

vision of certain facilities in existing hospitals. I think Dr. Hislop takes an exaggerated view. I hope the amendment will not be agreed to.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: How can the board provide facilities in hospitals over which it has no control?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I would not say it could force anyone into a hospital that was full up. I think the word "providing" means paying for certain facilities in existing hospitals.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Will the Minister deny that some few years ago the State Insurance Office considered buying a block of land in the city on which to build its own hospital?

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: But it did not do so.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It did not have the power, but it will under this provision. I have no desire to see the whole of the subparagraph struck out, but I would like the word "facilities" defined or limited. As the subparagraph stands, I am bound to oppose it. It would be reasonable to hold this over until we can find out what is meant by the word "facilities."

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.52 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 9th November, 1948.

CONTENTS.

	Page.
Privilege, as to member for Canning and further Court subpoena	2210
Questions: Bunbury Harbour, as to commencement of improvements	2211
Powdered milk, as to shortage of supplies	2211
Bills: Land Act Amendment, 1r.	2211
The Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia and Disposal of Public Documents, 1r.	2212
Electricity Act Amendment, 1r.	2212
Friendly Societies Act Amendment, 3r., passed	2212
Nurses Registration Act Amendment, 2r.	2212
Wheat Pool Act Amendment, 2r., point of order, Com.	2216
Annual Estimates: Com. of Supply, general debate	2236

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

PRIVILEGE.

As to Member for Canning and Further Court Subpoena.

MR. YATES (Canning) [4.32]: I rise on a matter of privilege. Some weeks ago I received a subpoena to attend the local court and produce a document that I had discussed in this House. The House directed me not to produce the document in court. I attended the court proceedings and subsequently received a subpoena to attend the Perth Police Court on Tuesday, the 16th November to produce the document in question. I desire to know whether or not the House will grant leave to me for that purpose.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Are you asking for leave?

Mr. YATES: I am asking for leave.

MR. WILD (Swan) [4.35]: In view of what has been said by the member for Canning, I move—

That this House declines to grant leave of absence to the member for Canning (Mr. Yates) to attend the Perth Police Court on Tuesday, the 16th November, on the ground of Parliamentary privilege.

Mr. GRAHAM (East Perth): I second the motion.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

QUESTIONS.

BUNBURY HARBOUR.

As to Commencement of Improvements.

Mr. MURRAY asked the Minister for Works:

As the replies to questions relating to a bridge across the Estuary at Bunbury and the reconstruction of the railway indicated that there is a "lag" in this work, will he now inform the House—

(1) Whether he still expects to commence work on the cut above Turkey Point during this financial year?

(2) Whether the commencement of this work is dependent on the completion of the protective groyne?

(3) If the answer to No. (2) is "Yes," when he expects this groyne to be—

(a) commenced;

(b) completed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) A commencement on the construction of the groyne protecting the cut is entirely dependent on the supply of men and materials. The date of commencement cannot therefore be given. Supply of rails is the main difficulty.

(2) Yes.

(3) (a) The groyne will be commenced when rails and sleepers have been received for the construction of the railway connection to the site. Approximately 6,000 feet of track materials are required, and a supply is being sought.

(b) Six months after the railway connection has been completed.

POWDERED MILK.

As to Shortage of Supplies.

Mr. LESLIE asked the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping:

(1) Is she aware that powdered milk is in extremely short supply and that it is impossible to purchase any in the retail shops?

(2) Is she aware that this commodity is used very largely in country districts where supplies of fresh milk are not available?

(3) Is she aware that this commodity is also used for feeding infants?

(4) Can she say why there is a shortage of this commodity?

(5) Has any action been taken to remedy this shortage?

(6) If not, why not?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) Not impossible, but scarce.

(2) Yes.

(3) Yes.

(4) Due to the extreme cold in New South Wales and Victoria, pasture growth was seriously retarded and the same intense cold weather seriously affected the July-August production from the cows to the extent that factories producing full cream powdered milk suffered a loss of several hundred thousand gallons of milk monthly.

Climatic conditions in early Spring improved, and by the beginning of October, although restricted shipments arrived, heavier shipments were due, but owing to shipping space being unavailable sufficient quantities did not arrive.

Considerable tonnage was taken up with bundles of case shooks which are vitally necessary to keep the condensed milk factory at Waroona working to its full capacity and these shooks are taken out of the total tonnage allotted. It is impossible to obtain full supplies of case timber from mills in this State.

I have received a wire from Melbourne stating that 2,100 cases of milk powder and 740 cases of infant food were shipped on the "Koorunga," due on the 11th instant. There are further considerable quantities awaiting shipment and sufficient space will be allotted on incoming vessels to meet our requirements.

(5) Answered by (4).

(6) Answered by (4).

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Land Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

2, The Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery of Western Australia and Disposal of Public Documents.

Introduced by the Minister for Education.

3, Electricity Act Amendment.

Introduced by Mr. Graham.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th November.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [4.40]: This Bill proposes, among other things, to provide for what will be known as "mothercraft" nurses, with a training period of 15 months. I have no objection to that, except that 17 years seems too early an age for the commencement of training. I think 18 years, the commencing age for trainee nurses for general nursing, is quite early enough. Another provision to which I take exception is the proposal which this House has already decided, in the past, should not be a condition of the nursing service in this State. I refer to the decision of this House that girls of under 21 years of age should not be engaged in training or nursing in any hospital specialising in the treatment of T.B. The Minister himself was one of the keenest advocates, in 1946, that girls should not engage in that type of nursing until they had reached 21 years of age. At that time it was unanimously conceded that females of more mature age were less susceptible to T.B. infection.

In 1946 it was decided to lay down a training period for what were to be known as special T.B. nurses. There was a strict proviso that no girl of less than 21 years of age was to be permitted to commence training or to serve in a T.B. hospital. As a matter of fact the Minister who now proposes that girls should be allowed to commence nursing in T.B. hospitals at 18 years of age was the mover of the amendment, in 1946, to provide that no girl of less than 21 years of age should be engaged in a hospital specialising in the treat-

ment of T.B. I realise that anyone is entitled to change his opinion, but does the Minister seriously expect that other members who expressed their views on the subject in 1946 have suffered a volte face such as he apparently has in this matter?

I do not know whether he has had the advice of his officers to bring him to the opinion that there is no greater danger of young girls contracting T.B. than there is of their contracting other types of infection treated in hospitals, but it would surprise me if the Minister had indeed received that advice from his officers, because the information supplied to this House in 1946 indicated that the chief medical officer in charge of T.B. treatment in this State was definitely in favour of excluding girls of less than 21 years of age from service in T.B. hospitals. It was stated by two or three members that that was the case. On referring to "Hansard" of 1946 I find that all those who spoke on this subject were unanimously of the opinion that girls under 21 years of age should not even commence training in hospitals specialising in the treatment of T.B. At that time the member for Beverley, who has a greater knowledge of this subject than have most members—both he and the Minister at that time had one or more daughters training for general nursing—said—

The tragic part of it is that in the past we have put young girls into places like Wooroloo, which is full of infection. Then they go to Collic and other places, finishing up at Kalgoorlie.

By "finishing up" he meant they finished their period of training. The member for Beverley went on to say—

The result has been that a number of them have gone back to Wooroloo as patients. I understand that there are seven suffering from the disease.

When it was mentioned during the debate that at that time there were only 25 female nurses at Wooroloo, that gave some indication of the incidence of T.B. among the staff. The hon. member also said—

We do not want them to start nursing until they are 21 years of age. The member for West Perth, as he then was, said—

These nurses will have to spend the greater part of their lives in a type of nursing from which they would be subject to greater danger

because of the particular disease than are nurses occupied in general nursing or the treatment of other diseases.

The member for Subiaco, by way of interjection, when the then Minister for Health was speaking with regard to the special period of training for mental and maternity nurses, said—

There is no fear of contagion in mental homes.

The inference, of course, was that there was fear of infection in T.B. hospitals. The Minister for Lands in 1946 said—

Medical men agree that a younger girl, particularly if she has had no experience of taking care of herself in such a hospital, has a greater tendency to contract the complaint than a person who is a little older.

When we take into consideration that the member for Leederville was the Minister for Health at that time, greater weight is given to his observations on the matter. The member for Gascoyne, who was then Premier, interjected at one stage, and said—

And to assure that more mature nurses become T.B. nurses.

The fact that he was referring to mature nurses indicated to me that he, too, was of opinion that girls of the age of 18 years should not be put into places such as Wooroloo to commence their training, as they have been over quite a number of years. The late Hon. W. D. Johnson said—

The Bill is satisfactory from that standpoint but there is the necessity to ensure that no-one will be allowed to come in contact with the nursing of T.B. patients until she is 21 years of age.

That is what the Minister says he wants. Dr. Henzell is the chief T.B. medical officer in the State, and a man who is recognised Australia-wide as a great authority on the treatment of the disease. The member for Beverley said that he had interjected some weeks prior to this debate in 1946, that there was no greater danger of becoming infected at Wooroloo than there was at any other type of hospital in the State; but he changed his opinion after talking to Dr. Henzell on the matter. Evidently Dr. Henzell's opinion at that time was definitely in favour of excluding girls under 18 years of age from training as T.B. nurses, and I would be very surprised if the Minister has changed the opinion as expressed by him at that time because of any views that he may have

obtained from Dr. Henzell. Men such as Dr. Henzell are professional men and there is no question of expediency about them; a change from one side of the House to the other, or even a change of Ministerial offices, affecting their opinion as to providing for nursing the sick. At that time, the member for Beverley, by interjection said—

And Dr. Henzell says so, too.

Dr. Henzell would have the same opinion now as he had then, and that opinion is definitely in accord with that of members who have discussed the matter with him. He approved of excluding girls of 21 years of age from going into hospitals that specialised in T.B.

The Attorney General: No report by Dr. Henzell was read.

Mr. STYANTS: No, not to my knowledge. It did not appear in "Hansard." The late Hon. W. D. Johnson went on to say—

I subscribe definitely to the principle that no girl shall come into contact with patient suffering from T.B. unless she is at least 21 years of age.

The member for North Perth at that time who is now the Minister in charge of this measure said—

I move an amendment, "That the following proviso be added:—Provided that no trainee shall be accepted for training in a hospital specialising in T.B. until she shall have attained the age of 21 years." "

That was the definite opinion of the member for North Perth in 1946. It might be interesting if he would let us know on what authority he has changed his opinion to such an extent that he would introduce a measure of this kind to impose a condition as to the age of a nurse to which he was so opposed in 1946; only a matter of two years ago. I realise the responsibility of the Minister and also that he is now on the opposite side of the House. I further realise that there is great difficulty in obtaining nurses not only for Wooroloo but also for the nursing of patients in other type of hospitals throughout the State. But, having held such strong views in 1946 as to have moved an amendment for a proviso that a girl should not be engaged for T.B. training until reaching the age of 21 years, he must have had some very convincing opinion to cause him to make such a volte

face. The Bill passed through this House with that proviso, although there seemed to have been some difference of opinion as to the meaning of the clause. However, it left here to go to another place with the proviso—That no persons, either male or female, shall be engaged in training for T.B. nursing until they have attained the age of 21 years. When the Bill went to another place, Hon. E. H. Gray, who was then Honorary Minister in the Council and in charge of the Bill, said, when introducing it—

No trainee shall be accepted for training at the Wooroloo Sanatorium or at any other hospital that may be opened to deal specially with T.B. unless she has turned 21 years of age. The age provision is strongly recommended by the Commissioner of Public Health and by Dr. Henzell, who is in charge at Wooroloo. They consider that persons under that age are not sufficiently mature to work in a hospital where, unless the employee takes advantage of all available precautions, there is a certain amount of risk of contracting the disease.

That is a statement by a Minister of the Crown. The then Commissioner of Public Health—I am not sure whether it was the same officer as now holds that position—

Hon. A. H. Panton: What year was it?

Mr. STYANTS: In 1946.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Yes, it was the same.

Mr. STYANTS: The Commissioner of Public Health, and Dr. Henzell were definitely in favour of the previous Bill which excluded girls from commencing training for T.B. work until they had reached the age of 21 years. The Minister went on to say—

They considered that persons under that age are not sufficiently mature to work in a hospital where, unless the employee takes advantage of all available precautions there is a certain amount of risk of contracting the disease.

Unfortunately, statistics will show that there is a certain amount of risk to those who are nursing T.B. patients. Hon. E. H. Gray went on to say—

The Bill has the hearty support of the Nurses' Registration Board which controls the training, examination and registration of nurses in Western Australia. This board has nine members, comprising the Commissioner of Public Health as chairman; the Inspector General for the Insane; two medical practitioners, one of whom must be an obstetrician, nominated by the British Medical Association;

two senior registered nurses, each of whom must be on the staff of a nursing training school and one of whom shall be trained and experienced in midwifery and infant welfare nursing; and three nurses, one representative of and nominated by general trained nurses, one by mental nurses, and one by midwifery nurses.

When members gave their approval to that Bill it showed a fair cross section of the opinion of the medical and nursing profession in this State. I do not know what their opinion today would be in regard to this proposal. If we consider the 1946 opinion of the members of those professions then we should prohibit the employment of girls under 21 years of age in hospitals specialising in T.B. That considered opinion would be the same today because medical science has not progressed to such an extent as to warrant this change. Hon. E. H. Gray went on to say that the percentage of those contracting the disease in Wooroloo Sanatorium was 1.3 per cent. per annum. He also said that the Commissioner of Public Health and Dr. Henzell considered that in addition to its ensuring an adequate supply of nurses trained in tuberculosis, it would greatly reduce the percentage incidence of the disease.

Yet the Minister has brought forward a proposal which is a direct contradiction of his expressed opinion in 1946 and is asking members of this House to somersault in their opinions as he himself has evidently done. I have no intention of doing that. I believe that what we did in 1946 was right, and that what the Minister proposes to do for expediency's sake is definitely wrong. We have a medical authority in another place and, while he was not particularly favourable to the creation of what he termed a dead-end occupation in that those nurses for the remainder of their lives, if they continued nursing, would be taking care of only T.B. cases, he made certain recommendations. As to the proviso to prohibit girls entering for training under 21, he recommended that there should be created a senior training school. I take it that would be a senior training school not only for T.B. nurses but also for all trainees for general nursing who were in their third year. It had been the practice to send girls to Wooroloo immediately they became trainees in their first year, and in many cases they would be there for 14 months

nursing T.B. cases before they got any general training. Dr. Hislop said—

We could then send nurses in their last year for short periods of time to Wooroloo to man the staff there.

Another advantage would be that nurses would not be sent to Wooroloo until they had built up an immunity to T.B. I emphasise the reference to "nurses in their last year." Thus Dr. Hislop considered that in their last year they could be sent for short periods to Wooroloo and that by that time they would have built up an immunity to the disease. Dr. Hislop then went on to deal with the means of discovering those who were more or less immune and the x-ray examination that should take place.

Apart from that, however, it was the opinion of members of this House that a girl, after she had received three years' training in medical nursing, would have a greater awareness of the danger of contracting the disease than would one who was a mere novice of 18 and lacking in any medical or nursing experience whatever. She would have a greater knowledge of the precautions to be taken and the measures essential for her own protection. Most of us have visited Wooroloo and appreciate the awful tragedy for those people who contract the disease. I do not propose to be one to vote for sending girls of 18 to Wooroloo when the greatest authority we have on these matters stated in 1946 that it is not desirable that nurses should be sent there unless they were 21 years of age. Hon. A. Thomson, speaking in another place, said—

Apparently it has been proved by experience that no girl should become a trainee in a hospital specialising in T.B. cases until she is 21 years of age.

Evidently he had given the matter some consideration. Of all the members who spoke in this House and in another place, not one disagreed with the age restriction in the Bill and the measure was passed in another place without amendment.

Without wishing to be offensive or acrimonious, I believe that the Minister has not really altered his opinion but that he has put up this proposal as a matter of expediency. His department is hard pressed to find nurses, and he knows that he would have a much wider scope if he could take girls from the age of 18 onwards than he

has when the age is restricted to those who have turned 21.

The Minister for Health: I am acting entirely on professional advice.

Mr. STYANTS: Then it would be interesting to know where the Minister got the professional advice in view of the assurance given by the member for Beverley that he had had a conversation with Dr. Henzel and that he approved of the 1946 measure. There is also the statement of the then Honorary Minister in another place who introduced the Bill there. I do not think the Minister for Health can expect us to adopt such diametrically opposite views. The provision in the Bill of 1946 was accepted by members as being desirable, and the fact of these women creating an immunity for themselves should be the guiding factor in making our decision today.

I hope that members, instead of agreeing to the proposal to delete the word "twenty-one" and insert "eighteen" will take a humane view and will not be influenced by expediency. It would come as a complete surprise to me if members supported that provision, especially in view of the opinion of experts and the decision of members on the self-same question in 1946. To the other portion of the Bill I offer no objection. As regards the proposal to appoint mothercraft nurses, there is an acute shortage of maternity nurses just as there is a shortage of general and mental nurses. There seems to be a general shortage all round, and until such time as those who entered after the war complete their training periods, there will be a shortage.

I ask members to retain the safeguard for young girls. I am afraid that many of them would volunteer for this class of work without having any knowledge of what it entails or any idea of the danger to which they would be exposing themselves. Only after they had contracted the dread disease would they realise what a tragic mistake they had made in accepting such positions and the tragic mistake, as the member for Beverley characterised it, made by the Minister in proposing this alteration after having himself moved the amendment in 1946 to prohibit the employment of male or female nurses under the age of 21 in hospitals specialising in T.B.

The member for Kanowna, who was Minister for Health at the time, assured the House that he had issued instructions that no person should be employed in nursing T.B. patients at Wooroloo unless he or she had reached the age of 21. In Committee I shall not repeat my contentions, but will ask members to refuse to accept the proposal to make the age 18 instead of 21 years.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—North Perth—in reply) [5.10]: There does not seem to have been any objection to the creation of a class of nurse to be known as mothercraft nurse and I therefore do not intend to discuss that phase at all, but considerable objection has been voiced by the member for Leederville and the member for Kalgoorlie to the alteration of the age at which nurses may be engaged in hospitals where T.B. cases mostly are treated. Members are correct in stating that in 1946 I opposed the employment of nurses in such hospitals unless they were 21 years of age. I did that as a private member and on the best advice available to me at the time, and it must be admitted that the then Minister for Health could give no facts that warranted action otherwise. Since then a lot of organisation has taken place throughout Australia in the nursing of tuberculosis patients and, as members are aware, this matter is now being sponsored financially by the Commonwealth, which is also to assist materially in an investigation of and research into the disease.

