just starting to provide free medical attention with a view to decreasing the ravages of the disease. I say let us give it a fair trial before we branch out along lines never yet tried in any part of the British Empire. I leave it to hon. members to consider the matter carefully. It is more serious than they realise. The difficulties are such that we have to watch carefully. I for one will never vote to cast upon a woman such a slur as will be cast upon many if the Bill becomes an Act. I ask hon. members to consider their votes carefully.

On motion by the Minister for Works debate adjourned.

House adjourned 10·53 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 9th April, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings"]

BILL—VERMIN BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of committee adopted.

BILL—RABBIT ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Hon. W. Kingsmill in the Chair; Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment to Section 21 of the principal Act:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

"That all the words after 'twenty-one' in the first line be struck out and the following be inserted in lieu: "and Section 32 of the principal Act are hereby amended by substituting the words, "at the prescribed rate of £4 per centum per annum" in the former section, and for the words "at the rate of £5 per centum per annum" in the latter section."

The reason for the amendment is because of the alteration in the financial position. When the Act was framed five per cent. was considered a fair rate of interest, but at present the rate is much higher. I do not think it would be safe to prescribe any rate as we do not know what money will cost us in the future.

The CHAIRMAN: This, undoubtedly, should form the subject of a new clause. The amending Bill will have Clause 2 dealing with Section 32 of the Act and Clause 3 of the Bill dealing with Section 27 of the Act, a most unusual course. The amendment, however, is in order and as such I accept it.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: I should like to know why Section 32 is referred to when the Bill we have before us refers to Section 21.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I think that with very little trouble the suggestion offered by you, Sir, might be adopted, namely, to substitute a new clause. I am sure that this will meet with the wishes of the Honorary Minister. In that case all that will be necessary will be to amend Section 2 by inserting in lieu of the words "Six pounds per centum" the words "at the prescribed rate." A new clause could then be inserted to make a similar amendment to Section 32 of the principal Act. Section 21 provides for the rate of interest to be charged in connection with the purchase of wire netting, and Section 32 provides for a rate of interest of five per centum on debts incurred by the holder for work done in the extermination of the rabbits.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I suggest that the clause should be postponed and the Bill recommitted. Between now and that time a new clause could be drafted.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I desire to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

"That in line 2 the words 'Six pounds per centum' be struck out and 'at the prescribed rate' inserted in lieu."

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Will that read with the original Clause 2?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 31:

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: According to the parent Act an owner can be reported to the Minister, and the Minister can demand that that person should appear before him and give his reasons for not carrying out the instructions issued by the inspector. The amendment does away with any opportunity the owner may have. An inspector will be able to give various instructions which it may not be possible to carry out. The owner will have no redress except by way of appeal to the same inspector. The original Act provides for the right of appeal to the Minister, and it is dangerous that we should take away that right.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Under the existing Act it is necessary when a person is summoned for that person to proceed all the way to Perth. The amendment will do away with that necessity. There is nothing in the amendment which will prevent an appeal being made to the Minister. It will be possible to make such an appeal. The only object of the amendment is to enable the Minister to proceed without dragging a person to the City.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: There is some force in the remarks of Mr. Hamersley, but if he looks carefully at the clause he will

find that an inspector must act with the authority in writing of the Minister. I do not think an ordinary inspector could deal with such a matter. It will have to be an inspector or some person acting with authority. The position is guarded to a large extent.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The amendment will give to the inspector a power which was never contemplated. It is true that the inspector has to act under the authority of the Minister, but one can understand an inspector going through the country and in all probability being armed with authority given him by the amendment, which will enable him to take drastic action. In connection with local health matters, an inspector is not allowed to enter premises and take such measures as may be necessary without giving notice. That is right and proper. Then if an owner or occupier fails to carry out the requirements of the notice, proceedings may be instituted. The original Act provides that there can be a hearing by the Minister, and it would be wrong now to give the drastic power proposed to an inspector.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It is only in cases where settlers have been served with a notice, that action will be taken. The amendment merely proposes that the defaulter shall not be dragged to Perth, and it gives power to the inspector to see that the instructions issued are carried out. The amendment will merely mean a saving of time and expense.

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

Ayes	13
Noes	6
Majority for..	7

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. R. J. Lynn
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. C. McKenzie
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. H. Millington
Hon. J. A. Greig	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. J. W. Hickey
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	(*Teller.*)

NOES.

Hon. J. F. Allen	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. Nicholson	Hon. V. Hamersley
	(*Teller.*)

Clause thus passed.

Clause 5—Fencing water supplies, etc.:

