead. The position is absurd. If a boy decides on a particular occupation and asks for training in it, we should not insist that he be trained in something else, with the alternative of receiving no training at all. This position needs attention.

Some weeks ago I asked a question regarding the number of teachers coming out of training colleges for their first appointments, as it is amazing to see the number that are sent to the country. The information given in reply to my question was that in 1956 there were 89 such teachers in the metropolitan area and 276 in the country. In 1957 there were 117 in the metropolitan area and 235 in the country. In 1958 there were 151 in the metropolitan area and 256 in the country; and I repeat that it is amazing to see the number of new teachers that are sent to small country schools. The proportion is often more than 50 per cent. of the whole staff.

A teacher's first appointment should be to a school where he or she can mix with a number of experienced teachers, instead of having a majority of the teachers in each school inexperienced. It is not good for a school, or the scholars, to have the majority of the teaching staff straight out of the training college. To my mind there should be a better balance than that, because the number of scholars in the metropolitan area is 62,600 and in the country 47,800. Those figures indicate that there could be an almost equal division of experienced and inexperienced teachers.

I am not saying that teachers straight from the training college are not good teachers; probably some of them are much better than older teachers, who have been teaching for some years. But the principle is wrong, and some action should be taken to provide a better balance.

Another matter I should like to mention on the question of decentralisation has reference to the comprehensive water scheme. This scheme is nearing completion. Although it may be a year or two before it is finished I understand that tentative plans have been made for an extension of the existing scheme. In my opinion something should be done now about those plans so that they can be submitted to the Commonwealth Government which will subsidise the scheme on a £ for £ basis. The sooner we do something about finalising the plans, the sooner we will know where the extensions are to be made, and thus we will be able to plan for the future. The way things are at the moment, we seem to be sitting back and waiting until the completion of the present comprehensive scheme. I hope the Government will do something about completing the plans for the extension of the comprehensive scheme.

I would like to draw hon. members' attention to one other matter, and this concerns probate duties in the various States of the Commonwealth. Over the last couple of years I have had occasion to be interested in this matter, because I have been executor of an estate which included a number of shares. I think it is high time the Premiers of the States got together and co-ordinated their ideas in regard to probate duty because at present the position is

nothing short of absurd. Where probate is granted in one State, that should be acceptable in the other States. But where an estate includes a certain number of shares, probate has to be taken out in each State in which the shares are registered. There is not only the delay factor, but the cost factor, too, is important. I am sure hon. members do not realise how difficult the position is unless they have experienced it.

The matter is an urgent one, and something should be done to rectify the position. At present, in the case of shares, all the States concerned want their little bit. If shares are held in a company which is doing business in this State, and it is registered in Victoria, succession duty has to be paid in Western Australia and in Victoria as well, plus Federal probate. If there is a branch of the company in Queensland, and the company has assets in that State, probate has to be paid to the Queensland Government. The Government of New South Wales has its own ideas about probate, and they are perfectly ridiculous. All the State Governments concerned take their pound of flesh.

Mr. May: They have to live, you know.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: What happened in the case with which I was connected would amaze hon. members. Shares to the value of £24 were held in a company registered in New South Wales, and the authorities there wanted some indemnity concerning my honesty.

Mr. Crommelin: I bet that was hard to get!

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Yes. They wanted an indemnity policy from a reputable insurance or trustee company—all for £24-worth of shares. I submitted a guarantee by a sharebroker, thinking that that would be accepted. But no! I had to take out an indemnity policy with an insurance company to cover the sum of £24 to satisfy the Government of New South Wales.

Mr. I. W. Manning: It is time that Government was kicked out.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Yes. This is a matter of importance not only to the citizens of this State but also to the citizens of other States. The question of probate should be placed on a satisfactory basis. I trust that a note will be taken of some of the matters I have mentioned this afternoon.

Progress reported.

ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 4).

First Reading.

Received from the Council and, on motion by Mr. W. A. Manning, read a first time.

House adjourned at 6.8 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, the 4th November, 1958.

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

OBITUARY.

The Late Hon. Gilbert Fraser, M.L.C.

THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (Minister for Railways—North): It is with deep regret and personal sorrow that I move, without notice—

That this House desires to place on record its sincere appreciation of the services rendered to the State by the late Hon. Gilbert Fraser, who was at the time of his passing a member for the West Province, Chief Secretary, Minister for Local Government and Town Planning; and Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, and express its deep sympathy with his widow and the members of his family in the irreparable loss they have sustained by his decease; and that the President be asked to convey the foregoing to his widow and family.

The late Hon. Gilbert Fraser was our leader in this House—the Leader of the Government in this Legislative Council. He had a very long and distinguished parliamentary career in this Chamber; and in order to place the matter in our parliamentary records I should like briefly to outline Mr. Fraser's history.

Gilbert Fraser was born at Bunbury, Western Australia, on the 22nd July, 1894, and he went, as a minor with his parents, to Bendigo, Victoria; he was educated at the Marist Brothers College in Bendigo. At the age of 15, in the year 1909, he joined the Postmaster General's Department as a messenger boy; and some 11 months later transferred, with his parents, back to Western Australia, where he worked in the same department in the post office at Fremantle.

In 1928 he was elected as a member for the West Province in the Legislative Council; and he was a member of this Chamber until the early hours of Saturday last. Gilbert Fraser was held in very high esteem by all of his parliamentary colleagues, and also his parliamentary acquaintances. I do not think there is one person who knew him who thought unkindly of him. He had a fine and jovial personality; his earnestness and sincerity made him numerous friends.