Western Australia is fortunate in having an expert in that disease who is recognised for his ability throughout Australia—I refer to the Director of Tuberculosis, Dr. Henzel—and also a man of the ability of the Commissioner of Public Health. I shall not at the moment enter into the argument raised, as, in view of what members have said, I propose to obtain more detailed information than I now have. In a report which was submitted to me not long ago, the Director of Tuberculosis and the Commissioner of Public Health stated they were satisfied that, provided the protective measures which were being carried out in the hospitals were applied, the risk of a girl nursing at Wooroloo contracting tuberculosis was no greater while she was under the age of 21 than it was on her attaining that age. On the other hand, girls training in general

hospitals actually nursed cases of tuberculosis in the wards without any safeguards, so that, in effect, the object of Parliament in introducing this amendment—the amendment referred to by the member for Kalgoorlie—could only be attained by limiting the recruitment of general nurses for any hospitals to girls who had attained the age of 21 years.

I agree with the member for Kalgoorlie that I did give consideration to the matter before agreeing to introduce this amending Bill. I only introduced it after I was convinced, on the advice that I had had, that the risk was no greater to a girl at the Wooroloo hospital than it was in general hospitals, such as the Royal Perth Hospital. It is generally conceded that nurses are carrying on a vocation which people consider to be a very noble one, and that they take risks which the ordinary individual does not. They take risks not only of contracting tuberculosis, but also other infectious diseases equally dangerous and objectionable.

Mr. Styants: But not so lasting as tuberculosis, which is a lifelong disease.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Not necessarily. They do recover from it.

Mr. Styants: Mostly they do not.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Most girls recover from tuberculosis if they are careful.

Mr. Styants: No.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes, if the infection is discovered at an early stage and they are given proper attention and rest. However, I do not propose to go fully into that question now. I shall not take the Bill into Committee today but, when we are in Committee, I shall quote the authorities who convinced me that this change was warranted.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—WHEAT POOL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 3rd November.

MR. PERKINS (York) [5.15]: The member for Irwin-Moore has certain detailed information with respect to the Bill and I shall leave it to him to give that informa-

tion to the House. During the week-end, I had some discussion with one of the trustees of the pool, Mr. Russell of Bilbarin, in regard to the Bill. I have not the slightest doubt that the measure is fully warranted. I can understand the member for North-East Fremantle taking umbrage at the lack of information supplied by the Minister when introducing the Bill. Unfortunately, it was not given and therefore the member for North-East Fremantle is quite entitled to ask for it. It can be given, however, and I think it should allay his fears. I understand from Mr. Russell that the purpose of the trustees in asking for the Bill to be introduced and passed is to enable them to safeguard the fund.

Certain investments have been made by the trustees, who are empowered by the parent Act to invest in wheat-handling agencies and undertakings of that nature, or pertaining to their particular line of business. But such investments are somewhat limited. The trustees have invested in land, on which it is intended at a later date, I understand, to build offices, presumably for their own use. The trustees have also invested portion of the fund in Government bonds. Investments available to trustees at the present time produce a comparatively low rate of interest and I understand that it is a common practice for trustees, charged with the responsibility of investing funds of a somewhat similar nature, to purchase approved shares. The purpose of this measure, I believe, is to enable the trustees of the Wheat Pool to invest in shares.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: With what ultimate end in view?

Mr. PERKINS: Increasing the fund.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: For whose benefit?

Mr. PERKINS: For the benefit of the wheatgrowing industry. The trustees' purpose in investing in shares is to augment the income and so build up a larger fund. The inability of the trustees to invest in shares in the past has no doubt resulted in the fund being of smaller dimensions at present than otherwise it would have been. Investment in perfectly sound shares will result in a higher return. Such shares are also readily convertible into cash should the money be required. It is an easy matter to sell that type of share on the stock ex-

change. Dealing now with the purpose of the fund, about which the member for North-East Fremantle seems to be somewhat concerned, I would say, speaking as a wheat-grower who has contributed to it, that I would be much better pleased if the fund were £300,000 than if it were £150,000, not that I expect ever to receive from it any cash benefit. It would be impossible to distribute the money in cash to individual growers, nor do I consider that to be necessary or desirable. Most of the wheatgrowers whose wheat contributed to the building up of the fund did not notice these contributions when allotted. The fund has served a very useful purpose.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Suppose the fund rose to £500,000, would you go on to make it up to £1,000,000?

Mr. PERKINS: That could not possibly do any harm.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What is the ultimate destination of it?

Mr. PERKINS: It could be used for many purposes, such as research into the agricultural industry. The fund is a most useful one, no matter how large it may be. It will help to solve some of the problems facing the wheatgrowing industry from time to time. Let us take our minds back to the establishment of co-operative bulk-handling in this State. Had it not been for this fund, we would not have the co-operative bulk-handling system that we have today. I can say that quite definitely. Had the fund been responsible for nothing else, that would have been a wonderful contribution both in the interests of the wheat-growers and the general economy of Western Australia. Members will recall the violent opposition that was raised to the establishment of bulk-handling in this State. The scheme was opposed by vested interests, both by those handling the wheat and those marketing it.

Mr. Fox: I did not oppose it.

Mr. PERKINS: I venture to say that it would be very difficult now to get the wheat lumpers to return to the old bullocking days of handling wheat.

Mr. Fox: My contention was that bulk-handling should not be introduced without making adequate provision for the workers displaced by it.

Mr. PERKINS: The same objection was taken to the introduction of bulk-handling as was taken to the adoption of other mechanical methods, but eventually the workers displaced found profitable avenues for their labour. The five sidings on the Wyalkatchem line which were originally equipped were so equipped by money made available from this fund. A big risk was taken at the time, as it was possible that that experiment might not have been a success and therefore the money might have been lost.

Even had the money been lost, that would not have been of great moment, as it would not have effected any individual person. The money was provided from a fund which was specifically established to enable such experiments to be carried out. No member of this House can say at this moment what other problems the wheatgrowing industry may come up against in the future. It is our duty, as representatives of the people, to help safeguard the fund for the future to enable the wheatgrowers to help themselves if the occasion arises. I can think of dozens of other difficulties with which the industry could be faced. An instance I can quote where the co-operative movement has been able to help itself is in regard to shipping freights.

Members may recall that a few years ago an argument developed about the freight rate charged by the international shipping interests for the carriage of wool oversea. The growers' interests were pressing strongly for a reduction of 10 per cent.—I think that was the figure—in the shipping rate. The oversea shipping interests raised tremendous opposition to the suggestion. As a result of action by the co-operative organisation of this State—largely through the ships which Westralian Farmers, Ltd., had on time charter, and which were chiefly used for the shipping of refrigerated cargo—and by the co-operation of the growers themselves, it was possible to ship a certain amount of wool each year to London at the reduced rate.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: I thought this dealt with wheat, not wool.

Mr. PERKINS: Because of that comparatively small amount of wool shipped at the reduced rate, the international shipping combine was forced to come into line and drop the wool freights by 10 per cent.

That shows what can be done if there is the nucleus of an organisation to act as the spearhead. I suggest that some time in the future a situation such as that could arise in regard to the wheat industry. It would be possible, by the terms under which the trustees hold the money, to use that money in any direction which would result in the interests of the wheatgrowers being served. It is difficult at this stage to be specific as to what the problems may be, but members should be able to visualise a situation where problems affecting the wheat industry could arise, and where a great deal of risk would be taken if private funds were used to make experiments, but where a fund such as this could be used so that great benefits would accrue to the industry. If an experiment might involve the loss of a large sum, it could only be undertaken with money that did not belong to anyone in particular.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Is there any trust deed in existence?

Mr. PERKINS: The matter is covered by the original enabling Act, and the various resolutions and controls existing under the method by which the trustees are appointed.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You do not know whether there is a trust deed in existence, or not.

Mr. PERKINS: I am afraid the member for North-East Fremantle does not properly appreciate the situation.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Never mind about appreciating the situation! I do not know whether there is a trust deed; do you?

Mr. PERKINS: The trustees, by the way they are appointed, are under the direct control of the growers in that the whole State is divided into 20 zones which elect the representatives of the growers' council.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: We have that in front of us in the circular we received today.

Mr. PERKINS: The growers' council, in turn, elects the four trustees, one of whom retires each year. That means to say that over a period of four years, the four of them retire. The position which the member for North-East Fremantle is getting at, is covered by reason of the fact that if the trustees take any action with which the growers disagree, the growers can, through their representatives, entirely replace the panel of trustees.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is not the point at all.

Mr. PERKINS: I think that is the greatest safeguard. The essential point I am trying to make is that the fund should be kept intact if we can possibly manage to do so. We should give the trustees the opportunity not only to maintain it at its present level, but, by judicious investment, to increase it so that it may be of even greater benefit in the future than it has been in the past. From my point of view, the larger we can make the fund the better, in that it will give the trustees added strength when taking any action along the lines I have indicated.

I have no doubt that the trustees are well justified in the request they have made for some slight extension of their powers. Personally, I have the greatest confidence in the present trustees and, because of the method by which they are appointed, I think it most unlikely that any individuals with wild-cat ideas would ever get themselves elected as trustees of the Co-operative Wheat Pool. That being so, this House has every reason to take notice of the request made by the trustees. I know the member for Irwin-Moore has other detailed information which he can give, so I do not think it is necessary for me to say anything further at this juncture.

MR. ACKLAND (Irwin-Moore) [5.38]: I support this amending Bill. While listening to the member for North-East Fremantle last week, I was amazed at some of the statements he made. Quite obviously he had been misinformed. I realise, with other members, that the hon. member prepares his speeches with the greatest care, and that he does try to get right behind most of the Bills that come before us. On this occasion, however, I can assure the House he has been badly informed indeed, and I recommend him to change his source of information from within the co-operative movement itself because, on other occasions during the life of this Parliament, he has given us information not altogether correct. I believe that in most of these cases—in fact all of them—he has spoken in the belief that his information was in accordance with fact.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You were a long way out in the matter of wheat stabilisation, too.

Mr. ACKLAND: The member for North-East Fremantle has asked the House to re-

ject the Bill, and he gave two main reasons for so doing. One was the scarcity of information supplied—I hope before sitting down that I will be able to give that information to members—and the other—

Mr. Marshall: Why did not the Minister give it?

Mr. ACKLAND:—was that he considered it to be quite wrong to grant these extended powers without first determining the ultimate destination of the fund. I have noticed that there has been some opposition to every co-operative movement or Act that has come before the House during this session. One would naturally expect one or two of the more conservative members of another place to have adopted such an attitude because, if co-operation does anything, it restricts the profits and the activities of those who are in business purely and simply for the purpose of making big profits. But we find that co-operative movements are attacked from both the front and the rear, and that the ultra-socialists—those who would socialise all industry including primary production—and those who are very nearly related to the Communist Party itself are possibly even more bitterly opposed to self-help methods through co-operation.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Who are they?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The school teachers, according to the member for Irwin-Moore.

Mr. Fox: You will antagonise the front benchers, if you are not careful.

Mr. ACKLAND: Before dealing with the two main objections of the hon. member who raised several bogies, I should like to inform the House as to the general set-up of the Co-operative Wheat Pool of Western Australia. First of all, it began soon after the end of World War I, and by the 1922-23 season it had become an established fact. Its aims were these—to market the major portion of the Western Australian crop; to reduce handling and marketing costs; to avoid competition between the merchants selling the wheat; to lengthen the marketing period; to avoid excessive quantities of Western Australian wheat being marketed overseas at any one time; to return to the growers—the owners of the wheat—the full average price for all wheat sold during the season, less only the costs of marketing and

handling. No provision was made for a profit basis in the handling of this commodity.

The pool method, as I have said, is conducted on a non-profit basis and the net proceeds are divided amongst the pool members. Other methods allow for profit to either an individual, firm or company. The pool is constituted with four trustees who are elected by the growers' council for a four-year period and one of the trustees retires each year. At the moment the trustees of the pool are Mr. J. S. Teasdale, C.B.E., who acts as chairman, Mr. C. W. Harper, the Hon. T. H. Bath, C.B.E. and Mr. W. J. Russell. They are the men who by inference the member for North-East Fremantle suggested had been indulging in some negotiation which made it necessary for this House to bring down legislation to bring their acts within the law.

These men handle all the pool matters, administer and act as trustees for the pool reserve fund and report fully to the growers' council on all work undertaken, and receive advice on all matters appertaining to their duties. They do not act independently but only after having received advice and instruction from the 20 growers who represent their various districts. The growers' council consists of 20 grower representatives from 20 separate districts into which the whole of the wheatbelt has been divided. Each district, as nearly as possible, contains an equal number of pool members and each district elects one councillor. These councillors elect the trustees of the pool, fix their remuneration and act as a sort of liaison between the pool members and the trustees. They supply information to the trustees as to the desires of members throughout the country generally. These 20 gentlemen are elected every two years and half of them stand for re-election every 12 months, and in this way the personnel is altered if necessary.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: When was the last election?

Mr. ACKLAND: Nominations for elections are called regularly every 12 months. I cannot tell the hon. member just when the last election was held but I can remember voting for a growers' representative within the last few years.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Are you not a member?

Mr. ACKLAND: Yes.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: When were you last re-elected?

Mr. ACKLAND: I misunderstood the hon. member. I am not a member of the growers' council and I have never been a member at any stage. I might mention that these members of the growers' council receive no salary whatever but are merely paid out-of-pocket expenses which enable them to attend to the pool business. They must be pool members for the season in which they are elected and for at least one other year. So the franchise is wide open for wheatgrowers in Western Australia and they all have an equal right and opportunity to be elected to that body.

The Minister for Lands: I understand that 10 councillors retire each year.

Mr. ACKLAND: Yes, 10 of them retire each year which ensures that the personnel could constantly change if it was the desire of the growers that they should do so. However, if we find that the growers are satisfied with the members of the council and that the council members are satisfied with the trustees, it is a sure indication that each of these bodies is giving general satisfaction to those whom they represent. The member for North-East Fremantle said that there had been no meeting during the war years.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I was in error in making that statement. I meant that there had been no election.

Mr. ACKLAND: There may have been no election but regular meetings are held twice in each year and very often three times per year. During the last 20 months there have been five meetings of the growers' council and, as its members are the people who give instructions to the trustees and are elected on the basis I have outlined, it stands to reason that the trustees must be giving effect to the wishes of the growers throughout the country. Every 12 months there is a general meeting and at that meeting a report is presented and every pool participant throughout the State receives a copy. I believe also that copies of the report have been made available to every member of this House so that each

one can study the position and see that there is no ulterior motive or object behind the introduction of this measure.

This voluntary wheat pool has been operating for the last 17 years and the trustees have calculated a total of £70,900 as being the result of the small fraction of one-eighth of a penny or less per bushel of wheat. In all, the trustees have marketed for the growers of Western Australia 187,407,249 bushels of wheat, and the capital trust fund, represents one-eleventh of a penny for every bushel of wheat handled. This fraction has been freely and gladly contributed by the growers to build up this large sum of money. It is remarkable that the growers who pooled their wheat in all the years between the two wars received an average return of 3s. 6.4d. per bushel and on the same basis the average price received by those who sold their wheat through independent wheat merchants was 3s. 3.05d. per bushel to the growers on a 4d. freight siding basis. So we see that those who pooled their wheat received 3.35d. per bushel, or $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., more than those who patronised the wheat merchants in Western Australia. That returned to the growers a sum of £2,615,893 more than they would have received had the pool not been in operation. The existence of this body has been of distinct advantage to Western Australia as a whole.

The member for York has already informed the House that this body found a great deal of money which made it possible for Co-Operative Bulk Handling Limited to build the first country bins, and they alone saved the growers of Western Australia £1,250,000 last year in bags. The pool has rendered a very great service and made available to Co-Operative Bulk Handling Limited a sum of £90,000 by way of capital expenditure to allow that organisation to operate. Under instructions from the growers' council, the trustees waived their security and permitted Co-Operative Bulk Handling Limited to borrow a sum of approximately £400,000 so that its installation could be rapidly expanded. They accepted a second mortgage to allow that to be done and I am glad to be able to inform the House that every penny of that money, plus interest, has been returned.

During the war years this body carried out several functions for the Australian

Wheat Board. It was the sole broker for the sale of wheat in Western Australia, one of the members of the paying agents, and it also acted as shipping agent for the Wheat Board as well. During the war years the out-turns at the various ports in Europe as well as in Great Britain were so unsatisfactory that all who handled wheat were losing so much money that the pool formed an out-turn company which acted in co-operation with two other similar bodies which are operating in the Eastern States. The operations were so successful in getting a very much larger out-turn percentage of wheat that it acted as an inducement and an incentive, and a compulsion for that matter, to those private companies handling wheat to bring about a better percentage of out-turns of wheat handled. They set such a high standard that no longer was the excuse that the wheat was lost in transit accepted and so the community at large, whether poolers or not, received benefit from the operations of that company. Funds have been made available from time to time for research work and the trust has helped provide funds for the Institute of Agriculture at the University of Western Australia.

Mr. Reynolds: To what extent?

Mr. ACKLAND: I have not the figures with me, but it has been considerable and I am quite prepared to have the figures made available to the hon. member if he so desires. The trust has also found money necessary to make an inquiry into the cost of wheat production, and I am firmly of opinion that the evidence submitted by Mr. W. J. Russell and Miss Rowley of the University of Western Australia was so complete that it played a big part in persuading the committee set up by the Commonwealth Government to increase the price of home consumption wheat to the extent that it did. From reading the evidence I say that it was the only factual information really put before the committee inquiring into the matter, and these two people went to a great deal of trouble in arriving at their decisions. The trustees have helped in other ways, too.