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: There is no doubt that the Bill will have to be administered with a good deal of discretion because there are some very extensive powers given, and if these are fully exercised, a great deal of trouble and inconvenience, as well as expense, will be caused. For instance, in the proposed new Section 34a, it states that the Governor may declare any area rabbit infested, and the owners are required to surround and enclose completely with rabbit-proof fencing all water supplies. If that is insisted upon where are we to get the wire netting? In the circumstances that would be a great hardship. Then Subclause 5 provides that no person shall draw water from any water supply and discharge, or permit the same to be discharged, or to remain in any place to which rabbits can have access. That will create another difficulty. Many of these water supplies are provided by dams, tanks, or wells, and the water has to be given to stock by means of troughs or other channels. How are we then to get over the difficulty of preventing the rabbits from getting at that water? There would be great difficulty in preventing it. A penalty of £2 is provided, but that applies more particularly to fencing. If the Bill is administered too strictly a great deal of hardship will be entailed on those who are trying to develop the country at a time when every effort should be made to minimise the rabbit pest.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: An inspector having the written authority of the Minister could direct an owner or occupier to carry out some extraordinary or almost impossible improvement. At the present time there was a difficulty in obtaining wire, and an inspector should not have the power to order a man to wire net water supplies. Members should pause before giving such drastic authority as was provided in the clause. I can quite understand that instructions would be given to inspectors to carefully administer the Bill, but one cannot control the moods of inspectors.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: My ideas coincide with those of previous speakers. This Bill places in the hands of responsible persons large powers. Inspectors may dictate to an owner or occupier how he is to eradicate the rabbits and even how to manage his sheep station. I have always considered a dam or water-hole in the midst of a paddock a valuable asset for trapping rabbits because if the rabbits are allowed to go to the water until they become accustomed to it, then a trap could be made there and the rabbits caught. Then the dam could be left open for a few weeks again and so on. The inspector should be a man of judgment, who not only understood the trapping of rabbits, but the economical management of a station.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Although the clause appeared to be exceedingly drastic, it is permissive. The inspectors of the department would not order anyone at the present time to do anything with wire netting, because the material cannot be obtained. Then, again, if an opportunity for appeal is given there would be too many appeals. Perhaps it would be as well to allow the Bill to be administered as a trial and if it did not succeed the House would be meeting again in a few months and we could amend it.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am prepared to give the Government full power to deal with the rabbit pest, but Clause 5 is too drastic. It is all right in regard to areas of 1,000 or 5,000 acres, but in the larger stations of half a million acres with paddocks of 20,000 acres, it would not work. In these large paddocks windmills are situated all over the place and they are arranged to act automatically so that when the tank becomes full the water is cut off and the dam or trough is left full. If this clause

is caried as printed, someone would have to remain at each watering place continually so that when sheep had been watered the plug could be pulled out of the trough and the water allowed to run away.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Whilst this power is sought, there was no idea on the part of the Government to do anything rash. Authority is sought mainly to deal with agricultural areas. We have had cases where the Government had gone to the expense of fencing in water supplies and owners and occupiers of land had become careless. In one case the chairman of a roads board did not water his own stock, but left the gate of the watering place open so that his stock could walk in and out at any time, but the rabbits could also get in.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Why not specify that the clause referred to agricultural areas only? The Government are asking for extreme powers to be vested in inspectors, who could dictate to owners or occupiers as to how they would manage their holdings.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: In the agricultural areas there were windmills and troughs which worked automatically for watering stock, and these watering places are left open day and night. If inspectors had authority they could order these water supplies to be closed in. It is well known that there are many pipe tracks running through agricultural areas and these pipes leaked. The Government were asking that land owners should keep these pipe tracks in order. It was perhaps well to leave the clause as it stood.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: This clause gives the Minister power, but the Minister assures us that he does not intend to exercise the power.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Not to exercise it in an extreme way.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: If this clause is not mandatory there should be something to show it. I cannot understand a measure such as this being passed while the Minister gives us an assurance that he is not going to put it into operation. It is strange to find so drastic a measure as this submitted to Parliament with an assurance that there is no intention to put it into operation. In courts of law, I understand, attention is given only to what a measure actually says, and not to the speeches of Ministers or members. If the Honorary Minister would give us an assurance that he intends to put the measure into operation, we should know where we are.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I thought I had made myself quite clear. This provision is intended to operate in thickly populated areas. To apply it to pastoral areas, where a man cannot be permanently stationed at every well, would create hardship. There is no intention of administering the measure harshly.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I think the Honorary Minister is going a little too far when he says there is no intention of enforcing this provision. Ministers come and go, but the measure will remain until repealed. We might, in a year or two, get a Minister who will not view this measure in the same way as the Honorary Minister does. Moreover, it is an inspector, and not the Minister, who has to put this measure in motion; and under this clause we are giving the inspector power to wipe out either the agricultural or the pastoral industry. The Honorary Minister says, of course, that the measure is to be sympathetically administered; but at some time or other we might get a Minister with a bee in his bonnet as regards the rabbit pest, and with a determination to enforce this measure rigorously. It is astounding for a Minister representing an agricultural district to ask the Committee to pass a clause of this nature.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: With regard to Subclause 5, hon. members overlook the feature that it merely makes the doing of certain things an offence. It gives the inspector himself no power. The inspector can merely take legal proceedings, and the court will decide whether the defendant is to be punished, and to what extent.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: If an inspector prosecuted a man for allowing water to run on his property the court would have to interpret the measure as it stands; and in that case, if the clause passes as printed, the man would be liable. Apart from windmills, there are in the Kimberleys numerous artesian bores, from some of which the flow amounts to as much as one million gallons per day; and that water is running through the country in drains about a foot or two feet wide, supplying two or three paddocks. This clause, if enforced, would retard the entire pastoral settlement of the country. So long as we are assured that the agricultural and pastoral industries will not be penalised, I am content to let the clause go.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The Gascoyne is not the only part of the State likely to be infested by rabbits which has artesian bores and windmills, and channels of running water. It seems to me impossible to define the portions of the State which must have special treatment in this matter.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: The areas would be defined by proclamation.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: If this provision came into a court of law to be construed, the court could consider only what the measure actually says. The inspector would be able to demand that all such supplies should be closed down.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Mr. Kirwan has struck the keynote of the whole position. This entire clause applies only to defined areas. The Governor may, by proclamation, declare any area rabbit infested, and require all owners of land in that area to do this, that, and the other. The provision is not general, but is restricted to areas defined by proclamation. Therefore the matter rests in the discretion of the Government. The clause is not mandatory.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: What is the position with regard to owners of land through which creeks run? Will those owners have to fence those creeks? The rabbits are close up now, probably within 150 miles or less of Perth.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Subclause 11 defines "water supply."

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Personally I do not object to the passing of such measures as this, because nothing ever happens. But the owners of land on the ranges from Geraldton down to Albany would find themselves in a peculiar position if required to fence creeks running through their properties. To start with, they would not be able to obtain the necessary wire.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Government in amending the principal Act are desirous of eradicating the rabbits. In order to do that, they must have power to require that all water supplies shall be fenced in. Those who know the rabbit are aware that wherever there is a supply of water he will continue to increase. I say again there is no intention to exercise this power harshly. In the northern portion of the State, where there are miles upon miles of running streams and hundreds upon hundreds of windmills, this provision of course cannot apply. But here in the south there will, in the absence of this power, be no hope of eradicating the rabbits. In fact, without this power the measure will be almost useless.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I am sure that every member endorses the wish expressed by the Honorary Minister for the eradication of the rabbit pest. But the powers asked for in this Bill might possibly have the effect of eradicating not only the rabbits but every form of stock within the boundaries of our State. The Honorary Minister, of course, says that the provisions will not be administered in a stringent or a harsh manner; but, if they were exercised in such a way as is possible, we should probably find that all these drinking-troughs and watercourses required for the support of stock would be shut off from them, with the result that the stock might be found dead instead of the rabbits. Indeed, the rabbits might find their way to water notwithstanding this provision. Hon. members are not opposing the Government, but rather trying to help them to find a means of overcoming the difficulty. The Honorary Minister will agree it is obviously unfair that a power such as this should be exercised in the wide areas of land where the large stations are. It is equally obvious that to ask landholders to fence large watercourses would be wrong. But it might be possible for the Government, if the further discussion of the measure were postponed, to consider whether they cannot in some way or another limit the operation of this clause only to certain areas, which might be defined.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The areas have to be proclaimed.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes. It might facilitate the passage of the Bill if some limitation were put upon the operations of the measures; for example, if it were made to refer only to areas in certain districts.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: It would impair its usefulness.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: One cannot but recognise the grave risk there would be if the Bill were administered in a harsh manner. Again, whilst I made a reference to the preceding amendment in Clause 4, I did not mean to mix up Clauses 4 and 5. I desire to make that clear. Clause 4 is a distinct amendment by itself, and it is that drastic power under Clause 4 which I strongly oppose. It would be worth the while of the Minister to reconsider the question of the effect of Clause 4. We should endeavour to find some way of overcoming any inequitable power which would appear to be given generally under Clause 5.

Hon. H. CARSON: It is a very dangerous clause. Take the Yuba agricultural area, through which the Hutt River runs. It would be impossible to put the clause into operation on that area and enclose the river from rabbits. In all probability, that being an agricultural district, it would be proclaimed a defined area.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—Contribution by owners on either side of fence:

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I move an amendment—

"That all the words after 'contribution' in line 4 of Subclause 4 be struck out."

It is provided that where two properties abut on a rabbit-proof fence each shall be charged one half the contribution; but it is further provided that if the land on one side is free from any charge by reason of an agreement made under Subclause 6, the whole of the charge shall fall upon the land on the other side of the fence. I see no reason why a person on one side of the fence should be called upon to pay the full rent for both sides. I myself have been in that invidious position. I made use of a rabbit-proof fence by joining on one side, and my neighbour did the same on the other side. But my neighbour had a parallel wire fence within a couple of chains of the rabbit-proof fence, and the Government agreed to take over that wire fence and in return not to charge my neighbour any rent for five or six years. Imagine my surprise to find that they put the whole of the charge on to my property! I appealed, and Mr. Mitchell, who was Minister at the time, said it was absurd that I should be asked to pay for a privilege given by the Government to my neighbour.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I have no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. CARSON: I do not think the Government should make any charge for linking up with these rabbit-proof fences. It is a very great imposition. I know several settlers near the Murchison River who have been given permission to use the fences, and I do not think any charge should be made on those settlers, seeing that they are bearing the brunt of this plague of rabbits.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: If settlers are fortunate enough to have a good fence erected along their boundary and maintained in splendid order while they are charged only five per cent. of the capital cost of such fences, I think those settlers are very fortunate indeed.

Clause as amended put and passed.

Clauses 7 to 17—agreed to.

New clause:

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I move—

"That the following be added to stand as Clause 4: '(4) Section 30 of the principal

Act is amended by adding the following words:—"And he shall instruct and demonstrate to such owner and occupier the proper means to adopt to carry out their destruction."