I have before me a letter from the National Fitness Association, which was written in 1946, and I notice from the letter-head that the president of that organisation was one Mr. J. Tonkin. They made a gift to that organisation of an amenity

valued at £400, which was to be for the benefit of country children at Point Peron. They assisted in providing funds to help wheatbelt children to enjoy holidays away from their homes. I have enlarged upon the activities of this organisation and, if I have not been sufficiently clear to members on various points, they will have an opportunity of perusing last year's report of the trustees. I mentioned earlier that the sum of £70,900 had resulted from the fractions of 1d. below $\frac{1}{2}$ d. taken over all the years it has operated. Today the funds of the Wheat Pool are much more extensive, and their expansion has been due to the business ability of the growers' council and the trustees of the Wheat Pool.

Today the fund stands at over £140,000—the report before members is that for the year ended the 31st July, 1948—and that result has been achieved by good management on the part of people in respect of whom, it has been suggested, it is necessary to amend the legislation to validate something done outside the provisions of the Act. I consider I have refuted the statement that was made—it has certainly been admitted, too—that this body did not meet during the war period. There has also been a suggestion that the funds of the organisation have not been spent in accordance with the spirit or even in conformity with the letter of the Wheat Pool Act. I have before me a certificate from King, Lissiman and Co., chartered accountants, of Perth, dealing with the whole of the investments right up to yesterday's date. I think the House should know of what those investments consist. First of all, there is £116,000 invested in Commonwealth bonds. Then there are shares held in the following companies:—

	£
Nicholls Pty. Ltd.	4,754
Australian Outturns Pty. Ltd.	666

That is the concern I mentioned earlier that had set such a high standard in maintaining out-turns at ports in Great Britain and Europe.

	£
Berry Barclay & Co. Pty. Ltd.	2,500
The Australian Producers' Wholesale Co-operative Federation Pty. Ltd.	160
Debentures—Co-operative Bulk Handling Limited	5,311

Those were debentures purchased from necessitous farmers for small sums of money and from the estates of deceased farmers. Next

there is the item that was referred to by the member for North-East Fremantle. The other investment certified to by King, Lissiman and Co. is—

	£
Land (vacant) situated in King-street, Perth, at rear of His Majesty's Theatre	10,750

I am informed that the only item of expenditure mentioned in that list, which is not statutorily within the present provisions of the Wheat Pool Act, is the amount of £116,000, which was invested in Commonwealth war bonds. The Act distinctly says that the purchases made must be such as are in the interests of the wheatgrowers. At present, so small are the opportunities of spending money for the benefit of those people that the trustees are temporarily holding the bonds until they are able to do something else with the money. The expenditure of £10,750 on land was with the idea of erecting office accommodation for the organisation. The co-operative movement has expanded so quickly that the staff is crowded out of the present buildings, which this section of the co-operative movement rented from another co-operative enterprise. In consequence, those concerned have asked for additional office accommodation and the opportunity was taken to purchase the vacant block in King-street when it became available. The necessary building will be erected there just as soon as conditions make it possible for permits to be issued for the work to be proceeded with.

Members have asked why the amending legislation should be brought down. Under the present set-up, the opportunities for the investment of trust funds are limited. The time will come when we shall again be able to enter into projects that will be of benefit to the growers, similar to that embarked upon when we assisted in co-operative bulk-handling. In the circumstances, the trustees have asked that the Act be liberalised to enable them to take up shares when they can be purchased for the benefit of the wheat-growing industry. That is the reason the liberalisation is desired. I should like to read portion of a statement that I have before me—

This fund has already proved of great value to wheatgrowers. One instance of this was when experimental work was done in the early stages of bulk handling in this State, and when Co-operative Bulk Handling was formed. The

reserve fund was used to the full at that time, and wheatgrowers in Western Australia are reaping the benefit today.

The trustees, however, feel they may be restricted in their choice of investments, and wish to obtain a better balance. It is becoming more and more the policy of those with money entrusted to them to find an outlet in such securities as safe industrial shares, but under the Wheat Pool Act, as it stands, the trustees cannot invest the reserve funds in such securities.

Some superannuation trust funds and life insurance companies, which are particularly conservative, invest their funds in the shares of reputable companies. The trustees wish to take advantage of any good, suitable investment, whether it be shares, bonds, debentures, real estate or any other investment which the trustees may think beneficial for the wheat-growers of Western Australia.

It is not only the trustees who have that in mind. They are controlled by 20 elected representatives of the growers throughout the whole State. Those are the people who decide how these funds shall be invested. The trustees can act only under instructions from that body. To continue the statement—

—In regard to that part of the amendment dealing with real estate, the trustees already have the necessary power in the Wheat Pool Act. The present amendment merely states this in unambiguous language.

That is what is behind the introduction of this legislation. The inferences suggested in this House were quite unjust. We have in Mr. John Teasdale a man held in high repute not only in Western Australia but throughout the Commonwealth. We have Mr. C. W. Harper, a man who has been connected with the business community and the wheatgrowing interests of Western Australia for a great many years. His character hardly needs any boosting by me. Then we have Hon. T. Bath.

Point of Order.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: On a point of order, I would not have taken the course of interrupting the hon. member's speech were it not that I desire you, Mr. Speaker, to have the opportunity during the tea suspension to consider a point of order I intend to raise. I submit that the Minister's Bill is out of order because the amendment embodied in it is repugnant to the existing Act and beyond the scope of that measure. The Wheat Pool Act was passed for the setting up of trustees whose main purpose was to

constitute and manage wheat pools. The Act gave the power to do all necessary things incidental thereto. The measure was deliberately framed so that where reference was made to additional powers, those powers had to be related to the business of a wheat pool. For example, Section 15, which the Bill purports to amend, sets out the powers and duties of the corporation. The Title of the Act sets out that its purpose is —

to constitute and incorporate the Trustees of the Wheat Pool of Western Australia; to regulate the appointment of the Trustees; to define their powers and authorities; and for other purposes incidental thereto.

The Minister's amendment would permit the trustees to purchase and run hotels and to engage in the hotel business generally; it would enable the trustees to purchase boardinghouses and run them as such; it would empower the trustees to purchase houses and let them as dwellings. The proof of that is that the amendment in the Bill reads—

Section 15 of the principal Act is amended by adding after the word "do" in Subsection (5), paragraph (c), line 11, the words "and from time to time to invest any moneys forming part of any such reserve funds or the accumulations thereof in any investments or securities which the trustees shall think fit or in the purchase of real estate with power as to real estate to sell, transfer, improve, manage, develop, exchange, let, mortgage, or otherwise dispose of, deal with, or turn to account the same."

They can purchase, as I have pointed out, hotels, boardinghouses, real estate of various kinds and engage in all sorts of business completely foreign to that of a wheat pool or incidental thereto.

The Minister for Lands: They have that power already.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Wheat Pool Act did not contemplate that in the first place because the powers are mentioned in the Act, Section 15 (4), of which reads—

The Corporation may undertake and carry on any business transactions which may seem to the Trustees capable of being conveniently carried on in conjunction with the objects of the Corporation.

I submit that the amendment in providing such scope is something that is repugnant to the Act and quite outside its scope.

The Minister for Lands: You did not read paragraph (d) of Subsection (5).

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The Minister for Lands: I do not see how the member for North-East Fremantle can prove to this House that this amending clause is repugnant to the Act; because if he had read the other paragraphs dealing with the powers of the trustees—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You read on.

The Minister for Lands: I am going to. The hon. member read paragraphs (a) and (b). I will continue from there. Paragraph (c) reads—

To enter into all contracts whatsoever which the trustees may deem necessary or expedient in the exercising of the powers or performance of the duties by this Act conferred or imposed upon the corporation.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is exactly what I say.

The Minister for Lands: Paragraph (d) reads—

To purchase, take on lease or otherwise acquire and sell, dispose of, or otherwise deal with real and personal property of all kinds.

That is clear enough. This amending Bill sets out to clarify the position further. As the member for Irwin-Moore explained, the wish of the trustees is so to clarify their powers that there can be absolutely no mistake. The wording of the Bill is almost the same as that in the Act, with additions. The measure provides that the trustees shall, if they think fit, invest moneys—

in the purchase of real estate with power as to real estate to sell, transfer, improve, manage, develop, exchange, let, mortgage, or otherwise dispose of, deal with, or turn to account, the same.

Though we shall bow to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, I consider that the hon. member has not made out a case.

Mr. Speaker: I will refer members to "Hansard" of October 1932, Volume I, page 1071. On that page there is a quotation from a letter from the Solicitor General to the then Speaker, in which the following appears:—

The validity of the provisions of the Bill is not a matter for determination by Parliament as an institution; it may be a matter of opinion in the minds of individual members of Parliament when voting on the Bill; but any decision as to the validity or otherwise of any provision of an Act of Parliament is one for determination by the proper judicial authority . . .

Mr. Sleeman raises a legal question concerning which the Speaker of the House is not com-

petent or authorised to give a decision, and in regard to which Parliament as a body is not properly concerned.

That is a quotation from a previous letter of the Solicitor General on a closely related subject. It may be argued that those words do not affect the position but I quote them to show that the matter has been before the House on a previous occasion. I have prepared a ruling as follows:—

I have examined the provisions of this Bill, and as far as compliance with the Standing Orders and Rules of the House are concerned, the Bill is in order. It is perfectly in order for the operations of the Wheat Pool to be extended in whatever manner this Parliament determines by Act of Parliament.

As to whether the Bill is repugnant to the provisions of the principal Act is not the concern of the Speaker to decide. Should the Bill become an Act, the proper authority to determine that point is the judiciary. I therefore rule that the Bill is in order and may proceed.

Debate resumed.

Mr. ACKLAND: Before the point of order was raised I was pointing out that, whether intentionally or not, a reflection had been cast on the trustees who administer this Act by the suggestion that they had done something outside the scope of the Act and that the amending legislation was to legalise that action. I had referred to two of the trustees and was about to state that in the person of Hon. T. H. Bath we have a man who is held in the highest esteem in commercial spheres. In addition, I doubt if there was ever a Cabinet Minister in this House who has been held in higher repute by the growers and the people of the State generally than is he. The fourth trustee is Mr. W. J. Russell, a farmer of Bilberrin, who is the treasurer of the Farmers' Union of Western Australia. The characters of those four men do not need any vindication by me or anybody else.

Here we have an organisation that has given 17 years of honourable and useful service to a section of the people of Western Australia. It has handled nearly 190,000,000 bushels of wheat in this country and has returned to its members nearly £2,745,000 which is more than would have been returned had those people not had the advantages of the pooling system. It has done a great deal of excellent charitable

work. It has assisted the children of wheat-growers throughout the State by finding amenities for them at their camps, and by so doing has assisted others who use the camps. It has been of benefit to the people generally. It has helped in research and has found money for the Institute of Agriculture. We have been asked to make one provision of the Act a little less ambiguous. I would like to repeat one clause of a statement I read before the tea adjournment, as follows:—

In regard to that part of the amendment dealing with real estate, the trustees have the necessary power in the Wheat Pool Act. The present amendment merely states this in unambiguous language.

I would like to answer the question of the member for North-East Fremantle as to what is to be the ultimate decision regarding this fund. I am of the opinion that the fund should grow to a very much greater amount than at present. The hon. member asked what would happen when it reached the sum of £500,000. The co-operative company in this State has done a great service to the people, but it is an infant compared with co-operative bodies in other parts of the world. Even in Queensland we have a co-operative concern which is doing a great deal more work than we are and has much more trust money to play with; and in Denmark and Great Britain there are similar societies with funds much in excess of our own.

I am of the opinion that this sum should grow and grow so that it will be available for any purpose furthering the industry and the interests of those contributing to it. We have nearly 14,000 men who have contributed approximately £140,000 to this fund, which has been growing for 17 years. There are some people who would like to see the money distributed to those who could receive some of it today. I believe that the amounts that would be received would vary from £3 to a little over £40 per head. The money could be better used for the benefit of the people generally. I do not know of any single person who has had a fraction of a penny deducted from his wheat returns who wants it handed back to him; but I do know people who have not contributed to the fund and who are very worried at its existence; because while it is there it is a menace to those who would try to set up a socialistic State.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You are getting more stupid as you grow older.

Mr. ACKLAND: I hope the measure will be passed and that the fund will grow to a very much greater figure than it is at present.

Mr. LESLIE: I move—
That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Geraldton) [7.43]: As one of those who has a light financial interest in this Bill, having contributed a few bushels to the wheat pool, I want to say that after having listened to the member for North-East Fremantle and knowing his calibre, I was somewhat concerned. I thought there was going to be a decent hand-out, but after hearing members who have spoken with a view to explaining away some of the cobwebs the hon. member so successfully wove the other evening, I am beginning to think that the trustees are doing the right thing. There is an old saying that good wine needs no bush. It has been said that one not acquainted with the circumstances could not fail to come to the conclusion that the trustees were trying to put over something that was not quite right, though I am not in agreement with that view. The member for Irwin-Moore has given a lot of details, but neither he nor the member for York referred to one important factor. In these days, when most of us stand for a democratic way of life, it should be realised that these 20 men represent the various zones of the wheat-belt and are democratically elected, not on a property qualification—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Not even on a bushelage basis?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: No. Nothing more democratic could be imagined. I can appreciate the position, having been permitted to become a small contributor, and therefore a shareholder.

Mr. Marshall: Where did you get the wheat?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: All of us who have contributed have an equal franchise, no matter how small or large our contribution of wheat might be.

Mr. Hegney: Then you cannot have ten votes if you have ten farms?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: No. Irrespective of the number of bushels contributed to the pool, each man has one vote only. Those are the shareholders that these 20 men represent, and therefore to try to create a suspicion that they are putting something over contributors to the pool—in view of their loyalty and co-operation in building up this fine asset—is simply to be wilfully misleading. The trustees, as pointed out by the member for Irwin-Moore, stand high in the esteem of every right-thinking person in the State. Nevertheless, attempts have been made in this House and in Press reports to misrepresent the position. Here is something attempted and something done without any cost to those who have put their wheat into the pool. It is something that has been accomplished by men who have given the best years of their lives in the service of others, without thought of payment or reward. Their efforts have at last been crowned with success. I have pleasure in adding my measure of praise for their years of hard work on behalf of the wheatgrowers.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [7.50]: I join with members who have expressed their appreciation of the work done by those associated with the co-operative or voluntary wheat pooling system in Western Australia. I believe that the men at the head of this organisation have been actuated by the best of intentions. In the past their conduct and zeal on behalf of the trust reposed in them have been conclusive evidence of their bona fides and have placed them above any suspicion of having attempted to obtain personal gain from their activities on behalf of the pool. Even after hearing the explanation given by the member for Irwin-Moore, I am not convinced of the necessity for a Bill of this kind to enable the trustees to do what they want to do. As I read the parent Act, it seems to me that any venture connected with wheatgrowers or wheatgrowing may receive the attention of the trustees as a source of investment of this fund. Almost any undertaking could be tied up with wheatgrowing or with the interests of wheatgrowers.

The purchase of land in King-street for the erection of offices for the pool would be in the interests of wheatgrowing and wheatgrowers, as would also—as the member for North-East Fremantle suggested—

the purchase of a hotel, if it were in a wheatgrowing district. I can see no avenue that is barred to the trustees for investment purposes and so I cannot see that the Bill is necessary or that it gives the trustees any more power than they already have. I do not know whether the Bill, if passed, would intensify one difficulty that I see ahead. It would appear to me that the trustees of the pool—and others associated with it—have in their minds the idea that some day we are to return to the marketing system that operated in the past and that therefore there is necessity to maintain this organisation intact.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Now you have it!

Mr. LESLIE: That might be possible but I question the ethics of using money that belongs to one set of people to provide benefits in the future for those who will almost surely be an entirely different set of people. I concede that to return this money to its rightful owners would now be a physical impossibility. Hundreds who have contributed small sums must now be dead and there must be hundreds of others who have disappeared and whose estates would be most difficult to trace. In those circumstances the small sums payable to many of them would not justify the cost of endeavouring to trace them. That, in turn, raises the query of what is to be done with this money, if it continues to be invested—and an investment must be profitable. If that course is followed, we will have here a steadily growing financial concern with no definite objective except the possibility of the trustees once more becoming operative as sellers of wheat in the event of a return to the voluntary selling system. I do not see much possibility of that and so I feel that the trustees and wheatgrowers are faced with the problem of deciding what is to be done with this fund, apart from giving the trustees power to invest it in different directions.

The wheatgrowers will have to decide what is to become of the fund; whether it is to be allowed to continue to grow and earn profits and, if so, what is eventually to be done with the money. If a Bill was brought down authorising the trustees to invest the money according to their discretion, and devote the profits to a specific purpose outside the present powers of the trustees under the Act, I would be happier about the position than I now am. If it was

the intention of the trustees eventually to devote the money to some purpose for the benefit of the wheatgrowing industry—not on business lines, but in extending some of the activities mentioned tonight by the member for Irwin-Moore, such as assistance to Country Women's Association seaside homes—I might feel more satisfied.

If it is intended that this organisation should remain in existence to use the earnings of its huge trust fund in ways such as that, then we would be justified in taking an easier attitude towards its continuing in existence, but it is the question of investment that has me worried. If it were intended to invest the money so that it would grow steadily I think that course would be entirely wrong.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: That is not what the member for Irwin-Moore said. He thought it should grow to £250,000.

Mr. LESLIE: I am not anxious to see the fund grow, because it would then become a huge commercial concern, which was not the original intention.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is the whole point.

Mr. LESLIE: It was a purely co-operative scheme in which everything put in was to be returned to those who participated in it, once it was due to go out of existence. It cannot today return its accumulated funds. Earlier in the session we had an example in The West Australian Club Bill, the purpose of which was to allow money, which could not be returned to its rightful owners, to be used for the benefit of the members of that organisation generally, and that is what is wanted in this case. Without the Bill there would be no restriction at all on the trustees—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I differ from you there.

Mr. LESLIE: There are no restrictions on them, except that the money is to be invested for wheatgrowing interests, and anything can be considered as coming within that category. There would be a limit only in devoting the money to other indirect benefits. There is a limit to the amount the trustees could give away, for instance, but I do not think there is any limit to what they could do in investing it.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: In fact, their case within the Act is, that what is done must

be done in accordance with the objects of the corporation, and those objects are clearly defined.