There are on farms and pastoral areas very many men who know but little about destroying rabbits. It is futile for an inspector to simply tell such men to lay poison here or traps there. Many would not know how to do it. Then there is the question as to whether or not the poison is inimical to stock. That is a question which has been debated but not yet settled. What people would like to know is whether stud sheep would pick up poisoned grain, and how such poison should be laid. There are two objections brought forward in connection with the laying of poison. One is that phosphorus is liable to create fires, and another is that it is liable to kill stock, which may be very valuable stock. No one seems to have yet arrived at any decision on these points. From inquiries I have made, it appears that the phosphorised rabbit bait constitutes a fire kindler, and also a destructer of more valuable lives in the shape of stock than are the lives of rabbits. The whole question is based upon assumption. This class of bait continues to be freely used in nearly all the grazing districts of Victoria, and people cannot agree as to whether or not they are losing sheep by the agency of these baits. I have had made to me two conflicting statements by landholders in this State. One says that he always clears his paddocks of sheep before laying phosphorised baits, because in the past he has lost hundreds of sheep through this poison. The other says that he never moves his sheep, and that his poison carts are at work all the year round. He had never lost a sheep. What is an amateur to do in the face of such conflicting evidence? If these dangers exist, and there are particular ways of dealing with the rabbits, some more detailed information should be given to those concerned, so that they may be able to carry out their instructions without danger to their stock. These are the reasons why I move this amendment.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I must oppose the amendment. It is impracticable, and would necessitate the employment of an army of inspectors. The department is prepared, at all times, to assist people in every way to carry out the instructions that are given, and as often as possible to afford a practical demonstration. On the ground of expense, I must object to its being made mandatory that we should employ enough inspectors to send to every farm in the State.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The argument of the Honorary Minister is the weakest I have ever heard. He distinctly states that whenever an inspector finds evidence of the existence of rabbits on land, he may give the owner or occupier a notice in writing. The inspector must be there to give this notice in writing, and all I ask is that in giving this notice, he also gives instructions as to how to carry it out. I am not asking for the employment of an army of inspectors.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I would point out to the Honorary Minister and to Sir Edward Wittenoom that the particular section of the Act now being dealt with almost sets out what the latter wishes to be done. The Act says that whenever an inspector finds evidence of the existence of rabbits on any land, he may give to the owner or occupier of the land notice in writing to take such steps, and adopt such means, to suppress the rabbits as may be specified in the notice. I suggest to the Honorary Minister that if this notice in writing were made a little more elaborate than at present, it would exactly meet the case put forward by Sir Edward Wittenoom.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I desire to support the amendment. There are hundreds of settlers in this State who have had no experience of rabbits, and it is essential that practical men should give instructions as to how to mix poison and lay it, and what traps to use and how to set them. It is most necessary, when dissolving phosphorus, to see that there are no lumps left, because if a lump is left it will ignite as soon as exposed to the air. It is very easy to cause a fire if the phosphorus is not properly mixed with the pollard. If the mixture is properly made I do not think there is any danger. Further, if a rabbit eats a lump of phosphorus, that lump will remain undissolved after the body has decomposed and will cause a fire in that way. It would be very advisable that the inspectors should give demonstrations to the settlers as to how to handle the phosphorus.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: If sheep eat the poisoned bones of rabbits killed from phosphorus, will they die?

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I have never known of such a case. I have always made it a rule not to lay poison in paddocks where the sheep were running, for I believe there would be a danger of poisoning. It would be cheaper in the long run for the department to allow its inspectors to make these demonstrations than to leave it to the settler or farmer to make a muddle of the job.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The suggestion made by Mr. Kirwan does not quite meet with my desires. My idea was that these inspectors should give demonstrations of how to carry out the instructions. If the objection of the Honorary Minister was sustained, then it might be possible to give district demonstrations, at which the people in the neighbourhood could attend. People will be unwilling enough to carry out these instructions, and it will only be by the most conciliatory methods that they will be brought to work in with the scheme at all. Unless all the people work together, the scheme will not be a success.

New clause put and passed.

New clause:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move—

"That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 6:—'Section 32 of the principal Act is hereby amended by striking out the words 'five pounds per centum per annum,' and inserting 'at the prescribed rate' in lieu thereof.'"

New clause put and passed.

New clause:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move—

"That the following be added to stand as Clause 7:—'Section 43 of the principal Act is hereby amended by deleting paragraph (b) thereof.'"

The reason of the amendment is to allow rabbit skins to be traded in. Where rabbits are destroyed in large numbers the holders of land should not be debarred from trading in the skins if they desire to do so.

New clause put and passed.

New clause:

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I move—

"That the following be added to stand as Clause 18:—'All copies of the principal Act printed by the Government Printer after the commencement of this Act shall be printed as amended by this Act under the supervision of the Clerk of Parliaments.'"

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill reported with amendments.

Sitting suspended from 6.10 to 7.15 p.m.

BILL—EMPLOYMENT BROKERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th April.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [7.31]: I regret I was not here when Mr. Dodd introduced this Bill; at any rate I did not hear all his remarks on the subject, but I moved the adjournment of the debate so that I might get some information on the subject, and I thought the best method was to get it first hand. I went to a registry office and fortunately found the registry office keeper there and three or four applicants for employment. I am bound to confess that all the applicants wished the employer to pay. I made some further inquiries—I am giving this for what it is worth, as I am not able to verify it—and I found that in the Eastern States a fee of 2s. 6d. is paid on both sides, that is by the employer and the employee. But there was someone at the registry office who stated that she knew the English system, and it was that the employee, that is the applicant, paid a fee of 2s. 6d. for registering his or her name on a list, and after that fee had been paid no other fee of any kind was asked for. The employer would then pay whatever expenses were necessary. It struck me that was a fair arrangement. I made inquiries from one or two employers, who told me they thought half a week's wages was somewhat excessive; that is to say, a person who got a situation at £1 a week would pay 10s., or if at £2 a week would pay 20s. The high fee that the registry office keeper now pays, amounting to £5 a year, struck me as a pretty stiff fee to pay, whether it was to protect the employee or the employer, or for the purpose of collecting revenue did not seem quite clear. Whether the idea is to keep up a high standard for the registry office keeper does not seem to me to be quite clear, I suppose we can get the information in Committee. The second clause is not very well worded. To have a specific fee of 2s. 6d., or whatever figure is agreed on is better than, say, that no fee or remuneration should be charged that is not equally shared by the employer, but the employer has no guarantee whatever that the applicant will stop any time in his employment, and in those circumstances it seems a bit hard that the employer should have to pay 5s. or 10s., or whatever the amount may be. I would like to know from those who support the Bill whether there could not be a specific charge, whatever it is, or whether the English system is not better than the Eastern States system, the English system being the payment by the applicant for their name to be placed on the books a fee of two and sixpence. After that the whole of the charge falls on the employer. I am assuming that the debate will be adjourned so that Mr. Dodd will have an opportunity to reply to these inquiries, but it would seem that Clause 3 dealing with Section 28 of the principal Act prescribing the scale of payment or remuneration chargeable by and payable to employment brokers would contradict paragraph 2. When we get into Committee we shall have a chance of putting those points to the member in charge of the Bill. In the circumstances I do not intend to detain the House on a matter of this kind, but to wait until the Committee stage. I suppose the leader of the House will be able to tell us whether an adjournment is to take place, and whether these questions will be answered. In regard to the remarks of Mr. Nicholson, that the vendor pays the fee, or the brokerage, or the commission—although at first sight I thought that sound on second thoughts I do not think it is a fair analogy. In the Eastern States and also in England they have a different system, that is to say, a specific charge. The system in vogue in England does not appeal to the legislators in the Eastern States.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: What costs would the employer pay in England?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I wanted to get more particulars, but I could not.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: None to the brokers.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I suppose they would be pretty high.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Very small.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It was with the idea of collecting information on the subject that I took the course of moving the adjournment. When we get into Committee probably the member in charge of the Bill will be able to tell us the precise fees paid in England. It will help us to come to some conclusion. I am content to allow the Bill to get into Committee and then I may get the information I require.

Hon. H. MILINGTON (North-East) [7.40]: I have pleasure in supporting the Bill, and I think if we amend the present Act on the lines suggested it will be in the best interests of the employees, and not doing an injustice to the employer. Those who have spoken have tried to show it is an unfair pro-

position for the employer to pay part of the fee charged by the employment broker, and it has been illustrated that in ordinary business procedure the agent or a broker—and with Mr. Sanderson I do not think that is an analogy applicable to this case, in the ordinary procedure the seller pays. But in this instance the seller is always of the same class. Take a deal or transaction in shares, where a broker is employed, the seller pays the commission, but the buyer becomes the owner and presumably in course of time becomes the seller, and then he pays and so on. In a land transaction certainly the seller pays the agent's charges, but there are certain charges which the purchaser pays. In this case the whole of the brokerage falls on the man seeking employment, and the iniquity appears when those seeking employment often have to give their last shilling to the employment broker to obtain employment. It is hard on the man looking for employment under these conditions. The system of charging the employee has probably had the effect of keeping up the high rate charged at present to the broker. I propose to quote some of the rates charged in the Eastern States and locally. It seems the rate in Western Australia is higher than in any of the other States, where they are regulated by law. I think the reason is not far to seek. It has been pointed out, for instance, that a considerable volume of business is done by the employment brokers. I can quite understand it, when one considers that the employer in the country—or, for that matter, in the town—writes to a broker that he requires a certain class of assistance. Naturally the employer does not trouble to find out how much the person whom he proposes to employ has to pay. Probably, if the fee had to come out of the employer's pocket, he would insert an advertisement in the newspapers at the cost of a shilling or two. The fact remains however that an engagement through an employment broker costs the employer nothing. He merely writes to the broker, and the broker charges whoever comes along seeking employment. As a fact, the broker charges half a week's wages. Those, I believe, are the broker's terms in Western Australia. Presumably the evil effects of such a system made themselves manifest in the Eastern States. I propose to show how in the Eastern States the law regulates the fees and what effect this regulation has had in lowering the fees as compared with Western Australia. Further, for the benefit of those who dearly love a precedent I propose to urge in favour of this Bill that a precedent has been established by other Australian States, which already have legislation on similar lines to this. In Queensland the employment broker's fee depends upon the duration of the engagement and also upon the sex of the worker. For example, for a term of three months or less a female employee is charged 3s. and a male employee 4s.; for six months or under the fee is 4s. for females and 5s. for males; for terms exceeding six months the fee is 5s. for the female and 7s. 6d. for a male. The fee paid by the employer in each case is 5s.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: But what about six days? That is more applicable to this State.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: That is the difficulty in Western Australia, to get an engagement extending beyond six days. The poor employee frequently has to pay half a week's wages for obtaining six days' work. That is the trouble under our present system. South Australia has enacted a lengthy scale of fees, which I shall not read. I may say the scale is based upon the amount of wages earned.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Are there free labour bureaus in those States?

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: As to that, I am not quite sure.

Hon. J. Duffell: It is an important point.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: Yes, it is an important point, because the free labour bureau at present so far as the employer is concerned is the employment broker's office, that office which is to be found in Perth and other large centres. So far as the employer is concerned, the employment broker's office is free, and therefore he patronises that office. The South Australian scale works out as follows: the worker for a job at 25s. per week pays 5s. and the employer 6s. 6d.; for a job at 30s. per week the worker pays 6s. and the employer 8s.; and so on. The Victorian Act works out as follows: for a job worth 30s. per week the worker pays 6s. and the employer 6s.; for a job worth more than 30s. per week the worker pays 7s. and the employer 7s. All these fees are payable to the employment broker. In the Dominion of New Zealand the scale of remuneration is regulated by the amount of weekly wages. For a job worth 20s. per week the worker pays a fee of 2s. 6d. and the employer one of 5s.; for a job worth £2 per week the worker pays 3s. and the employer 6s.; for a job worth 40s. per week the charge to the worker is 3s. 6d. and to the employer 7s. In New South Wales there is no regulation, nor is there in Tasmania. The Western Australian law provides that employment brokers' offices have to put up notices stating the charges payable. The fee chargeable to a worker is half a week's wages; the fee chargeable to the employer is nothing. I have quoted these figures to show that what we are now seeking is already in operation in other Australian States, and presumably working there to the satisfaction of both employer and employee. Further, the legislation of the Eastern States and New Zealand has had the effect of reducing the fees charged by employment brokers. Unfortunately, when the existing Act was before the Legislature of this State the power to regulate fees was deleted. The consequence is that the employment brokers fix their own fees. I do not propose to delay the House with regard to this measure, which is a very short Bill. At the same time, it proposes to do something which I maintain should be done in the interests of the workers, who have to be considered. Particularly should it be done in the interests of those workers who have, as has been mentioned, to be continually applying to the registry offices for employment. The present system comes particularly hard on workers who have to go the registry