Mr. LESLIE: The trustees are dealing with reserve funds, the accumulation thereof, and the investment of them in such a manner as they may consider beneficial to the Co-operative Wheat Pool or the wheat-growers in Western Australia. The Act definitely limits the use of the money in that direction. The trustees are authorised only to invest the fund. In my opinion they can invest it anywhere so long as it is to the benefit of the wheatgrowing industry. Anything can be to the benefit of the wheatgrowing industry, even to the paying of my election expenses.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: There is a difference of opinion on that.

Mr. LESLIE: There is no doubt in my mind that that is the position. However, I think there is a limitation in the Act as to what can be done with this money. If the Minister can tell me that the Bill proposes to remove any limitation which exists as to what the trustees can do with the money then I will be quite happy. The Act gives them power to—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Do anything!

Mr. LESLIE: —give the money away if they deem it advisable; but they must give it away justly and reasonably, because in that instance they would be directed by the growers' council. But they could say, "We will apply it in a direction that is very remotely connected with the wheatgrowing industry." If the Minister can explain that position then I shall be quite happy about the Bill. I want an assurance from him that it is not the intention of the trustees to set up another investment concern with power to let the funds grow and grow until eventually a position is reached where people in this country and others have been able to assume power over huge financial resources without having had any of their own money or assets in the concern. In some of the biggest corporations in the world there are those who are actually controllers, not of the finances but of the destinies of a number of people, and they would have very little at stake of their own if at any time those corporations ceased to exist.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do not they pay any dividends?

Mr. LESLIE: To whom would they pay?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: To the members.

Mr. LESLIE: There are no members. That is what I am trying to explain. The whole thing would be an impossibility. I disagree with the member for Irwin-Moore. The fund could grow until £1,000,000 was reached.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: In what period of time did the fund grow from £70,000 to £140,000 and by what means?

The Minister for Lands: By investment.

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, by investment. The Wheat Pool has not had any of these fractions for years. The amount accrued over the last six years has been derived from investments and the surplus they have had by handling wheat here as agents of the Commonwealth. Members can now see to what proportions the fund is likely to grow. In another six or 10 years we are going to have another £100,000 until we have a big concern which will not be under the control of the growers as far as I would like to see it. Somebody may then say, "You have no control over this money because it does not belong to you." An altered set-up may exist where the controllers will be in complete charge and they may say, "What equity have you in this?" The whole thing must become a trust fund for a certain purpose. I want to have some assurance that the intention is not to see this money grow to a huge amount, but that one of the things the trustees will seek to do will be to devote the whole of the earnings from this fund towards worthy objectives. I would rather see the capital diminish than grow.

I feel that the trustees and those behind this move are concerned with keeping in existence an organisation which will be able to handle wheat on the voluntary pooling system in the event of the anticipated marketing arrangements falling down. However, I do not see that position arising for many years. But should it arise then this voluntary pooling system will prove an excellent one. I have no doubt that even if an organisation were not in existence which would assist us to return to that voluntary pooling system, we would soon find that there would be growers sufficiently interested to come forward and set up the same organisation as that which we have

had. It would certainly not be as successful as the existing one because we will have lost through the effluxion of time, and because of age, those to whom the whole of the credit for this scheme is due.

To such men as Mr. Teasdale and Mr. Bath, the whole of the credit for the past must be given. We will have lost those people but there will be others who will be quite ready to organise a pool and get a similar scheme under way, which would be quite a desirable one if the occasion arose to use it. Therefore, there can be no real justification for continuing the existing set-up to meet circumstances that are hardly likely to arise. Provision for such an eventuality can be made even if this organisation does go out of existence. I would like the Minister to assure me as to the actual intention of the trustees with regard to the accumulation of the funds.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [8.9]: From the position of an onlooker I would like to have a word or two to say on the Bill. I was a farmer on a limited scale, but I have been so long out of the business that I can approach the subject without any partisan views. I have been looking at the parent Act with the idea of finding out what it indicates. From it I think there are certain fairly clear indications as to what the wheatgrowers wanted and what Parliament intended when this Act was passed in 1942. Prior to that date, until the trustees of the Wheat Pool were made a corporation with perpetual existence, wheat pools were conducted by trustees who were, in legal terms, a firm. They had no corporate existence at all. In conducting these voluntary wheat pools by means of fractions the amounts were so small as not to be distributable, they accumulated a fund which they called a reserve fund.

When the firm, as the trustees were previously called, was converted by the 1942 Act into a corporation, one thing they had to do was to vest that fund in the corporation whereas previously it had been vested in the trustees. In the parent Act by Subsection (1) of Section 14 the origin of the fund called "the reserve fund" is fairly clearly indicated because it refers to the reserve fund as "the fund established by the firm at the request or by the authority of growers who in the past have delivered

wheat to the firm." So, when the trustees operated in an unincorporated position prior to 1932 in conducting wheat pools, they accumulated fractions into a fund—the reserve fund—and they did so according to the Act at the request or by the authority of the growers themselves. So the growers contemplated the building up of a reserve fund from their fractions and from any increments that might accrue from investments in which that reserve fund, from time to time, should be placed.

Having been incorporated, the trustees as an incorporated body under the Act of 1932, carried on in accordance with the policy regarding fractions which, according to the Act, have been approved by growers in the past, and by degrees they accumulated this sum of £140,000. Up to the present time I understand that some voluntary pools have been conducted by the trustees under this Act, and in addition to that, they have discharged functions, from time to time, as agents for the Australian Wheat Pool and in some other directions have earned a certain amount of money which has swelled the fund derived from the fractions. I think it is clear that up to the present the growers have felt that this organisation, incorporated by Act of Parliament with all necessary powers to operate a voluntary wheat pool, was a valuable safeguard for marketing purposes in relation to wheat in this State if, at any time, there should be no other kind of organisation for marketing.

Up to the present I know, from my own conversation with those engaged in the wheat industry, that this organisation has been looked upon as a most valuable safeguard in the event of a failure to create a Federal scheme or a Federal scheme being deemed to be unconstitutional, or the State Parliament not making any alternative provision. They have always thought that there they had the organisation, the machinery and the funds which could be utilised in an emergency to take care of the marketing of the Western Australian wheat crop. It can be said as a matter for consideration that however strong the reasons may be for maintaining the organisation and maintaining a substantial fund in its possession as an organisation able to step in at need to take care of the marketing of the crops, a change may come over the scene if the proposed arrange-

ments for marketing by the Commonwealth now about to be dealt with by the various Parliaments come to fruition.

I believe that a five-year term is proposed. During that period there will be no need to call upon the trustees of the Wheat Pool of Western Australia to operate a State marketing scheme unless there should turn out to be some constitutional weakness in the Federal scheme—always a possibility in a Federation—which may mean that the proposed Commonwealth scheme could not operate satisfactorily, or unless, at the last moment—and this seems very unlikely—there should be some hitch in the implementation of the Commonwealth scheme which would prevent its operating and there was no alternative State scheme to take its place.

As for the future, in view of the likelihood of a Commonwealth scheme for a five-year term, it might be a proper matter for consideration by the growers' council as to the extent to which this fund should accumulate or in what directions it should be applied, bearing in mind that there are wide powers in the existing Act relating to the reserve fund. I feel that the growers have set up an organisation which could undertake wheat pools for Western Australian harvests. They have empowered the organisation to give every assistance in promoting bulk-handling. Those were the two main objectives. In addition, they have given a series of fairly wide powers, in particular by Section 15 (4), which reads—

The corporation may undertake and carry on any business transactions which may seem to the trustees capable of being conveniently carried on in conjunction with the objects of the corporation.

Of course, those business transactions must be of a kind which, as the Act says, can be conveniently associated with the objects of the corporation. What Parliament meant to do and what the growers meant to do, I think, was this: they wanted to have a permanent organisation which could conduct a voluntary wheat pool and also incidentally aid bulk-handling.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: And safeguard them from the private wheat marketing firms.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Well, there are authorities who consider that the wheat industry will be very greatly bene-

fited by a combination of governmental marketing with private firms operating.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Will you name some of those authorities?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I shall not go into that question now, but there are some.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I do not think you would get many wheatgrowers to agree with you.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The wheatgrowers in 1932 asked Parliament to give their trustees a statutory position to enable them to undertake wheat marketing and maintain an organisation for the purpose. When they did so, obviously they decided to give the trustees very wide powers, but they knew, as the Act provides, that all the time they would be trustees and as trustees would be subject to certain very definite obligations, namely, that every trustee, whatever may be the terms of his trust deed or trust authority, must act in relation to the trust moneys at least as prudently as a business man would act in regard to his own moneys. If trustees go outside that degree of prudence, they are personally liable for the want of care they have failed to exercise in the performance of their trust.

So the growers decided to give the trustees wide powers, to rely upon the personnel of the trustees and to control them by the growers' council. I venture to say that this is a matter for the growers themselves. They have their growers' council; they have a right once a year to change the trustees; they are a body that can bring influence to bear on the trustees and it is their job to decide. For all we know, if this matter is dealt with by any representative body of wheatgrowers, they may say, "We want this to continue; we do not care if this fund does go up to a quarter of a million. We have the security there all the time against the vicissitudes or constitutional difficulties or parliamentary vagaries of Commonwealth marketing. When the fund reaches a quarter of a million, we will talk about its future." But, so far as I can see, we have no mandate to take any particular action or any power under this measure.

I think there is no danger to be apprehended, bearing in mind that these men are trustees with all the obligations of trustees,

in giving them a power similar to that which is exercised by mutual insurance companies throughout Australia and in other parts of the world in relation to investments. As to the future of the fund, that can be adequately left in the hands of the growers themselves, who, I imagine, do not need to be told what they are to do with money held on behalf of their industry. If any directions are required, they themselves are sufficiently vocal to give them.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay—in reply) [8.23]: I admit that there is not much left for me to reply to. I assure the member for North-East Fremantle that I took a copy of his speech and had it examined with a view to getting replies to the points he raised.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Handed it to the member for Irwin-Moore?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Irwin-Moore and I were supplied with a copy, and he has dealt with most of the points raised. The hon. member is very closely associated with the wheat-growing industry and with bulk-handling, and I think he handled the matter very well indeed. I do not disagree with all the points raised by the member for North-East Fremantle. Far from it, but my contention is that this amending Bill does not deal with the points he raised. It has been clearly indicated to the House that this fund will continue to grow irrespective of whether we pass this small amending Bill, which is merely designed to give the trustees wider powers to invest. As the trustees stated in remarks to me, they are only putting the position more plainly and in less ambiguous terms than are employed in the Act.

I feel some concern as to the future of this fund and its growth at the present rate. I represent one of the truest co-operative concerns in Australia, an absolutely non-profit-making company. We have no surpluses and we do not want them. When we have fractions that cannot be distributed in one pool, we carry them on to the next and they are then distributed. We hold nothing in hand and have no desire to do so. This fund could have been handled in the same manner, but the wheatgrowers decided otherwise. There is a council of 20

wheat growers representing all parts of the wheatbelt and they are quite competent to watch over the actions of the trustees. We know that the trustees are reputable men and have no doubt about them.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The trustees have not a perpetual life.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. So long as the farmers are interested—and we know that they are—and so long as they have a growers' council of 20 members to watch over their affairs, I think we can safely leave it in their hands to indicate their wishes to the trustees. There may come a time when the growers will fall on hard and difficult times, and that may prove to be an appropriate occasion for the trustees to realise on their assets and make a distribution. I assure the member for North-East Fremantle that I appreciate the point he made about the growth of the fund. It will continue to grow.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Then it will be a headache for someone later on.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I agree, but seeing that the trustees have asked for the Bill, which they say will clarify the position for them, I think we might well pass it, although I cannot see that it will affect to the extent of one iota the accumulating of this fund. With the powers already granted, I believe that the fund will continue to increase. Since 1939, the fund has doubled. In that year the growers kicked off with £70,000 and to day it is £140,000.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: What is this kicking-off business?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is a term that I thought the hon. member would understand. We should agree to the Bill, for the simple reason that the points raised have been answered. I hope the trustees will read the "Hansard" reports and make themselves familiar with the opinions that have been expressed regarding the future of the fund as well as the other points raised, which, as I have remarked, are not related to the Bill before us. Seeing that the trustees have asked for the Bill and that it has passed another place, this House might well agree to it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 15, (5), (e):

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This clause, of course, is the Bill.

The Minister for Lands: Definitely.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If agreed to, the clause will make it possible for the trustees of the Wheat Pool to do what they like with this large sum of money. I shall never be a party to legislation of this kind; it is doing things by the backdoor method, which should not be tolerated by Parliament. It will completely alter the whole set-up of the corporation under the Wheat Pool Act. Under that Act, the trustees were appointed for a very definite purpose. The object was not to set up a trading corporation which could engage in purchasing real estate and invest funds in order to accumulate large sums of money. The purpose was to authorise the trustees to conduct voluntary State pools and to do a number of things closely associated therewith. That is why the framers of the Act were careful to provide that the powers of the trustees should be exercised at all times in conformity with the objects of the Act.

The parent Act provides that, subject to the provisions of the Act and the borrowing and other powers therein contained, the corporation shall hold the reserve fund, and all accumulations thereof, and all investments representing the same upon the trusts for which the said reserve fund was held by the firm. That is definite. The funds were not to be held for the purpose of turning the money over and over and so accumulating large sums. The Act also sets out the powers of the corporation. It may establish and maintain voluntary wheat pools; it may establish and maintain schemes for the handling of wheat in bulk. The corporation may also undertake and carry on any business transactions which may seem to the trustees capable of being conveniently carried on in conjunction with the objects of the corporation.

One object of the corporation certainly was not to accumulate a large fund by investing its moneys in all sorts of industrial concerns. Its powers are definitely and

clearly set out in the Act. I defy any member to point to any provision in the Act showing that its framers intended that the trustees should be permitted to engage in types of businesses unrelated to that of growing and marketing wheat. The Commonwealth legislation setting up the wheat stabilisation plan will continue for the next five years at least and consequently there will now be nothing for these trustees to do. We have had no voluntary pools since the commencement of the war and there cannot be any more for the next five years. I venture the opinion that the farmers, once having had five years' experience of a marketing scheme under one control, will be exceedingly reluctant to revert to the marketing schemes of the several States. No doubt the stabilisation plan will be altered and improved as the years pass; but I cannot see the remotest possibility of the States again carrying on voluntary pools separately.

Clause 3 provides that the trustees from time to time may invest any moneys forming part of the reserve funds or the accumulations thereof in any investments or securities which the trustees shall think fit, or in the purchase of real estate with power as to real estate to sell, transfer, improve, manage, develop, exchange, let, mortgage, or otherwise dispose of, deal with, or turn to account, the same. Has anything been left out? The trustees can set themselves up as estate agents, hotelkeepers or boardinghouse proprietors.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Subject to the growers' control.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. The parent Act provides that any two of the trustees present in person, or by proxy, shall form a quorum and that the chairman shall have a casting as well as a deliberative vote. At a meeting of the trustees, two only may be present and, if the chairman exercised his casting vote, they could decide to do what they liked with this large sum of money. Their growers' council could not prevent it.

Mr. Perkins: Do you think it probable?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I have seen many things happen in Western Australia. I remember a man named C. O. Barker, who did things very similar to those I have just mentioned. I also recall a man named Alcorn, who was able to exchange worthless

shares for sound shares in the Bank of New South Wales. Members might say that that is fantastic; it sounds so, but it happened. We have a duty to the wheat-growers, to whom this money belongs. If it is desired by the Government to allow these four trustees to invest this sum of money, then it should introduce a special Bill for the purpose. Here is the inducement for the trustees to go into the real estate business, the hotel business, the boardinghouse business or any other business. Section 13 of the parent Act provides—

Every trustee, secretary or other officer or servant of the corporation shall be indemnified by the corporation against all costs, losses, and expenses which any such trustee, secretary, officer or servant may incur, pay, or become liable for by reason of any contract entered into or act or thing done by him in the discharge of his duties, and the corporation shall pay all such costs, losses, and expenses out of the assets and funds in his possession.

That indemnity was provided in the knowledge that the powers of the trustees were limited within the terms of the Act. But, would the framers of the Act have agreed to that if the trustees were to have an open cheque to do what they liked, and to go out into the commercial world and enter into all sorts of transactions? I think not. Parliament only agreed, in my opinion, to indemnify the trustees because of the knowledge that the transactions which they could carry on were clearly defined and had to be related to the business of wheatgrowing and wheatmarketing. But now we are to indemnify the trustees against a possible loss after they have been authorised to engage in every type of business transaction. If members find them engaged in businesses which were never contemplated, they will only have themselves to blame. It is not right that under the title of the Wheat Pool Act, and under the heading of trustees, we should authorise a body of men to commence trading in all sorts of things. I have never heard the like of it.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Are you moving an amendment?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No. The Bill ought to be thrown out. If it is desired that these trustees should be kept in a job, let us introduce a Bill to set up an investing corporation and say that the present trustees shall have these powers, authorities and indemnities, but do not do it under cover

of the Wheat Pool Act, or say that what we are doing is to provide for the same thing in less ambiguous terms. That is what we have had rammed down our necks tonight. I for one am not prepared to provide the indemnity suggested here for men who are to be given authority to do what they like. Under the trustee law, yes! Whilst they are limited as they are in the Act, we can do so by all means, because they have to exercise prudence, and if in the exercise of their judgment under the Act they make mistakes, they should be indemnified.

If the trustees want to engage in all sorts of business transactions in open competition with others, and take business risks where there is no need, I am not prepared to encourage them. It is not part of their job. The Wheat Pool Act was not framed to permit the trustees to accumulate large sums of money. That was not the object, but it is to be the main object now. The desire is to turn this money over in all sorts of ways so that a big fund will be established. No-one can determine to whom the the sum shall belong. There will be a fine wrangle in the future when it is a large amount and people think they should get some of it for themselves. Does the Act exist to enable four men, who find themselves possessed of a large sum of money, to invest it in all sorts of directions without any decision as to the ultimate benefit or object of the fund? I cannot imagine anything more foolish.

We ought to tear away the subterfuge and come right out in the open and say, "There is no wheat pooling business left for the trustees; their job is gone, but there is a large sum of money. We can decide to distribute it or invest it, but let us set up a special organisation for the purpose because it has nothing to do with wheat pooling or wheatgrowing." To endeavour to insert this provision here is repugnant to the Act. We should not be called upon to consider it. I have as much concern for the welfare of the wheatgrowers as has anyone else, and also to see that this money gets to the rightful owners, but I have a duty to the big body of wheatgrowers and not to the four trustees who, although they are reputable men, want to keep themselves in a job.

The Minister for Lands: They do not want to keep themselves in a job. They are mostly independent men.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: This will become a full time job for them. The big bulk of the funds is in Commonwealth bonds. According to their own statement, £124,000 of a total of £129,000, is in bonds.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: A good safe place for it, too.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The rest of the money is invested in Berry, Barclay & Co. Ltd.; Australian Outturns Ltd.; a stevedoring company; Co-Operative Bulk Handling Ltd. debentures, and the Australian Producers' Wholesale Co-Operative Federation Pty. Ltd. Only a very small proportion of the money is invested in those companies, but I do not quarrel with that as it is within the scope of the Act. But now the trustees want to take the £124,000 which is in Commonwealth bonds, and, apparently, invest it in all sorts of things. I am given to understand that one of the purposes is to establish a farmers' club in Perth.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is a new one on any of us.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Only a small proportion of farmers would use the club. It would be mainly for the benefit of the St. George's-terrace farmers. Is that a legitimate object on which to spend the money?

Mr. Ackland: It would not be spent in that way.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: My information comes from a fairly reliable source.

The Minister for Lands: These rumours all originate in St. George's-terrace.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Let us be honest. Is this a legitimate purpose? Should we amend the Wheat Pool Act, where the powers are related to the growing and marketing of wheat, by extending them to transactions which are in no way related to the growing or marketing of wheat? That is outside what was contemplated when the Act was passed. We might just as well take the Racing Restriction Act, which deals with the number of race meetings that can be held, and empower the authorities under that measure to go in for all sorts of industrial undertakings, and engage in other sorts of business. If, as the Minister for Housing has said, the purpose here is to keep the organisation intact and to ensure that there will be a sum of money available to be used if need be, this is no way to do it.

The safest way to keep the money intact is to leave it where it is, in Commonwealth bonds, and not to authorise the trustees to engage in other types of business under this wide indemnity. If that be the purpose, we should defeat the Bill. It does not appear to me that there is any likelihood of the trustees again engaging in the marketing of wheat, so they will fill in their time turning over this large sum of money, which in a reasonably short period should become a quarter of a million pounds. Is that a job to be done in the spare time of the four trustees, or will they require to set up a fairly large organisation? It will need some organisation, and the trustees will guarantee themselves security of tenure, and we cannot blame them for that if Parliament agrees, but it should not be done by amending the Wheat Pool Act.

When the purpose for which an Act was passed has disappeared it is usual to repeal the Act, and that probably is what should be done here. If we did that, something different would have to be done with the fund. But because that has not been done, and because the trustees have the ear of the Minister and can get his ready acquiescence, they want to do what is suggested in the Bill. The Minister says they have the power to do it whether we agree to this measure or not, but he knows they have not, and so do they. They want the benefit of this indemnity and that is why they want their powers extended. They would not take the risk of doing all these other things under the indemnity. They want their powers extended and specified, when they will have no worry at all. Some members will rue the day if they grant this authority.

I oppose the clause because I am against this method and because it does not make clear to all what is happening. I have no objection to the setting up, under special legislation, of an organisation to deal with this fund when the people, generally, would know what was happening, which they do not under this amendment. Members must not be carried away with the plea that this is just to clarify the powers the trustees already have. It is no such thing. It is a definite extension of powers, beyond the control of the trustee law, covering all the indemnities usually provided under those conditions.

Mr. PERKINS: There need be no fear that the terrible things the member for

North-East Fremantle speaks of will come to pass if this clause is agreed to. Quite obviously the trustees are under the direct control of the people to whom the reserve fund belongs—those who participate in the Co-operative Wheat Pool. If the trustees did anything to which the wheatgrowers who support the Co-operative Wheat Pool objected, then I have not the slightest doubt that they would be removed. If the trustees were to remain in their position in perpetuity and there was no method of removing them, then we could take some notice of what the hon. member has said. In the circumstances I do not see the need for taking such a gloomy view of the position. It is only because the wheat pool has operated under a special Act of Parliament that the matter has now come before the Chamber at all.

Many other co-operative concerns in this State operate under the co-operative section of the Companies Act and it is left to the shareholders—they compare with the participants in the pool—to taking the necessary action to discipline their boards of directors, who are comparable to the trustees in this particular case. The powers provided in the original Act are so wide that if the trustees were intent on abusing their powers, as the member for North-East Fremantle fears they are, then it would have been very easy for them to have done so in the past. However, the trustees are not the type of men who are likely to do that.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They are not going to live forever and we are legislating for the future.

Mr. PERKINS: The trustees who are elected in the future will be subject to the participants in the pool, through the growers' council, as the trustees are at present. If any undesirable trustees were appointed in the future, I am sure they could be safely disciplined or easily removed. It is unfair to put a body of men in the position of administering a trust fund such as this and yet refuse them sufficient power to make the best use of that trust.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: We had better wipe out the Trustee Act.

Mr. PERKINS: At the moment the trust is more or less limited to investing in Commonwealth bonds and the return available is a little better than three per cent. It is thought that by investing in absolutely safe

shares it may be possible to secure a return of five per cent. or even more, and if an emergency arises the cash can be obtained through the Stock Exchange. This extra money available from investment would help to build the fund up to greater proportions. I am afraid that members who think it is undesirable to increase the fund will not find many supporters among the participants in the pool and after all they are the people vitally concerned.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Do you think they will get any benefit if they invest in real estate?

Mr. PERKINS: The hon. member cannot tell the Committee what is going to happen in five years' time. He cannot say whether the Commonwealth compulsory pool will finish or whether the growers will elect to carry on with a compulsory pool. If they are dissatisfied the growers will be in an infinitely better position in this State to set up an organisation of their own to market their own produce if there is a fund such as this available for the purpose. A great deal of finance is necessary to organise wheat pooling. The payment of the first advance, for instance, requires a large sum of money and this money must be borrowed on some security and if a large sum is available in a reserve fund and can be used, it will serve as a useful security.

Mr. Marshall: What is the cost of administering this fund?

Mr. PERKINS: I cannot say from memory but I think the figures are available in the annual report which most members have had. The principal Act is a safeguard for the participants of the pool and they, through the growers' council and the trustees, have expressed a desire that the fund should be carried on and the trustees in their wisdom have asked for these slightly increased powers, so that they can invest in shares as well as in bonds. The other point raised by the member for North-East Fremantle about real estate is, I think, a red herring.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You do not think they will buy any real estate.

Mr. PERKINS: The trustees have bought a property upon which they propose to erect offices. I understand that both Co-operative Bulk Handling and the Co-operative Wheat Pool have received notice from Westralian Farmers, Ltd., that they require

the premises now occupied by these two concerns and would like them to find accommodation of their own, if possible.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I suppose they will get a permit to build.

Mr. PERKINS: At some time in the future, when it is possible for them to build, they will probably erect a substantial building on a site which they have purchased in the city. I daresay they will erect a type of building which will not only serve their own needs, but also the surplus accommodation will be available for some other organisations and can be let to suitable tenants. It may be possible, for instance, to provide Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., with offices in this building, and though I do not know whether there is any thought of that, it seems to me it would be a good idea.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The second floor would be a good position for the farmers' club.

Mr. PERKINS: That is a most frivolous suggestion. If the growers through the council, instructed the trustees to take some such action, I suppose the trustees would be compelled to do it.

Hon. A. H. Panton: There is nothing wrong about it.

Mr. PERKINS: However, it is a matter which would come under the control of the participants of the pool themselves. The power to invest in shares and the power in regard to real estate is necessary even if they are going to put up their own building and let offices to outside tenants. Under the Act as it stands it is impossible for the trustees of the Wheat Pool, if they own a building, to let surplus accommodation to other tenants. That is not embarking in the real estate trade in a big way. The participants in the pool are those most vitally concerned and it is their money which has set up this reserve fund, and it is most presumptuous for people outside to turn round and suggest what they should do with it.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We are not outsiders.

Mr. PERKINS: It has only been brought before this Committee in the same way as the Companies Act. We should take some notice of the expressed desires of the members of the pool, although there has

been a great deal of propaganda raised in regard to the matter and most of it has come from people who have no interest in the wheat pool at all.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Would you contemplate the trustees continuing in office in perpetuity?

Mr. PERKINS: They will continue in office as long as the growers desire them to do so.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Whether there are any voluntary wheat pools or not.

Mr. PERKINS: We cannot say what the position will be in five years' time and the trustees must take their instructions from the participants in the pool. At the present time the pool is acting as the paying agent for the Australian Wheat Board, and each year the growers who deliver their wheat to Bulk Handling Ltd. and thence to the Australian Wheat Board have to indicate on a document who is to be their paying agent. I give credit to the member for North-East Fremantle for attempting to do what he considers best in the interests of the growers, but after all they have the final control of the growers' council and therefore the final control of the trustees of this body.

Progress reported.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1948-1949.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 4th November on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £3,451:

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [9.15]: There are two matters that I desire to deal with on the Estimates. One relates to the parlous condition of the goldmining industry. From my personal knowledge, I cannot say with any certainty just what the position is because, as I have stated on many occasions in this Chamber, the mining companies do not take State members representing goldfield constituencies into their confidence regarding the condition of the industry and its requirements. They bypass us and go straight to the Minister or, in some instances, they approach members representing other constituencies.

Nevertheless, I take a keen interest in the welfare of the goldmining industry.

The information that I am able to glean from the newspapers is probably sponsored by the Chamber of Mines, and to a great extent sets out the correct position of the industry. Even without inside knowledge, I know that the industry is in a critical state. If we are to have an industry employing anything like the number of men that are working today and supporting not only its own community but providing a market for other parts of the State, something will have to be done. The position is becoming progressively worse. Last week it was stated by the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe that in the opinion of an authority such as Professor Copland, the basic wage in 12 months time will be 15 per cent. higher than it is at present. That was prior to the recent increase in the basic wage of 4s. 2d. in some parts of the State and 3s. 8d. in the goldfields districts.

I have been informed that the increase of 3s. 8d. means an additional £52,000 in the wages paid by the companies on the Golden Mile, while the recent marginal increases represent an additional £80,000. Those increases were granted by the Arbitration Court a fortnight or three weeks ago, which means that within that short period, an additional amount of £132,000 has been imposed upon the mining companies. If it is correct that the increase of 3s. 8d. represents an additional impost of £52,000 and the anticipations of Professor Copland should materialise, it means that in 12 months' time the mining companies will have to find an additional £150,000 in wages. In my opinion, the State Government has contributed to that position in some degree.

Frequently I have read the Premier's reiterated statement that almost from the outset of the present Government's taking office, it had been endeavouring to get the Commonwealth Government to do something for the assistance of the goldmining industry. I have no doubt that that is entirely true. It is a process often referred to as passing the buck to the Commonwealth Government. After all, that Government has done something towards the preservation of the industry, but to date I know of nothing that the State Government has been prepared to do in that direction. The Commonwealth Government abolished the gold

TAX. While some people said that was not of much advantage, we recollect the hue and cry while the tax was in operation, regarding the burden it was to the industry. Nevertheless, the industry had an advantage of £250,000 when the tax was abolished. Furthermore, the Commonwealth Government has provided assistance for three what might be referred to as marginal mining companies and is considering rendering aid to the Big Bell Mine.

Some months ago that Government sent an auditor-accountant to Western Australia to go into the financial position of the goldmining companies. Evidently Federal Ministers were not very impressed by that officer's report, which he furnished on his return. They were not satisfied that the mining companies were in such desperate financial straits as they made themselves out to be. Some very extravagant claims were made upon the Commonwealth Government for assistance which, in the opinion of the auditor, could not be substantiated. Notwithstanding that fact, as I mentioned earlier, the Commonwealth Government has assisted three mines and is considering rendering help to another concern. We all realise that difficulty confronts the Commonwealth in providing a straight-out subsidy for the industry.

What we must endeavour to do in dealing with the matter is to ensure that it does not become a question of State versus Commonwealth politics; it is far too serious for politics to be mixed up in it. We should divorce the requirements of the industry from any political considerations and get down to hard facts. If both the Commonwealth and State Governments do not assist the industry to a considerable extent, it will not be in a prosperous condition 12 months hence. The President of the State Arbitration Court was evidently not very impressed by the parlous condition of the industry, as evidenced by the report of the Commonwealth auditor who visited this State, because it will be remembered that he held in abeyance the granting of certain marginal increases to which he thought the miners were entitled, until such time as the Commonwealth had decided upon how much, if any, assistance it was to give the industry.

Although the mining companies were very disappointed at the limited assistance forthcoming from the Commonwealth, the

President of the Arbitration Court a fortnight ago decided to grant almost in full the deferred margins that had been held in abeyance for some months. I am not satisfied that the Commonwealth Government is doing the utmost it can, even taking into consideration the difficulty associated with the granting of an over-all subsidy to the industry, to render the help that is warranted in the present crisis.

I next intend to deal with what I regard as the State Government's action in one respect and inaction in another, affecting the preservation and welfare of the industry at the present juncture. If the Government is genuinely concerned—I am sure it is, because it realises the value of the industry to Western Australia—and is anxious to assist goldmining, it has an opportunity to render help by reducing considerably the charge for water used by the mines. I am aware that last week an announcement was made that in the near future there is to be a reduction in the price charged to the mining companies as well as to individual householders on the Goldfields, for water consumed there.

The Minister for Works: There have, of course, been reductions in the charges to certain mines.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, and the secretary of the Chamber of Mines, Mr. Jennings, said that the amount of the reduction was not worthy of consideration. That was his opinion.

The Minister for Works: That was hardly fair because when they met me at the Public Works Department, I mentioned the amount they would be charged and they raised no objection.

Mr. STYANTS: I read a report in the Press after the Minister had made his announcement showing that Mr. Jennings said the reduction was so small as to be not worthy of consideration.

The Minister for Works: The Chamber of Mines did not voice that opinion.

Mr. STYANTS: Mr. Jennings is the secretary of the Chamber of Mines and I take it he would not express his personal view. He is a servant of the Chamber of Mines and would express the opinion of that body. Although it was rather difficult to follow the report that appeared in the Press—I have not seen any other re-

ference to it, although I raised the matter in the House with the Minister and have not heard anything from the department as to what is being done—I suggest to the Government that it could provide considerable relief to the industry if it were prepared to reduce the charge for water to mining companies to that which applies to the supply to local authorities for street cleansing, the Olympic Pool and tree watering and to market gardeners as well.

The Minister for Works: Surely you would not expect a reduction to that extent.

Mr. STYANTS: That would mean a reduction to 2s. per thousand gallons. Just prior to the reduction being made, I asked what was the average charge levied for water consumed on the mines and I was told it was 5s. 6d. per thousand gallons. They are using 523,000,000 gallons drawn from the Goldfields Water Supply undertaking, which cost the mining companies £143,825. If the charge were reduced to that levied for watering trees, market gardening and so on, it would cost the mining companies £52,300 or a difference of £91,525. We realise that if the Government authorised that reduction, it would mean increasing the deficit. We admit that, but submit that because of the parlous and dangerous condition of the mining industry and its value to the State, the incurring of that added deficit would be worthwhile. We should do the same with that as we have done with other portions of the increasing record deficit we have had over the last couple of years—and that is, pass it on to the Commonwealth Government. It must be admitted that the Commonwealth Government has been pretty liberal in handing out £750,000 here and £1,000,000 there to fund the deficits created through adverse circumstances operating in this State.

The Minister for Works: You feel assured in your own mind that the Commonwealth Government would accept that?

Mr. STYANTS: I believe so. If it were put to the Grants Commission that it was imperative for the preservation of the industry that the State Government should give it some consideration, I believe the Grants Commission would make a favourable recommendation and that the Commonwealth Government would pay up.

The Minister for Works: Would that sum you named be sufficient to save the industry?

Mr. STYANTS: No. I will tell the Minister another direction in which the Government has not been too favourably disposed towards the industry, and where it has considerably increased the expenditure of that industry. I refer to the raising of the railway freights recently. Even if it came to the worst and the Government allowed that £91,000 rebate in water charges, and the Commonwealth Grants Commission would not make a recommendation to the Federal Treasurer to refund the amount so that we had to increase our deficit by that sum, I believe that the stability or the preservation of the goldmining industry in this State would be worth such an increase in the deficit, and even to the extent of £100,000.

When we come to consider that the capital indebtedness in this State is something like £104,000,000, what would the addition of £100,000 a year to our deficit matter in the event of the Commonwealth Government not finding the money? I know the Premier realises the value of the industry to this State. He knows that it provides employment for quite a number of people and a very valuable market for our own primary producers. The industry has twice saved this State from disaster, particularly during the depression period.

The Minister for Works: How did they view the reduction in the domestic rate?

Mr. STYANTS: I have not been up there since last Friday when the announcement was made, but it would appear to me from reading the newspaper—that is the source from which I have had my information up to date—that the only reduction made has been in the amount of general rates paid. That is to say, instead of paying about 7s. 3d. per 1,000 gallons, they will be paying 4s. 6d., which would give the average householder something like 4,000 or 5,000 gallons for which no additional payment would be made. I have always advocated that method of relief in water charges to the individual consumers on the Goldfields. I think that considering the average consumption of water per house on the Goldfields the people there would appreciate that to a great extent. But the goldmining companies evidently did not think the

amount of reduction was worth consideration.

The Minister for Works: Not even at Norseman?

Mr. STYANTS: I do not know about Norseman. Possibly the member for Kanoona would be able to tell the Minister of the reaction of the people there. The Government made an increase of 20 per cent. in railway freights and fares and the reduction from 20 per cent. to 10 per cent. at 400 miles, which just excludes Kalgoorlie and Boulder. I do not know what the amount involved in the increase of 20 per cent. would be as far as the mining companies are concerned, but I should say that it would cost tens of thousands of pounds a year. The serious aspect of the matter on the Goldfields will be the inevitable rise in the cost of living and, following that, the rise in the basic wage, which will be an added burden on the gold-mining companies.