offices several times per year for employment. As regards the equity of the matter, if in ordinary circumstances the prospective employee and the prospective employer could meet, of course no fees would be charged. As a fact, those who do not have to pay the fees, the employers, are very often those who are precluded from coming into contact with those whom they desire to employ. They may be employers situated in the country, and then it is impossible for them to get into touch with suitable employees. The consequence is that they simply write to the registry offices. I believe that the passage of this Bill will have the effect of reducing the number of engagements effected through employment brokers' offices for the simple reason that when the employer himself has to pay a fee he will probably adopt other means of finding a suitable employee. Thus the reduction, even if not regulated by law, would be automatically effected. Clause 3 of the Bill provides for the fixing of a scale of remuneration to employment brokers on similar lines to those obtaining in various other States of the Commonwealth and in New Zealand. I hope the Bill will receive favourable consideration, and I am confident it will have the effect which I have indicated. In spite of the fact that there are some hon. members who appear nervous in regard to this Bill, I believe it will pass. It was noticeable that Sir Edward Wittenoom, who opposed the Bill, appeared to feel keen regret at being compelled to do so. I trust his regret will prove so keen that when the measure is put to a division he will decide not to vote against it. The Bill has already passed the Legislative Assembly, and I think we can well pass it in order to do away with a good deal of injustice to those who have to seek employment. Certainly, the passing of this amending Bill will make the principal Act a more workable one, and will give relief to those who at present labour under the injustice imposed by the registry offices of this State. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM (North-East) [7.56]: I also have pleasure in supporting the Bill, and I desire to refer to the remarks of certain previous speakers. It has been stated that the workers appear to have a liking for going to employment brokers in order to obtain employment, in preference to going to the Government Labour Bureau. That position, however, is brought about through the action of employers in giving their engagements to the private employment brokers. The position is not due to any desire on the part of the workers to patronise private bureaus rather than the Government bureau. They are not any more anxious to engage through the former than through the latter. The employers, however, make it almost compulsory for them to go to the private offices. When the employers send their engagements to the private offices, it stands to reason that workers out of employment must go to the offices which advertise the vacancies. Therefore, I think very little value attaches to the argument that the workers prefer the private offices to the Government Labour Bureau. At the same time, I think it is only fair that the purchaser of labour who is desirous of engaging an employee, and the seller of labour who is desirous of securing work, should both pay the particular agency responsible for bringing them together. It has been pointed out that this matter has been taken in hand in the Eastern States, and also, I believe, as mentioned by Mr. Sanderson, in Great Britain. That being so, it seems that we are lagging behind in respect of legislation of this nature, and I consider that the submission of this Bill has not come too early. The measure will certainly have a good effect so far as the workers are concerned. Many people in this State possibly believe that the workers are in receipt of high wages. But when one bears in mind that there are two parties to employment, the employer as well as the employee, and that the employee has extracted from him half his first week's wages, while the employer has the right of dismissing him at any time, one must recognise that it would have a good effect on the employer if he had reason to extend more consideration to the employee. At the present time the employer has no responsibility at all. He pays nothing to the employment bureau. The employee pays the whole fee, and the employer can put him out of work at any moment, although thoroughly well aware that in so putting the man off he is causing him to sacrifice 50 per cent. of the first week's pay. I think sufficient has been said in favour of the Bill to warrant its passage through this House.

Hon. J. A. GREIG (South-East) [7.59]: It is my intention to support this Bill, but there is just one question to which I think we may give consideration. If the employer and the employee are to provide the funds which keep the private offices in existence, then I fail to see that there is any necessity for the Government Labour Bureau. And if the Bill is passed I think the Government Labour Bureau should be abolished. At present a certain number of men are employed through the Government Labour Bureau, the maintenance of which comes out of the State finances. If the Government Labour Bureau were to be abolished it would place this business in the hands of private enterprise, which would be supported by the employer and the employee. Personally, I am in favour of putting everything I can in the hands of private enterprise, as against State enterprise. For that reason I will support the Bill.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (North) [8.1]: While I have no great objection to the Bill in itself, I think that, if we are to call upon the employer to pay half the engagement fee, there should be in the measure a clause providing that the employee shall pay half the fare, where a fare is advanced. A lot of our legislation is framed to suit the metropolitan area and the surrounding districts. When in the past an employer up North has engaged an employee to go North, the employee has paid the employment broker's fee, and the employer has paid the fare, amounting to £10 or £15. If we are to pass the Bill there should be a provision for the employee paying half his fare. If the supporters of the Bill are not prepared to agree to this I will not support the measure.

Hon. J. Duffell: Does not the employer get the fare back again from the employee?

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: In a great many instances, no. In some cases it is refunded, and if the employee remains for six months it is handed back to him.