I asked the Premier whether, in view of his knowledge of the parlous financial position of the goldmines, he would be prepared to postpone or forgo the increase in railway fares and freights in respect of the Goldfields area. He said it was impracticable. I submit that the proposition is very practicable; that the means exist and all that is needed is the will to apply them. I cannot see any difficulty, from the point of view of railway management, in issuing an instruction to all booking stations that any goods or any passengers going into what is recognised as the Goldfields area—which I think is just on the other side of Burracoppin—shall be carried at the old rate.

Apart from the very critical condition in which the mining industry finds itself at present, the future does not hold out much hope of improvement. In fact the position will deteriorate because of the increase in the basic wage that will inevitably take place in the next 12 months, and the increase in the railway freights which will push up the basic wage. The result will be that only those mines with the richest ore will be able to continue operations. What has been taking place over the last two years on the Golden Mile will be intensified: what is known as selective mining will be carried on.

The mines are by-passing a lot of low-grade ore which, under ordinary circum-

stances and under ordinary costs, would be quite a payable proposition; but because of the increased cost, that ore has now to be by-passed and it will be lost to the State forever, because it will not be worth while going back and taking it out at some future period. So the position of the industry is not at all rosy. The State Government should look at the matter in a more intimate manner than the Commonwealth Government. This is a Western Australian industry and, if it is going to be forced into extinction because of financial circumstances, this State will feel the result to a much greater extent than will the Commonwealth.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The mines will never be opened up again.

Mr. STYANTS: No. I want to appeal to the Government to regard it in that light. People on the Goldfields are very perturbed about the matter. They have appointed a committee of representatives from each of the interests on the Goldfields and there has been a preliminary meeting to draw up a list of ways and means by which both the State and the Commonwealth Governments can give assistance if they so desire. In the near future a public meeting is to be held in Kalgoorlie to which Commonwealth and State members of Parliament and the Minister for Mines, representing the State Government, will be invited. I understand that certain recommendations which were drawn up by the committee are to be or have been sent to the Government for consideration.

There may be some other charges that could be waived by the Government. I do not know just what they are; but possibly lease rents and certain charges of that kind could be dispensed with. In all I should say that if the increase in railway freights had not taken place and the Government was prepared to provide a concession in water rates, it could help the industry to the extent of £150,000 per annum. That would be of considerable assistance. It would at least cover the increase that has lately taken place in the basic wage and the £80,000 per year which it is estimated the marginal increases which were granted by the State Arbitration Court recently will cost the mining companies. I think that both the Commonwealth and the State Governments should come to the assistance of the

industry—but particularly the State Government. We are more vitally interested in an intimate way than is the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth will not feel the repercussions to any great extent if the mining industry diminishes in importance; but this State will suffer a severe blow.

I suggest that a representative of the Government—either the Premier or the Minister for Mines—should meet the Chamber of Mines in conference and discuss every possible means by which the State Government can provide assistance, and that that should be done at an early date. I realise that the State Government has not the money to hand out, without incurring deficits, that the Commonwealth has. But nevertheless it will be worth while for the State to increase the national indebtedness to £150,000 a year in order to keep this industry intact until there is an alteration in world conditions. Perhaps America may relent and decide to increase the price of gold to the extent of £1 an ounce. If that were done and the price were raised from £10 15s. 3d. to £11 15s. 3d., the industry would be tided over its present difficulties.

Just what the industry is going to do when, in 12 months' time, the basic wage is up 15s. or £1 a week, it is difficult for one to say with any certainty. I anticipate there will be a considerable diminution in the amount of goldmining activity that is taking place on the Golden Mile. The Golden Mile is in the most favourable position in this regard. Although its operations must diminish to some extent, the position will be more acute in the back country where transport charges and treatment costs are so much higher. I hope the Government will realise how desperate the position is and will have the conference with the Chamber of Mines and then, to the limit of its financial resources, assist the industry in an effort to keep it intact.

A condition not peculiar to the Eastern Goldfields is seen in the alarming position of the Kalgoorlie District Hospital. The staff there, by recognised standards, is sufficient to handle 106 patients, while actually it is handling 200. Although the staff are willing to carry on under great difficulties, there is a limit to human endurance, and they will not be able to carry on indefinitely under such a burden. The intermediate

ward of that hospital has been closed for the past 2½ years. A photograph of the ward with the cobwebs on it, was featured prominently during the Government's election campaign. If another photograph were taken now, it would be difficult to see the building at all through the cobwebs, and that is a statement of actual fact. The intermediate ward is the best of the group of buildings in the Kalgoorlie District Hospital but, owing to the extreme shortage of staff, it is not now used for any purpose.

I realise the difficulty of providing assistance in the circumstances, and I know the problem that had to be faced when over 300 of our nurses joined the Defence Forces, and only a small percentage of them returned to their profession in this State after the war. Three years is the shortest period in which a nurse can be trained, but I must bear in mind the fact that only 18 months ago the present Government told the people that it was bungling and incompetence on the part of the Labour administration that were responsible for the shortage of nurses, and that, if elected to power, this Government would remedy the position. I know the Government will not mind my recalling its promises made at the last election. There has been a continual shortage of staff in the maternity ward of the Kalgoorlie Hospital for the last two years, and I realise that the Health Department has not now the powers it possessed during the war period; powers of direction and so on.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: The position is bad in some of the northern towns.

Mr. STYANTS: I understand that the Wongan Hills hospital is going to close, or has already closed down, owing to staff difficulties. The position at the Kalgoorlie District Hospital is so critical that the staff will not be able to carry on much longer. A public meeting is being held tonight at Kalgoorlie in an effort to evolve some local scheme to supply untrained assistants to help the trained staff, and thus provide accommodation and attention for the inmates of the hospital.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The nursing position throughout the State is worse than it was 20 months ago.

The Premier: No. I will tell you about it directly.

Mr. STYANTS: I have been in touch with the Health Department over the last fortnight and have asked questions of the Honorary Minister for Supply and Shipping, representing the Minister for Health, who was absent on Government business. I was also in touch with the Health Department this morning, and was informed by the officer in charge of staff for country hospitals that every possible endeavour has been made to get nurses to go to Kalgoorlie, but that the best the department could do was to get two sisters and four trainees. The four trainees are to go from Northam to Kalgoorlie at the end of this week. On asking whether the transfers would have much effect owing to the acute shortage of staff, I was informed that the department had no power of direction but had advertised in the Press and over the air, drawing the attention of trained nurses in this State to the acute position at Kalgoorlie, and asking for volunteers. That was the best that could be done, and they got these four trainees—more or less a routine transfer from Northam to Kalgoorlie—and two sisters who are going to the Goldfields at the end of the week.

The Honorary Minister: Would you advocate power of direction?

Mr. STYANTS: No. I have expressed my views forcibly on the question of conscription or direction of manpower. While I do not object to it in times of national crisis, I would not agree to industrial conscription or direction in time of peace. It is difficult to understand why nurses will not go to Kalgoorlie, as the accommodation provided there is well above the standard of that at the average country hospital. It is the only country hospital in the State with air-conditioned sleeping quarters for night nurses, who are thus able to get their proper rest in the hot weather. Comfortable rooms are provided for them, as well as tennis courts and other amenities, and Kalgoorlie has greater attractions in many ways than have most country towns.

I am informed by the Health Department that the shortage is not peculiar to Kalgoorlie, as it exists in all our country districts. If, as the outcome of the public meeting tonight, sufficient volunteers cannot be obtained to assist the trained staff in either part-time or full-time capacity, I do not know what the position will be, or what

will happen in another month or so when the summer is properly with us. The present staff will find it impossible to give adequate attention and service to the total of inmates at present accommodated, and something will have to break down. I hope the Government will give this urgent problem every consideration.

MR. HOAR (Nelson) [9.55]: During his Budget speech, the Premier told the House that Western Australia is today on the wrong side of the ledger to the extent of £352,082, and that in spite of the fact that the much-maligned Commonwealth Government had seen fit to assist him to the extent of a supplementary grant of a further £1,000,000. From the figures given I understand that the total grant from the Commonwealth during the present financial year is slightly under £3,000,000. I am not alarmed that a State of this size, with such a small population, should in these days incur a deficit. I fail to see how Western Australia could do otherwise if it wished to progress either industrially or at all. It stands to reason that with half a million people we cannot expect to pay for all of our services and developmental works out of our 12 months' earnings. Yet the Premier expressed keen dissatisfaction at the unhealthy condition of finance making this State dependent on Commonwealth aid. I see nothing unhealthy in that condition which, to my mind, simply indicates that we are part of one nation and not an entity separate unto ourselves.

We belong to a people spread over the greatest island continent in the world. Our population is about seven millions, most of it being located in the Eastern States. Because of their circumstances, those States are able to contribute to Western Australia's progress and further development, and consequently, through the Commonwealth Government, we receive these grants of money from time to time in order that we may live the life to which we think we are entitled and develop our State accordingly. There is nothing unhealthy in it. The only unhealthiness about it is that which exists in the mind of the Premier, who would rather see us one of six separate States than part of a unified nation. The Premier and all his colleagues on that side of the House have, since his Government took office, indicated in every possible way

their desire that the States should as soon as possible resume their own rights, whatever that expression may mean.

Times out of number the people have been told that certain State rights must be jealously guarded, yet in wartime there was no indication from the Premier or from any member on that side of the House that they thought the nation should be divided into six separate States, with separate armies, leaders and administration, and separate ideas on how to fight the war. The Premier, and those he represents, well knew that it was only by unified effort that the nation could protect its people and its interests generally. Yet as soon as the war was over, members of the present Government made no bones about their feelings.

The Premier: Are you advocating the abolition of State Parliaments?

Mr. HOAR: I am advocating the abolition of the Liberal Party.

The Premier: You advocated that unsuccessfully 18 months ago.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. HOAR: Following the line of thought adopted by the Premier and his colleagues of both parties on that side of the Chamber a few months ago, I say no greater disservice has been done to the State than that done by the phobia which was responsible for the advocacy of the return of price control to the States. That is one indication to me that they, in their own minds at any rate, do not consider Australia as one nation, one unified people, with one object and one destiny; but rather do they prefer to have those petty little jealousies and discords that arise today. There is no question that price control was satisfactorily administered by the Commonwealth Government during the war years.

If we cared to obtain them I am certain that figures would prove that we had the best system of price control compared with that of other countries and that prices were kept within reasonable bounds corresponding to the living conditions then obtaining. I believe our figures, perhaps with one exception, are better than those of any other country in the world. At the conclusion of hostilities it was only natural that the Commonwealth Government should have wished to continue the service which it so completely rendered during the war years. That

was when the fun started. A loud outcry came from the parties comprising the Government and from every other allied organisation in the community.

The Minister for Housing: And from the Australian people.

Mr. HOAR: Yes, from the Australian people in the long run because of the methods adopted by the Government parties. There is no doubt that as a result of the efforts of those parties the people did do something which, I am quite sure, the big majority of them today heartily regret; and that was to vote No on the referendum.

Mr. May: They were lead astray.

Mr. HOAR: Since the handing back of control to the States there has been a rapid deterioration in the price structure not only in this State but also in the Eastern States. There is no question about that. The Prices Ministers regularly confer in an endeavour to seek co-operation for stability, but in spite of their efforts prices have risen to a tremendous level—

The Premier: No.

Mr. HOAR: —and they appear to be rapidly getting out of the control of State Governments. Almost every day we see in the Press letters condemning price increases. The average man in the street apparently does not understand what causes them to rise, but he has to pay the increase out of his own pocket and is beginning to kick about it. Even in Sydney we read where housewives are banding together to boycott high prices in the city and for the purpose of banning blackmarketeers. That position applies to every State in the Commonwealth. State Ministers are meeting regularly in an endeavour to overcome the situation and even they have been compelled to consider abandoning the idea of relaxation of further controls because of the cheating practised by various retailers throughout the Commonwealth.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Prices are much higher in Sydney than in Perth.

Mr. HOAR: They always were. That has nothing to do with the argument whatsoever. In spite of the fact that we see these things happening in this State, many apologia appear in the Press excusing the Government for its failure to control prices.

The Minister for Housing: They are eulogies.

Mr. HOAR: I have a copy of some of these apologetics.

The Minister for Housing: I would call them eulogies.

Mr. HOAR: I am particularly keen about this. We have seen the situation that has developed in this and other States despite the promises made to the people that the States could definitely take over immediately from the Commonwealth and exercise effective control. I have a statement here by Mr. H. R. Howard, president of the Perth Chamber of Commerce which was published in "The West Australian." He is a man of some responsibility and he said—

It can now be admitted that the transfer of price control from the Federal to the State sphere has been carried out on a highly satisfactory basis.

I would like to know to whom this is satisfactory.

Mr. Fox: Big business!

Mr. HOAR: It is not satisfactory to the consumers. We can stop any man in the street and he will confirm that. Am I to assume that it is satisfactory to the Chamber of Commerce? Is it a fact that in the costing of an article a certain percentage of profit is permitted? If it is, then I can well understand why the present system and the basis upon which we are now working prove satisfactory to Mr. Howard. It is obvious that if the price of an article is £5 and the profit is, say, 10 per cent. and the price rises—through causes perhaps beyond control—to £6, that the Chamber of Commerce, retailers and business men generally, will get far more out of £6 at 10 per cent. profit than they would out of £5.

The Minister for Railways: You cannot prove that. Quote some examples.

Mr. HOAR: One has only to look in the shop windows to see how prices have risen.

Mr. Graham: What about fish, for instance?

Mr. Rodoreda: Yes, how about controlling the price of fish again?

Mr. Nimmo: That is a good move on the Government's part.

Mr. HOAR: Mr. Howard is the president of the Chamber of Commerce and his head-

line statement catches the eye quickly, but if one takes sufficient time to read further down the newspaper article, it will be seen that Mr. Howard indicates clearly the position in which we find ourselves today, and in doing so, blames most of the people in the Commonwealth. He says—

The discontinuance of subsidies by the Federal Government on wool, imported textile and yarns, raw cotton, potatoes and whole milk will throw an additional cost on the buying public during the next few months. In clothing and household drapery substantial increases can be expected and Ministers are endeavouring to plan so that these increases may be cushioned in a way that will bring about a gradual impact rather than a sharp demand on the consumer.

There is an indication and a clear statement by the Press of the views of the Chamber of Commerce. I would not say that we cannot expect further increases—

The Minister for Housing: Through Commonwealth action.

Mr. HOAR: Even if it is through Commonwealth action, the position here is satisfactory to Mr. Howard because he says so.

The Minister for Housing: What can you do?

Mr. HOAR: That is what I want the Government to tell me. The Government made it perfectly clear to the people what it intended to do. I am quite certain that the Minister does not want his Government to go down with a record of fat promises and lean performances.

The Minister for Housing: There is no chance of that.

Mr. HOAR: I think there is every chance. There is no question that the situation today is very unsatisfactory indeed. If the Premier and his Government have given any thought to the position, he has not told the Chamber about it. We cannot, much longer, permit our dog to continue chasing its own tail the way it is doing today. There must be an end to that. There is always an end to every boom period and we know from past experience that somebody in this country will have to start thinking hard and fast.

The Minister for Railways: Hear, hear!

Mr. HOAR: Never mind whether it interferes with our pre-conceived ideas as to finance or Commonwealth control. Whatever is necessary to put this country into a

state of stability so far as employment and prices are concerned should be done without fear or favour to anybody and without any thought as to politics. Costs are continually rising and yet we find that it takes about three months for wages to catch up to prices. That is a generally-accepted fact. Prices go up for various reasons. Costs in industry rise and these are reflected in prices. An appeal is then made for an increase in wages, which is generally granted, for wages are necessary to buy the needs of a civilised community.

As soon as the increase in wages is granted industry makes a fresh appeal for an increase in price. When this is granted then wages must go up again to catch up with prices. So it goes on indefinitely. I want to know where it is going to end and whether the Government is going to do anything about it. All the Government has done is to instruct the Minister to go to the Eastern States ever so often to confer with other Ministers who know as little of the position as he does. The present unsatisfactory trend can only result, within the next two years, in a state of affairs in Australia similar to those in the 1930's when an arbitrary cut of 22½ per cent. in the wages of the people had to be made to bring prices down. That is the wrong way to go about it. My following remarks will offend the Government very much on ideas regarding State control.

What we should be considering is the use of finance for a reversal of our economic order. That is to say, instead of wages having to suffer a cut, which somebody sooner or later will seek to achieve, we should, by increasing our national debt through the Commonwealth Government, finance a reduction in prices over the whole of Australia and in every State simultaneously. So far as increasing the national debt is concerned nobody need worry about that, because I am certain that posterity will have far more sense than we have and will wipe it out. We have spent thousands of millions of pounds on a war and we could easily afford to finance a 10 per cent. reduction in over-all prices throughout the Commonwealth, and in a very short time wages would come down.

The Minister for Housing: The Prime Minister will not do it.

Mr. HOAR: Because the McLarty Government has advocated taking all the power from him.

The Minister for Housing: He has all the power.

Mr. HOAR: He has not. That was determined a short time ago.

The Minister for Housing: He has all the power to do that.

Mr. HOAR: He has not the power.

The Minister for Housing: I am certain in my own mind that he has.

Mr. HOAR: That is what has to be done.

The Minister for Housing: The Premier of Tasmania asked the Prime Minister to do something like that and he declined.

Mr. HOAR: If it is legally possible for the Commonwealth to do as I suggest, an effort should be made by everyone that has any influence at all in this direction. I believe that this is the only way the country can avoid a repetition of the conditions that arose during the depression years. Once prices are reduced, there is automatically created a situation where wages can be reduced without harm to anyone. This idea should be promulgated through all countries of the world because we are certainly working the wrong way round. The cost would be a mere bagatelle in comparison with what we would have to pay in two or three years' time unless a determined effort is made to bring about a safe reduction in prices and wage conditions.

The Commonwealth, operating a fund of this sort, could give stability to industry. It could either increase or decrease the amount of money at a given time in order to keep conditions stabilised. The Government should be prepared to use what influence it has to this end. I have not heard of its having attempted to do anything in this direction, and we are going from bad to worse every week. Even if the Government feels concerned about the position, nothing is being done and it is high time that somebody tried to do something.