Hon. J. Duffell: Quite right, too.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: I am not so sure that it is. I do not see why the employer should pay half the fee to the employment broker for engaging the employee, and then be called upon to pay the full fare.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter debate adjourned.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister—East) [8.3] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is not at the present juncture absolutely necessary in connection with the acquisition of wheat of the 1917-18 crop, because the Wheat Marketing Bill of 1917, assented to on the 12th December, 1917, gives all the legislative power requisite for handling the present harvest. It is, however, advisable that the gristing agreements that have been entered into with millers should be confirmed as early as possible. The Bill that I have referred to was an emergency one, and it was of the utmost importance that it should become law at the time in order to give the Government control over the wheat just then being harvested. I was Minister in direct control of the wheat scheme, but unfortunately was absent at the time on scheme matters in the Eastern States. Several controversial matters were, however, introduced into the debate, principally with regard to the appointment of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., as sole acquiring agents. It will be remembered that hitherto there were 14 acquiring agents operating, including the mills, and the suggestion was made that the Westralian Farmers, with their co-operative societies, should act, instead of such a large number of agents, either in competition or operating under what has come to be known as the zone system. In view of the attitude of members at that time the Premier, who was in charge of the measure in another place, promised that hon. members should have an opportunity of scrutinising the wheat acquiring agency agreement with that company. It was because of that undertaking, and also in order that the principal Act of 1916—altered to suit the present requirements—should be capable of being extended by proclamation to apply to the 1918-19 wheat harvest, that the Bill is now before the House. The acquiring agreement that has now been entered into with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., is set out in the first schedule of the Bill, the gristing agreement with millers forms the second schedule, while the third schedule comprises a list of those millers with whom the agreement has been made. There are two other millers who are operating under the agreement, who have not yet unconditionally signed the agreement. It is hoped that these cases will be finalised within a few days, and provision has been made to meet them under Clause 4 of the Bill. Of course it does not necessarily follow that the same agreements as have been made with the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., or with the millers for this season's wheat, will be renewed for next harvest. That will depend on circumstances, such as shipping tonnage available, the condition of wheat then on hand, the manner in which the acquiring of milling business has been conducted this season by the respective agents, and the special shipping requirements of the Australian wheat board, which is responsible for overseas sales and shipments. If the present Bill does not now become law, another measure will need to be brought before the House within nine months to enable the Government to have adequate control of the new season's wheat. This is necessary if for no other reason than that that crop is subject to a Government guarantee payment to the farmer of 4s. per bushel f.o.b. In addition to the provision for ratification of the present agreements, I am suggesting amendments of minor importance to the principal Act. These I will refer to presently. The original Act, the Wheat Marketing Act of 1916, has proved a very satisfactory one on the whole, and most of the criticism that has been levelled against the scheme, deserved or undeserved, has been more because of the administration of that Act than because of its provisions. Perhaps I would be more correct in saying the objections have been against the various Ministers, committees and officers who have, from time to time, had part in its administration. The main exceptions taken to the provisions of the Act have been in regard to the advisory committee's functions being advisory and not executive and to the audit of scheme's accounts being by the Auditor General, instead of by an outside or independent auditor. The principal bodies responsible for these objections are the Farmers and Settlers' Association and the Perth Chamber of Commerce. In my opinion no good and sufficient reasons have yet been advanced to warrant the Government in taking the initiative in seeking amendments in these directions. If, however, hon. members can show good reasons why the wheat committee should have executive functions and be independent of Government control, whilst the Government are responsible for a substantial financial guarantee for the successful operations of the scheme, and also cogent argument to show that an independent audit is likely to be more effective or less expensive than that by the Government Auditor General, the Government will carefully reconsider their present attitude. If such amendments are moved, I shall deem it my duty to indicate at the right time the very clear and decided views the Government now have on these matters, and to show what the alternative course to the retention of present provisions may lead to. I will content myself at present by saying that in a national industry in time of war, such as the successful marketing of our wheat crop undoubtedly is, when finance and shipping are the guiding factors, a national Government should govern, and not shirk their responsibilities by handing over their powers of government to a financially irresponsible independent board, no matter how capable its

members may be. If the Government cannot govern the wheat scheme satisfactorily, that is to say, nationally, they must make way for a Government that can. I have yet to learn that the present management, leaving the past alone, is not economically, expertly, and courageously administering the affairs of the scheme according to the intention of the Legislature and the requirements of the State. In this connection I might say that on the 3rd December last we were singularly fortunate in obtaining the expert services of the present general manager, and I say this with a knowledge of all that has gone on in the scheme since its inception, and with four months close official experience of Mr. Keys.

Hon. J. Duffell: Is he a local man?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Mr. Keys was for some time in control of the Westralian branch of Messrs. Dreyfus & Company. He has been practically the whole of his life in the wheat trade, and he knows it from A to Z. I am sure the appointment of one with such wide experience and extended knowledge of the wheat business, and with such fearless commercial rectitude as he possesses, should inspire confidence, not only in the minds of the farmers of this State and their financial and political organisations, but also in the Chamber of Commerce, of which Mr. Keys was a member until recently. I know, at any rate, that his appointment will appeal to hon. members, and any doubt they may have had that the conduct of scheme affairs would suffer by the loss of the business experience of the four shipper acquiring agents—Dalgety & Co., Ltd., Bell & Co., Darling & Son, and Louis Dreyfus & Company—has been considerably lessened since Mr. Keys became general manager, if it has not altogether disappeared. With regard to the amendments that I have referred to as being of minor importance, I wish to point out that during the operations of the principal Act in 1916, it was found necessary to seek financial accommodation from the Commonwealth Government, until the fourth payment of 6d. per bushel on 1915-16 certificates was made available by the Australian wheat board, and the 3d. per bushel ante-paid by the local committee was deducted therefrom and returned to the Commonwealth Government per the local Treasurer. It is necessary that that action should be ratified, hence the amendments set out in Clause 3 of the Bill. A further amendment proposed is that no millers should be allowed to grist wheat, other than for the scheme, without the Minister's consent. Of course this will not be arbitrarily withheld, but full control must be with the Minister. Prevention of sale of wheat is a deterrent, but some wheat finds a way into some mills—some millers have farms of their own, as for instance, Ockerby, Padbury, House (Perth Mill), and Piesse—and if no special agreement is made with them there is nothing to prevent their operating on their own wheat quite independently of the scheme. Other mills, mostly small ones, at present, could operate against the mills now under the control of the scheme. Clause 4 is in operation in the Eastern States, as we see from the Victorian Act No. 2846. Regarding the acquiring agency, there is no need for me to explain the circumstances leading up to the appointment of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., as sole acquiring agent this year on behalf of the scheme. This was fully traversed when the 1917 Bill was introduced. Further, the departmental papers have been laid on the Table of the House since that time, and have been at the disposal of hon. members. It will be noted that this acquiring agreement, as finalised, is subject generally to conditions similar to those contained in the agreements entered into with former acquiring agents, as set out in the schedule annexed to the main Act. The principal exception is that no provision has been made for the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., to ship any of the 1917-18 wheat. It is anticipated that this wheat cannot be substantially shipped for 18 months or two years, and it would therefore be premature to make any contract now for its ultimate shipment. The obligation of this firm ceases when the wheat is acquired from farmers and delivered to the officers of the scheme at the various wheat depots, where it will be taken care of until such time as it is sold locally or for overseas shipment. The only wheat that is being sent overseas, either in the form of grain or as flour, is that which came from the 1916-17 harvest. Owing to the shortage of ships this supply is not extensive, and the shipping can be satisfactorily carried out by the officers of the scheme in accordance with the present stringent requirements of the Australian Wheat Board, who are responsible for the terms of the contracts in connection with overseas shipments. Our officials have been effectively organised for this and similar purposes. The terms of remuneration for which the agent is operating are those that were agreed to in correspondence that was placed before the House when the Wheat Marketing Bill of 1917 was in the hands of hon. members. They are set out in Clause 11 of the agreement. Notwithstanding that the company is the sole operator in acquiring the wheat this year, it is considered that a Bond of £20,000 will be sufficient in view of the reduced responsibilities of the agent, because it must be understood that the acquiring agent this year has nothing like the responsibility which was taken by acquiring agents in previous years.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: The bond last year was for £100,000.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): That is so, but the acquiring agent this year is simply asked to acquire wheat from the farmer at the depots, and there the responsibility ceases.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is there a copy of the agreement available?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Yes, it is attached to the Wheat Marketing Bill. The arrangement with regard to gristing, storing and selling agency has been made with all the principal millers in the State, and is for a period of 12 months to the 3rd November, 1918. It will be seen from the list in the third schedule that all have signed the agreement with the exception of the Perth and Guildford mills. The Pingelly mill is in-