Since the control of prices has reverted to the States, the position has become progressively worse. That is a statement of fact which nobody can dispute and, this being so, we should give the Commonwealth all the power necessary to proceed as I

have suggested. Possibly this is no more than the germ of an idea that could be improved by better brains, but something of the sort must be done. The economic order should be put in reverse gear for a period, and if that were done, I cannot see that any hardship would result and, as to the debt, we need not bother about it.

MR. MAY (Collie) [10.17]: I doubt whether I should have intruded in this debate, but certain references have been made to the Collie coal industry and I felt it incumbent upon me to make some remarks. Candidly, I am disappointed that no proposal has been made for capturing new trade that ought to come to this State. In my opinion, there has never been a more favourable opportunity to expand our industries, especially secondary industries, than that which has prevailed during the last two years. I fail to see where any provision has been made in the Estimates to encourage an expansion of trade and thus take advantage of the opportunities that are presented today. The hand of welcome should be held out to those desirous of starting industries in this State, and concerted efforts should be made to provide facilities for their encouragement.

I cannot see that any provision has been made to bring about an expansion of the coalmining industry. I wish to make a few suggestions which, if adopted, would, I believe, lead to an increased output of this basic requirement being obtained. About three weeks ago I suggested to the Premier that a liaison officer should be appointed at Collie. I do not think anything has been done in that direction and I do not know whether the Government intends to do anything. To give the Government some idea of what I have in mind, I wish to point out a few ways in which, by the appointment of a responsible officer at Collie, many of the bottle-necks that exist could be eased. I have crystallised my ideas and committed them to writing in order to ensure accuracy.

It has been long universally recognised that the industrialisation achieved by any State or nation is proportionate to the development of and production from its coal resources, and in this respect Western Australia is no exception. Therefore we must agree that it is the amount of capacity or lack of it which we employ to remove our

bottle-neck problems to coal production that will decide whether industries are to stagnate or progress, and just how soon the coal needs of this State may be reasonably satisfied. My long and intimate experience at Collie has convinced me of the urgent need for the Government to appoint a liaison officer to examine the over-all bottle-necks associated with the coalmining industry.

I have in mind the appointment of a full-time officer who would be responsible to the Premier and have access to all departments concerned for the removal of bottle-necks. This officer would be in a position constantly to inform the Premier and the appropriate Ministers of such trends as warranted their attention. In my opinion the liaison officer should be afforded authority to inquire into all bottle-necks at Collie and take steps to obtain the full co-operation of all those interested in the progress of coal production and industry generally. It is suggested that the liaison officer's time would be expended between inquiries at Collie and remedial action in the metropolitan area.

There are problems frequently arising which require the joint solution of departments, such as the Commonwealth Employment Service or Department of Postwar Reconstruction (trainees), State Housing Commission, local authorities and skilled trades unions, and there is no doubt that in such cases a liaison officer would be able to pin responsibility and obtain decisions more readily than through private action. Further, this liaison officer would maintain continuous contact with employer and employee organisations and, through the agencies of the Minister for Supply and Shipping, the Railway Department, and Transport Board, would represent problems associated with sponsorships, supply and transport of plant, machinery and materials to and from the coalmines or contractors engaged on housing construction.

This constant liaison through agencies with overseas, intrastate and local manufacturers and distributors would improve the supply position and go far to eliminate bottle-necks, which retard installations for coal production and completion of housing needed to accommodate additional labour required in the coalmining industry. Finally, I believe that the appointment of a liaison officer would be followed by a pro-

gressive increase in the number of contractors and workers engaged in housing construction as well as the labour employed in the coalmining industry. I ask the Government to give consideration to my suggestion with a view to expanding the production of the industry.

Let me now give an instance of where a liaison officer could give valuable service. I have a letter from J. G. Hough & Son Pty. Ltd., contractors of Collie, who wrote to the Secretary of the State Housing Commission under date the 5th November as follows:—

At the present time we are 40 gallons in arrears with our petrol. We anticipate that this month we will be short of another 45 tickets. The position plainly is that unless we can get another 45 tickets per month, together with the reimbursement of our present shortage, we will not be going to Collie every day in the month as we do now, and the contracts which we have with you will quickly fall into arrears.

A liaison officer could be of assistance there. I tell the Premier and the Government that unless housing accommodation at Collie is increased, the output of coal requisite to meet the needs of the State at present and for any future development will not be available.

Another matter to which I wish to refer is that of a landing ground at Collie. I visualise the time when Collie will be the centre of large industries, and the executives will need to be able to travel to Collie from the capital city in the shortest possible time. The Collie Municipal Council and the Collie Road Board have made determined efforts to secure the co-operation of the Government to get a landing ground at Collie, but so far these efforts have not proved very satisfactory. I hope that when further representations are made in the near future, favourable consideration will be given to the request.

Mr. Bovell: Is not the Commonwealth Government responsible for that?

Mr. MAY: Yes, but we need the assistance of the State Government. As to the railway position at Collie, I believe that the Minister is sympathetic, but very little has been done to relieve the situation. I should like to tell the Minister that on Sunday night three buses are required to cater for the passengers who travel by the diesel and are destined for Collie as compared with

about 16 passengers travelling to Bunbury. That is the advantage the Commissioner of Railways gained by cutting out the train to Collie.

The railway set-up at Collie was arranged 40 years ago and no alteration has since been made. Yet members can visualise the difference in the quantity of coal in the railway yard now as compared with then. It is marvellous that the railway men are able to cope with the business because of the conditions under which they have to work but, so far as I am aware, no effort has been made to relieve the situation. I hope the Minister will impress upon the Commissioner of Railways the difficulties arising from the bottle-neck that exists. But for the fact that the railway men are prepared to work on Sunday to clear the coal from the yard, the position would become impossible. The railway men are deserving of commendation for the manner in which they have worked during the week-ends to relieve the accumulation.

I have a word or two to say about water supplies. I know the Minister for Water Supplies is not particularly interested, but unless something is done very quickly—and I recognise the disabilities under which he is working—to relieve the question of transporting water by rail to the Great Southern, the position will become worse. Valuable rollingstock is being used for this purpose that could be put to better advantage on the production side of the State. The water is waiting at Collie for transport and some effort should be made to convey it to the Great Southern districts other than by rail.

I suggest to the Minister for Housing that he should interest himself in some method by which the housing position at Collie can be improved. I know the Premier will say, "You get all the permits you want." As I have said before, permits do not build houses. We at Collie are up against the same trouble as is being experienced by other country towns so far as the shortage of building materials is concerned. Unless the Government takes some concerted action for a concentration of house building at Collie, the coal output will not be increased. Increased output connotes an increase in the number of workers in the industry, and consequently the present building rate must be increased.

Another matter which the Government will have to face shortly is the duplication of the railway from Collie to Brunswick and from Brunswick to Armadale. I know this is a problem, but it is the Government's duty to deal with these difficulties. Unless it does, it will retard the development of the State, which I am sure the Government does not wish to do. This duplication must be put in hand to avoid the continual train delays. Certain references were made the other evening by the member for Geraldton to absenteeism in the mines. I think he was trying to deal with a subject about which he knew very little. He quoted the president of the Chamber of Commerce and the managing director, or the general manager, of Amalgamated Collieries.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I quoted the manager. Do you deny he is right?

Mr. MAY: I tell the hon. member that, owing to the shortage of skips at Collie, the men work on a system known as a fair share of skips. This is because the management is unable to keep up the supply of new skips. In many instances, the miner has received his fair share of skips at 12.30 or 1 p.m. He knows very well that he cannot get any more before knock-off time. Will anyone suggest to me that he should wait in the foul air, with water running on him, waiting for knock-off time? No, he does the sensible thing. He packs up and goes home.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Well, that is your reply!

Mr. MAY: So far as absenteeism is concerned, I refer to "The West Australian" of the 3rd November, in which it is reported—

A new coal production record was established last week when the seven mines and two open-cuts put out 17,785 tons in six days.

In tonight's "Daily News" there is another reference to output, as follows:—

Coal output last week, when five days were worked, exceeded by 103 tons the production for the previous five-day period.

Does that suggest absenteeism? Of course not. It represents an effort on the part of the miners to do their best for the State. The men are being retarded because proper provision is not made by the railways for the haulage of coal.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Was the management wrong in what it said about absenteeism?

Mr. MAY: The hon. member can draw his own conclusion.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: It was wrong in stating that?

Mr. MAY: Of course!

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: But I gave you the opportunity to reply.

Mr. MAY: I was surprised that the member for Geraldton did not come to me and say, "What is the argument for the coal-miners? What is their reply to the statement made by the company manager?" The first thing the hon. member did was to make a statement in the House. I have now told him the miners' side and I hope he appreciates it. There is no question but that something must be done by the Government lest the opportunity slip through its fingers. If it does, the people should take action at the next election and put it out of office. The Ministers I have approached have been sympathetic, but they do not seem to know anything about the matter.

The Minister for Housing: I heard you talking about putting up a statue to the Premier at Collie after what he had done and is doing for you.

Mr. MAY: If the Government does not do something soon, I am afraid the miners will burn the Premier's effigy.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: They will put up a different kind of statue.

Mr. MAY: I am serious. I hope the Government will take cognisance of what I have said and do something. So far, I have not seen any noticeable effort on its part to grasp the opportunity that is being offered to the State at present to put it on a par with the Eastern States. Unless something is done, we shall remain the Cinderella State. The Minister is aware that there is an opportunity to supply 100,000 tons of coal to the Goldfields. I do not regard the opening up of the Black Diamond leases as any solution to the problem.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: How much coal has been obtained from those leases up to date?

Mr. MAY: None at all. Last week I asked for figures in connection with the open-cut sites in the Collie coal basin. The

Minister replied that, according to geophysical surveys, there were seven sites each of which is within measurable distance of the railway as compared with the Black Diamond site.

The Minister for Housing: Yet the Black Diamond site was recommended to the previous Government, which accepted it as the best site.

Mr. MAY: For the Electricity Commission.

The Minister for Housing: As the best site for quick coal.

Mr. MAY: The State Electricity Commission bored that site and knew where the coal was; but the Amalgamated Collieries ignored the Commission and put down the open-cut in the wrong place. That is the tragedy of it. Apart from that, I point out there are seven other open-cut sites in the coal basin at Collie. It is a remarkable coincidence that, notwithstanding that some of these open-cut sites are on property belonging to the Amalgamated Collieries, the company deliberately went to the farthest site to start its operations. Why did it do so?

The Minister for Housing: Why did you not tell the previous Government that?

Mr. MAY: It may have been unfortunate, but I was not in the House when the Labour Government was in office. Why did the Amalgamated Collieries go to the open-cut farthest from the railway?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Tell us why.

Mr. MAY: I will; it was simply because the present Government agreed to pay all the costs of the removal of the overburden from that site. The company would get rid of that open-cut site first and then work the open-cuts nearer to the railway. Some of them are alongside the railway.

The Minister for Housing: That was always done in the past Government's day.

Mr. MAY: I am rather surprised at the Government, which claims to be a business one, allowing the Amalgamated Collieries to put that over it. The company did it in broad daylight; there is no doubt about that. Good luck to the company, if it could get away with it, but I did not think it could put that over a Labour Government.

The Minister for Housing: Somebody has put it over you.

Mr. MAY: I defy contradiction that what I say is not right.

The Minister for Housing: Wait until I have a word on the Mining Estimates.

Mr. Marshall: It is the cheapest form of open-cut, because the Government is paying for it.

Mr. MAY: It is farthest from the railway. The coal has to be carted by motor truck for five miles.

The Minister for Housing: It is the one recommended as the best.

Mr. MAY: The Minister has not seen coal from it.

The Minister for Housing: I will read you all the reports on the Mining Estimates.

Mr. MAY: Work was started on that open-cut last March, and we were told that in six weeks we would get coal. The Government has not had an ounce of coal from the open-cut yet and will not get any this year.

The Minister for Housing: We shall see.

Mr. MAY: That is an example of the Government's attempts to relieve the coal position. I assert that the Amalgamated Collieries put it over the Government.

The Minister for Housing: Someone has put it over you.

Mr. MAY: The Collieries are removing 90 feet of overburden for 10 feet of coal. That is not a good proposition. There is very little more I desire to say. I impress on the Government, as I tried to do last year when I spoke on the Estimates, that the opportunity for the State is here at the present time. Let us grasp it. Unless the Government is prepared to make provision to increase a basic requirement such as coal, then it is going to retard the progress of the State.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [10.45]: At the outset I wish to express my appreciation of the officers of the Supreme Court, Mr. Turnbull and his staff, for the generous assistance they have given me throughout the year. Very often it is necessary for members of Parliament to assist pensioners in winding up small estates, and Mr. Turnbull and his staff have been of

great assistance to me in that regard. There is one other matter that I wish to mention, and I spoke to the Minister for Housing about this. Where a person dies intestate and the estate is very small—perhaps under £600—and a widow is left with two or three children, a person has to go to a lot of trouble to have the property transferred to the widow. In the particular instance I have in mind, the estate was valued at £594 and the funeral expenses amounted to £46. By deducting them from the total it left a net estate of £550 of which the widow was entitled to the first £500 and one third of the remainder. In this case when I went to transfer the property to the widow I was told it could not be done without a court order. Now, that means a solicitor has to be consulted and an application made to the Supreme Court.

The husband died in July, and the widow had to go to work to maintain herself and the three children. There is only an amount of about £34 to which the children are entitled, so I think the Act should be amended to give the Minister discretion to recommend that in such circumstances a transfer may be made. It is not fair to put the widow to a lot of expense simply because each child is entitled to £12 or £16 when, in reality, she is working for them. In the case I have mentioned the mother has been maintaining the children from the 3rd July to the present time so that they, no doubt, have had the benefit of the home just as they did before the husband died. I hope the Government will look into that aspect.

The Minister for Housing: I shall look into that matter. I think there is something in it.

Mr. FOX: I want to say a few words on the housing question. Despite all the statements made by the Government the housing position in my opinion is worse today than at any time.

Mr. Grayden: You are very wrong.

Mr. FOX: It is of no use saying that. I have people coming to see me every day of the week, and when I make representations to the Housing Commission I am told that there are no houses available.

Mr. Bovell: There has never been so much building in the history of the State.

Mr. FOX: The hon. member does not know anything about it. He lives in a little

back part of the South-West. I do not blame him for his lack of knowledge because he would not have the opportunity of knowing the position as we in the metropolitan area have. I shall quote one or two instances. I gave the assistant secretary of the State Housing Commission two or three pages of such cases the other day, but I did not get one satisfactory reply. I do not blame the Commission because it has not the houses available. I do, however, blame the Government for misleading the people at the elections when it said it would make houses available.

A colleague of mine has been endeavouring to get a home for a man, his wife and two children. They were living in a little upstairs room with no conveniences of any kind and no means of cooking anything. They had a seven months' old child which had to be fed on something that was cooked. The mother had nothing on which to prepare a meal for the baby. They had to go out for every meal, and that cost £6 a week. She had no conveniences for the ironing of clothes. About three weeks ago an application was made to the Housing Commission for a home or camp for that family. That was a deserving case, if ever there was one. The answer, as always, was, "There is no home available." At the end of last week, however, I was successful in getting them a camp at Melville.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You beat my chap.

Mr. FOX: Yes, his case was not quite as bad. I have more sympathy for the children than for grown-up persons. The Minister said the Commission did not have sufficient builders to cope with the material available. The logical thing to do then was to lift all controls. To show the position in regard to materials, I am going to read one letter. Prior to the 25th February, 1948, a man made application for a permit to build a home. This man, his wife and three children, the oldest of whom would be about 18 or 19, are all sleeping in one room. That is a case bad enough for anything. I went to the State Housing Commission about it the other day. The following is the answer addressed to me in February last in connection with this man's application:—

As you no doubt know, prior to this applicant's listing, many hundreds of people whose hardship is equal to, if not greater than this applicant's, were listed for priority.

That does not look as if there is any amount of homes available, or more building going on now than ever in the history of Western Australia. The reply continues—

It is felt that these people would have legitimate cause for complaint if this person was raised above their listings.

There must be many more people in a worse position. The children concerned in this particular case were two boys, aged 16 and 12, and a girl of six. It is over 12 months since the application was made, and they were then all sleeping in the one room. The secretary of the Housing Commission finishes up by saying—

For this reason I am unable to do anything more than request this person to await patiently the issue of her permit.

Earlier in the letter I was advised that the applicant was placed upon the list for priority on the 29th January last and, as she desired to build a timber and asbestos dwelling, the building materials position indicated that she would have to wait between eight and 12 months before her permit could issue. I went in the other day and was told that a permit would not issue before February. That does not look as if the building position is improving. I think it is getting worse and we can expect, because 3,000 or 4,000 marriages take place in this State every year, that it will take a long time for the position to be overtaken. I object to the Minister getting up on the hustings and saying that if he and his colleagues are elected every problem will be solved.

The Minister for Housing: It is being solved.

Mr. FOX: No houses would have been made available to the two-unit families except for the harping from this side of the House.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: There are 1,000 going into the next ballot!

Mr. FOX: I regret that the Government has decided to put off all the day-labour builders.

The Minister for Housing: That has not been decided.

Mr. FOX: The Government put off a good many, anyway. And if it carries out its policy it will put off the lot, because its policy is to give the building to contractors.

The Minister for Housing: It will not happen for some time, if ever.

Mr. FOX: The Government is being pressed every day in the week to do that by the people who helped to put it where it is.

The Minister for Housing: It will be day-labour for some time yet.

Mr. FOX: That is the best form of building we can have, despite any matters of policy. There is no disputing the fact that houses built under the day-labour system are much more satisfactory than those built by contract. Tradesmen working for contractors are not particular about the bricks and the class of materials they get. Some bricks are half an inch too long and perhaps a sixteenth of an inch too thick. The man on day labour will make a good job, whereas the man on contract will slum the work. In some cases I have been able to see through the walls.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Through brick walls?

Mr. FOX: Through the space in the double walls. One contractor said, "We make more money out of the things we do not do, than out of the things we do." That just about sums up the position. The other evening I listened to the member for Sussex waxing eloquent on the question of butter production in Western Australia; and he had every reason to be proud. But he should have been a little generous and given some credit to the Commonwealth Government which has put the dairy farmers on their feet. But he did not have one word to say about the great assistance it has given. When his own Government was in office, the dairying industry was looked on as one of drudgery, and about the worst job that anyone could take on. We could not get young fellows to go into it at all. It represented nothing but hard work. I am sure the Premier will agree with that.

The Minister for Railways: I am sure he will not.

Mr. FOX: Let us see what the Commonwealth Government has done for this industry. I might say also that the member for Sussex was not as generous as the Dairy Farmers' Federation of Australia, because in February, 1945, that body addressed a letter to Prime Minister Chifley recording its appreciation of the sympathetic treat-

ment received from the Commonwealth Government since 1941. There was not one word of what happened prior to 1941, because no assistance was given before that time. The Government policy of providing assistance to the industry created a new outlook for those engaged in it. The member for Sussex might have been a little generous and taken into consideration the magnificent assistance rendered to the dairy farmers by the Commonwealth Government. I am surprised he did not express some appreciation.

Mr. Bovell: Have the dairy farmers in the other States accomplished what our dairy farmers have here?

Mr. FOX: They are doing a very good job.

Mr. Bovell: Have they increased their production? The other States are retrogressing.

Mr. FOX: We heard tonight that dairying in the other States had retrogressed, and the Minister informed us it was because of the bad weather there. The Commonwealth Government has given stability to the dairying industry with its five-year plan, and it has appointed an advisory committee to investigate all aspects of dairying, costs, etc., and to report periodically to the Government. The price has been guaranteed for five years, based on costs with annual adjustments according to the rise and fall.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Good old Chif!

Mr. FOX: A sum of £250,000 has been made available for a period of five years to provide better progress in the industry. In 1947, the Prime Minister guaranteed a price equal to 2s. 5½d. per pound of butterfat for the next five years. All the dairy farmers mentioned by the member for Sussex should make their children say in their prayers every night "God bless Ben Chifley."

Mr. Bovell: Sir James Mitchell and the late Mr. Collier are responsible for the dairying industry in this State.

Mr. FOX: Another thing the Prime Minister did was to make prices retrospective to the 1st April, 1947. We all know what the position of the dairy farmers was prior to the advent of a Commonwealth Labour Government. The dairying industry could not pay wages and could scarcely provide

a decent living for those engaged in it. Now it is able to pay wages equal to those in almost any other industry. I know of dairy farmers in the Rockingham district who are paying decent wages for any labour they can employ, and I suppose the same obtains with dairymen throughout Western Australia. This is possible because of the help given by the Commonwealth Labour Government.

Our own Government has agreed to the appointment of at least one Select Committee this year—I do not know whether any more have been appointed—and last year some two, three or even more were created but unless the Government intends to pay more attention to the findings of these committees, it is not worth while appointing them. The Select Committee to inquire into the fishing industry is going to a great deal of trouble but in view of the statement made by the Minister that he does not intend to create a board—although he did not say whether this would be so if the committee recommended it—and if the Government does not intend to take any notice of the findings of these committees and commissions, then it might just as well not have been appointed.

That leads me to the committee appointed at the instance of the member for Middle Swan to inquire into the Coolgardie Water Scheme. That committee brought down two recommendations. I did not read all the evidence carefully, but one recommendation was that the member for Middle Swan should apologise to the Historical Society; up to the present I have not seen any apology recorded in the Press. I do not know what the Government intends to do about it, but the other recommendation was that a tablet should be erected somewhere along the Mundaring water line—probably at Mundaring Weir—to commemorate the man who first suggested the scheme, and that man would be Mr. Talbot. He wrote the first letter to "The West Australian" many years before Mr. Harper made his suggestion in 1895. I think the Government should take some cognisance of those recommendations and, in justice to the memory of Mr. Talbot, erect the tablet in his honour. I did have a few more things to say, but in view of the lateness of the hour and the fact that the Premier wants to make progress, I re-

serve anything further until discussing the various items on the Estimates.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington—in reply) [11.5]: I wish to make a brief reply, although I have noticed that there have been occasions when no reply has been made to the Budget discussion. I do not propose to cover all the ground traversed by the 19 speakers, as the departmental matters will be discussed as the Estimates proceed.

From my point of view as Treasurer, while I was interested in the whole debate generally, I was more interested in anything that was said in regard to finance, because, as I have already stated, departmental matters affect Ministers personally more than they affect me. There was not a great deal said on the financial side of the Budget. The chief speaker, of course, was the Acting Leader of the Opposition, who spoke for some time on the general financial position. Other speakers touching this aspect were the members for North-East Fremantle, East Perth and Brown Hill-Ivanhoe. The Acting Leader of the Opposition said that the Budget speech which I delivered was informative, and gave a clear picture of the financial set-up, as well as a reasonable estimate for the current year. He also stated that other members would agree in this regard.

In discussing with the Under Treasurer the presentation to Parliament of the Estimates, I said that I was most anxious to give a clear picture in as simple language as possible. The simple language was probably from my own point of view because, in dealing with finance, I think the plainer the statements one makes, the better it is for all concerned. However, there was very little criticism in regard to the financial position generally and in fact members seemed to take the line that nothing very much could be done about the position as affecting the State at the moment. The member for Nelson expressed displeasure, shall I say, with the general set-up. He thinks that the present system under which we are working, whereby we get our income tax reimbursements on the one hand and assistance from the Grants Commission on the other, is quite satisfactory. So, of course, he does not agree with the Acting Leader

of the Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition, or the member for North-East Fremantle; therefore he is somewhat out of step with the front Bench.

The Acting Leader of the Opposition, when speaking on the debate, had this interesting comment to make. He said, "The present situation cannot go on indefinitely. This State and other States cannot for all time be left to depend upon Commonwealth generosity, benevolence, or whatever you like to call it. A safer basis is required." I thoroughly agree. The member for North-East Fremantle said something along the same lines. I agree with both members that the Grants Commission has treated this State very fairly and that it has taken a sympathetic view of our financial difficulties generally. When I met the members of the Commission the other day I told them I appreciated the great responsibility which they carried and, when three men are called upon to allot £7,000,000 to £8,000,000 to the claimant States, it is a great load to carry.

I agree, as I have already stated, with the Acting Leader of the Opposition, that we want a safer basis on which to work, and I do not know just how long the present position will continue. That is why the Premiers, not only present Premiers but also past Premiers, have made representations to the Prime Minister again and again for a different set-up as regards financial relationships. I feel that it will be necessary for a convention to be called, and I have advocated this step previously, as did my predecessor. He, too, asked for a convention to be called so that some permanent basis could be arrived at between the Commonwealth and the States. I do not propose to dwell at any length on the financial position, as in a two-hour speech I tried to give the Committee all the information possible. However, other matters have been referred to and I feel I must make some reference to them.

Quite a lot has been said about price-fixing. Here again I quote the Acting Leader of the Opposition. He said—

... the accumulated costs of wartime are incorporated into the production structure, as costs of production, either by taxation, or some other form, and then through the costs of production find their place in rising wages and

increase in prices. It was inevitable, therefore, in my opinion, that there should be in this post-war period a substantial rise in costs

If I had been reading that statement and did not know whose it was, I would say that some economist had written it and that it was an extract from his book. I think it is true but if these costs of which the hon. gentleman has made mention affect Governments, then it stands to reason that they will affect the business community as well and must thus have a general effect upon all costs. So the criticism in regard to price-fixing, that is from the State point of view, I do not think was soundly based.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Not in view of your slogan "Prices rise with Wise."

The PREMIER: The criticism was not soundly based. I think the States can claim on the whole that there has been a smooth change-over from Federal price-fixing to State price-fixing.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You will have a hard job to convince us of that.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is so—with hard facts.

Mr. Styants: The Commonwealth provided staff for a start.

Mr. Graham: The change-over was as smooth as the Press could make out.

The PREMIER: Under Federal control there was always a tendency for prices to rise.

Mr. Graham: Nothing like the present tendency.

The PREMIER: Under Federal control there was much more blackmarketing than under State control.

Mr. Graham: That is an unsubstantiated statement.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: And it is just as easy to say the opposite.

The PREMIER: I do not think it is.

Mr. Graham: There is just as much daylight robbery.

The PREMIER: Most businessmen take a reasonable view with regard to prices. Most of them are honest and desire to do a fair thing. I have had business men come to me and suggest that in certain instances controls should not be relaxed because they believed there would be an upward rise in

prices which, they said, under present conditions was not justified. I assure members that where the Government finds prices are being raised against the consumer and there is no justification for it, action will be taken regarding the commodities those people sell. I want to make it perfectly clear that we do not want more and more control. It is my hope that we shall get away from controls as circumstances will allow.

Hon. E. Nulsen: You had to recontrol fish.

The PREMIER: Yes, and if we find it necessary to control other articles, we shall do so. The member for Nelson also referred to what I think he termed economic stability. I consider that when the Premiers return from their trip overseas, the Prime Minister should call them together with the idea of having a discussion on what steps could be taken to ensure the economic stability of this country. When I say that, I believe each Premier could tell the Prime Minister what his Government had in mind regarding future expenditure, developmental and governmental activities generally, while the Prime Minister could tell the Premiers what he had in mind with regard to Federal expenditure not only for the present but the future as well. I believe such a conference would do some good and I believe also that the time is opportune for such a gathering.

When we come to the Housing Estimates, we find that the Acting Leader of the Opposition expressed disappointment that there was provision for only a £3,000 rise over last year's Estimates and he said he thought it was a miserly amount. The hon. member did say that he knew this was not the sum provided for building purposes and had not anything to do with that phase but was purely on account of administration. That was correct. Actually, with the policy of decontrolling building materials more and more, there should not be the need for any increase on the administrative side, and I am hoping that as time goes on this particular Vote will decrease. This important matter of housing was mentioned by several members. I want to make the clear statement that in Western Australia, Commonwealth-State rental homes are being built more cheaply than in any other State and are being finished at a quicker rate.

During the current financial year the Housing Commission's programme involves the building of 1,000 Commonwealth-State rental homes and 600 war service homes. This will mean an expenditure of approximately £2,000,000. Apart from that, it is expected to provide for 1,600 private permits. Thus, in that direction alone there will be a total of 3,200 houses. The member for Collie again drew our attention to the need for houses at that town. As I told him at a civic reception at Collie, the Government is anxious to build houses there as fast as possible. We will continue to construct homes there until the demand for them is met. If the hon. member can do anything to assist in providing tradesmen who will contract for the erection of houses at Collie, such men will be given priority and will be provided with contracts.

I was agreeably surprised when the member for Collie drove me round the township to see what had happened with regard to the housing programme there. As a matter of fact, there are two new suburbs in Collie, comprised of the new houses that have been erected. I suggested to the hon. member that one of those suburbs should be named "Wilson" after the late member for the district, who did so much for it.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Were you agreeably surprised with what the member for Collie had to show when you went over the Black Diamond lease country?

The PREMIER: I looked over that area and was most interested in the work in progress. I expect that quite a large quantity of coal will be produced there in the near future.

Mr. May: I think you were disappointed at not seeing any coal.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Can the Premier tell us anything about the cement position?

The PREMIER: I know that position has become rather acute again, due to the fact that public works and governmental activities generally are making such a large demand on that commodity. Water supplies are necessary, and a certain quantity of cement has to be made available for that purpose. I think my colleague, the Minister for Housing, will be able to tell the hon. member much more about the actual cement position than I can.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It is about time cement was recontrolled.

The Minister for Housing: It is doing pretty well and has reached its peak production.

The PREMIER: Another matter respecting which the Acting Leader of the Opposition expressed some disappointment was the increase in the Mining Vote. He said that there was a rise from £185,000 to £205,000, or an increase of £20,000. He said that in view of the substantial increases provided for respecting other departments he thought it indicated that the Government was not so interested in the mining industry as it made out. Any assistance to the mining industry would not, of course, be provided under the Revenue Estimates. We have been trying to do something to aid the goldmining industry. We guaranteed the Kurrawang Firewood Coy. a sum of over £100,000 in order that the mines would be assured of a firewood supply. We have done something, although the member for Kalgoorlie claims it was not enough, with regard to the charges for water. If members can suggest to me any practical way in which we can assist the goldmining industry, I assure them that the Government will give full consideration to any proposal that may be forthcoming.

The member for Kalgoorlie suggested that the Government should provide rebates in connection with water supplies to the extent of £150,000. I do not think the provision of that sum of money would put the goldmining industry on its feet. Members know that I have made repeated requests to the Commonwealth Government at Premiers' Conferences, by way of letters and by means of personal interviews with the Prime Minister, urging assistance from that quarter. As I said when introducing the Estimates, every other primary commodity has experienced a very substantial increase in price. I would describe gold as a primary commodity because it comes out of the ground, and gold has not enjoyed an increase in any way comparable with other primary products.

Mr. Kelly: None since 1941.

The PREMIER: That is so. I believe that the only Government that can give real assistance to the mining industry in this State is the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. Fox: Any Government can do anything.

The PREMIER: The State has not the resources that would enable it to render any real assistance. I feel there is every justification for an increase in the price of gold. I know that under the International Monetary Agreement the price of gold is fixed, but it strikes me that amongst the members of the international commission that fixes the price of gold, there would not be one individual that would have any knowledge at all, or at any rate not more than a very slight knowledge, of the economic conditions in a country such as Western Australia where the goldmining industry is of so great importance. However, if any member can offer a practical solution whereby the State Government can assist the industry, which is playing such an important part in the economic life of the State, I, as Treasurer, shall be very glad to give consideration to it.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: What has the increase in rail freights cost the mining industry per annum?

The PREMIER: The Acting Leader of the Opposition, like the member for Kalgoorlie, referred to the increase in railway freights. There was a 20 per cent. increase; but provision was made for a sliding scale under which outer areas, of which the Goldfields are a part, do not pay the full 20 per cent.

Mr. Styants: Kalgoorlie pays the 20 per cent.

The PREMIER: I know something of that sort was done; but as the Minister for Railways, in replying to a question by the hon. member, said it would be extremely difficult to fix rail freights for one part of the State and have a different scale for another part.

Mr. Styants: I do not think there would be any difficulty at all. You are doing it now in connection with the concession rate.

The PREMIER: I think there would be difficulty. But even if railway concessions and water rate concessions to which the hon. member has referred were allowed, I do not believe that would play a very important part in putting the goldmining industry on its feet.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It would help.

Mr. Smith: We need to increase taxation by 10 per cent. and give the money to the goldmining industry.

The PREMIER: I do not think I will enter into a discussion on that point at this late hour. In regard to the matters raised by the member for Kanowna and the member for Albany in connection with land settlement, I point out that the Government is interested in both those districts. Land settlement has been commenced at Albany, though not as actively as I would like, and I have promised the member for Kanowna that I will visit Esperance and other parts of his district at an early date. I am looking forward to that trip.

Hon. E. Nulsen: You will see a better proposition there than in the Albany district.

The PREMIER: I will not enter into comparisons at this late hour, either; but I am anxious to see all the country of which the hon. member has so frequently spoken in this House. I was very interested to hear the proposal of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie that homes should be provided for the aged people in some of the goldfields towns. The proposal is one well worthy of consideration. I can quite imagine how hard it would be for old couples who had lived on the Goldfields for many years and loved them, to be shifted to the metropolitan area. At this stage I can only tell the hon. member that I was most interested in his remarks, and that the Government will give attention to what he has said with a view to seeing whether anything can be done.

Mr. Marshall: You will have all the Goldfields people down here very shortly!

The PREMIER: Mention was made of nurses at Kalgoorlie by the member for Kalgoorlie and other members. At present we have 819 nurses in training. The 40-hour week has made a difference in regard to nurses.

Mr. Styants: How many male nurses have you trained?

The PREMIER: I can give the hon. member the figures for Wooroloo only. The opening of the new Royal Perth Hospital, with increased bed capacity, has made it possible to increase the number of trainees in that institution. As a result, in the metropolitan hospitals alone there has

been an increase of more than 50 per cent. in the number of nurses being trained. In addition, the system of training in Government hospitals has been reorganised, Wooroloo having been practically eliminated as a training centre and seven of the larger country hospitals having been constituted training centres. In respect of each of these, important reconstruction is necessary to improve facilities for nursing procedure, and hence the quality of training.

Under the Government scheme in relation to country hospitals, 134 nurses are being trained and at Wooroloo 64 male and female nurses are having special training in the nursing of tuberculosis patients. In all, 819 girls are being trained at the present time. We have told our Agent General in London that if any nurses in the Old Country wish to migrate to Western Australia there will be no question about finding employment for them. Wages in this State are comparable with those paid in other States, and I understand that some of the conditions under which our nurses work are better than those prevailing in certain of the States.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The trouble is that when you get those 800 trained, they will not all undertake nursing. There is a tremendous loss after training.

The PREMIER: I know the member for Leederville has had a long experience of health matters generally, and I suppose he is referring to the high marriage rate.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Yes; and they go to the Eastern States, too.

The PREMIER: There is nothing we can do about that. But we are making every possible effort to encourage girls to enter the profession, and there has been a substantial increase. I do not know that I need say any more, except that I think the greatest need in our State in order to overcome our difficulties is increased production in every direction.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: We thought it was a change of Government.

The PREMIER: Maybe the hon. member is right.

Mr. Marshall: It is pretty late; but think it over as to why America is producing so

much more than we and yet prices are higher here.

The PREMIER: There is agreement with the Prime Minister that the need of this country is for more production in every direction.

Mr. Marshall: On that subject he is no more logical than you are.

The PREMIER: I believe that the ball is at our feet, if we like to take the opportunity.

Mr. Yates: We are too tired to kick it.

The PREMIER: I do not think anybody could advocate any other method of solving our difficulties than increased production. I am sorry the hour is so late. There are other matters to which I would have liked to refer, but I think I have covered most of those mentioned by members. There will be a further opportunity of discussing various subjects when the departmental Votes are considered.

General debate concluded.

Mr. MARSHALL: I move—

That progress be reported.

The Premier: No; let us go on!

The CHAIRMAN: I will put the question that the Vote be agreed to.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Premier has replied to the debate and the general discussion has thus been concluded. Members might, however, want to speak on some of the items and you are preventing them from doing so.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is referring to the Legislative Council Vote?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes; the Premier has concluded the general debate.

The CHAIRMAN: Very well, I will put the motion that progress be reported.

Motion put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.40 p.m.