cluded with the Northam mill in the arrangement with Messrs. Thomas & Co., Ltd., and the Kellerberrin mill is an addition to the mill at Cottesloe in the arrangement made with Messrs. Ockerby & Co., Ltd. The bare remuneration terms of the agreement were made public in November last, and known to hon. members when the 1917 Bill extending the principal Act was agreed to in December. These terms are set out in Clause 23 of the agreement as finalised, with certain amplifications which have been inserted to make the arrangement more clear. The provisions and conditions of the agreement have been completed only after considerable negotiations with the millers concerned, extending over some three months. The agreement is comprehensive and almost self-explanatory. The object of the arrangement with the millers was twofold: first, to grist as much of our 1916-17 wheat as was weeviled or in danger of becoming weeviled; and second, to turn as much wheat of the Imperial order into flour as possible, thus ensuring employment at the mills and providing extensive quantities of bran and pollard for local use. The alternative to a gristing arrangement was to supply wheat to the mills at a dock for weevil affection. From a scheme point of view this was economically impracticable, as no expert or body of experts could fairly estimate the extent of weevil damage in a stack or portion of a stack of wheat. The result would be that whatever dock was accepted by the miller would be in his favour. No matter what tribunal was agreed to by the parties concerned to fix dockages, the miller would always have the last word, inasmuch as he would refuse to receive the wheat on his premises. It might be said it could force the miller to close down. Perhaps it could do so, but the weevil would go on eating the wheat. Our difficulty is to grist the wheat before too much damage is done to it by the weevils. The terms ultimately agreed upon with the millers were the best that could be arranged in the circumstances, although it is considered, with regard to the bigger mills with up-to-date plants, that those terms are on the liberal side. Unfortunately, no differentiation can be made with the larger mills in comparison with the smaller ones, for even the millers in the State are a close corporation. The late general manager offered, subject to my confirmation, 6½d. per bushel for gristing the weeviled wheat, and this was his last recommendation on the file. Before he left office, however, he suggested to me verbally that in all the circumstances of the case I would be well advised to pay the 7d. per bushel. There is no doubt that in our subsequent negotiations in the actual conditions of the agreement we have been able to get from the millers concessions on account of this payment of 7d., which they would not for one moment have considered if the gristing charge had been reduced to the bare 6½d. per bushel. For instance, no gristing allowance was arranged for on the weight of bags as is customary; the free storage of one month's producing capacity of the mill, our flour, which in itself represents a big item, was conceded; and arrangements were made for the taking over of offal contracts at the market prices on the 3rd November, instead of those set out in contracts at lower prices.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Another breach of Mr. Hughes' promises.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Mr. Hughes made no promise to the millers.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Yes, he did.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): The arrangement with the millers is as satisfactory for them as it is to the wheat scheme. Regarding the acquiring agency agreement, I maintain that the Government have done that which is best on behalf of the wheat scheme. We are paying a lower price for handling in this State than is being paid in any other State of the Commonwealth, and our wheat has been equally well, if not better, handled than ever before. In all the circumstances, the Government I think have been justified in making this arrangement on behalf of the scheme, and I have every confidence that hon. members will endorse the action which has been taken. I move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

On motion by Hon. V. Hamersley the debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.25 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 9th April, 1918.

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT—RECRUITING CONFERENCE, MELBOURNE.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray) [4.33]: I desire to make a brief statement in explanation of the absence of the Premier, the leader of the Oppoition, and the member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loghlen). On Saturday afternoon last His Excellency the Governor General of the Commonwealth determined to convene a representative conference of Australian public men for the purpose of considering the urgent appeal of the Prime Minister of Great Britain to the people of the Dominions for further support to the Empire and the Allies in the present great crisis. The conference was appointed to meet in Melbourne on Friday morning next; and I am sure it will be the ardent wish of all hon. members and of the people of this loyal State of Western Australia that, as a result of the Governor General's action, means