

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 3rd November, 1948.

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

QUESTIONS.

FISH.

As to Increase of Prices.

Mr. WILD asked the Attorney General:

(1) Is he aware that with the cessation of price control on fresh fish a rise of prices of from 10 per cent. to 15 per cent. was made immediately throughout the metropolitan area?

(2) Is he aware that on Thursday last the price of South African fillet rose from 1s. 9½d. to 2s. a pound?

(3) What action, if any, has been taken to offset these unnecessary increases of prices?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) It has been ascertained from the trade and confirmed by the Fisheries Department that the abnormal weather during the past two months has been responsible for lack of supplies, as indeed has been the diversion to crayfish fishing of fishermen previously engaged in catching other types of fish. It is anticipated that better conditions will shortly prevail and greater supplies will be available, which is expected to reduce the price. The Fremantle Fish Supply advised that fishermen are charging local traders 1s. 3½d. per pound for crayfish, compared with 11d. to 1s. per pound for export.

(2) New consignments have recently arrived from overseas at a greater landed cost, meaning that retailers pay 2d. per pound more than on previous consignments. After provision for the usual margin on this increased cost based on old margins, the retailers' price would be 2s. per pound.

(3) Consideration is being given to whether a measure of control should be reinstated.

PIG INDUSTRY COMPENSATION.

As to Application, etc.

Mr. NALDER asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) What amount of money is held in trust from the pig duty imposed some years ago?

(2) What amount was paid out during the swine fever outbreak and for how many pigs?

(3) Has any amount been paid out from the fund since then? If so, what amount and what for?

(4) For how long does he intend to impose the duty on all pigs sold?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £11,853 18s. 8d.—balance in Pig Industry Compensation Fund to 30/6/48.

(2) £28,930 2s. 6d. compensation for 11,759 pigs.

(3) Compensation for tuberculosis, £11,424 17s. 11d.; compensation for paratyphoid, £709 14s. 6d.; total, £12,134 12s. 5d.

(4) Since it is necessary to provide funds for the payment of claims for compensation in respect of pigs condemned for tuberculosis and paratyphoid, the stamp duty payable under the Pig Industry Compensation Act must continue to be imposed.

The rate of contribution is at present 1d. in the £1. During 1947-48 an amount of £2,488 17s. 8d. was paid out in compensation for 557 pigs, 489 of which were affected by tuberculosis and 68 by paratyphoid. The rates of compensation have recently been increased by 3½d. per lb. in the case of baconers and by 2d. per lb. in the case of chop-pers, and it is expected that the contributions derived from stamp duty will barely be sufficient to cover the claims for compensation received.

In order to meet the contingency of a further outbreak of swine fever, it is considered that a substantial reserve should stand to the credit of the compensation fund. At present market values, a reserve of £50,000 would probably be required to cope with an outbreak of swine fever, but on the basis of present stamp duty contributions and the amount it is necessary to pay out annually in compensation, a period of many years will elapse before such a reserve can be established.

SOUTH FREMANTLE POWER HOUSE.

As to Construction and Shortage of Tradesmen.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Works:

Is it a fact that the progress of the erection of the power station at South Fremantle is being retarded for the want of tradesmen such as bricklayers, carpenters and fitters?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes. Special measures are being taken to overcome the shortage.

GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY.

As to Consumption by Mining Companies.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Water Supply:

(1) How many gallons of water were drawn from the Goldfields Water Supply

by the mining companies on the Eastern Goldfields during the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1948?

(2) What is the average charge per 1,000 gallons for this water?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 523 million gallons.

(2) 5s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons.

MILK.

As to Price Inquiry and Reconstitution of Board.

Mr. MURRAY asked the Minister for Lands:

In view of continued unrest amongst producer-retailers of milk in Bunbury district, and repeated requests for price review based on figures supplied, will he inform the House—(1) What action is being taken in regard to price review?

(2) Is the present price considered equitable?

(3) What steps are being taken to reconstitute the Milk Board?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The matter is under consideration.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) The constitution of the board is at present being considered.

EDUCATION.

As to New School, Baker's Hill.

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

What progress has been made to date regarding the proposal to establish a new school at Baker's Hill?

The MINISTER replied:

A site has been selected by the district inspector and will go before the Sites Committee on the 10th November.

BUNBURY HARBOUR.

As to Tydemar Report and Improvements.

Mr. MURRAY asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Can he inform the House when the Tydemar report on Bunbury Harbour can be expected?

(2) When will work on re-construction of bridge across the estuary commence?

(3) In view of the difficulty in obtaining rails and fastenings for rehabilitation of railway on breakwater, will he advise—

(a) Are necessary rails available for reconstruction of line to groyne, and to additional groyne to be constructed to protect the cut above Turkey Point?

(b) Will he take steps to ensure that no unnecessary delay occurs through shortage of this material?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Mr. Tydeman has advised his general agreement with Mr. J. S. Young's proposal for the development of Bunbury Harbour. Mr. Tydeman's comprehensive report must await completion of his report on Fremantle Harbour.

(2) Materials have been ordered. It is hoped to commence reconstruction in December.

(3) (a) Sufficient rails are available for reconstruction of line to groyne. Additional rails are being sought for the extension to the cut above Turkey Point. (b) Yes.

KALGOORLIE HOSPITAL.

As to Filling Staff Vacancies.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR SUPPLY AND SHIPPING: Further to my reply to the questions asked by the member for Kalgoorlie, I have to state that one sister and three trainees will commence next week and efforts are being continued to interest others.

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read stating that it had agreed to refer the Bill to a Select Committee of three members and requesting that the Assembly appoint a Select Committee with the same number of members to act with the committee of the Council.

Appointment of Select Committee.

Mr. PERKINS: I move—

That the House agree to the request of the Council and that the members for Swan and Nelson and the mover be appointed a Select Committee to confer with the Select Committee of the Council with power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, move from place to place, and report on the 25th November.

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

BILLS (4)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Government Railways Act Amendment.
- 2, McNess Housing Trust Act Amendment (No. 2).
- 3, Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act Amendment.
- 4, Stipendiary Magistrates Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILLS (2)—REPORTS.

- 1, Poultry Industry (Trust Fund).
- 2, Matrimonial Causes and Personal Status Code.

Adopted.

BILL—FEEDING STUFFS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

MR. WILD (Swan) [4.43] in moving the second reading said: This measure is being introduced as the result of opposition by the Minister three weeks ago to an amending Bill which I then brought down, his contention being that the amendment I sought to make was being inserted in the wrong place. I am not going to discuss the Bill at any length, because I feel that all members are conversant with the arguments put forward when the previous measure was before them. I would like to make reference to one query raised by the member for Roebourne who stated that the inclusion of the amendment originally proposed would preclude small backyard poultry owners from obtaining poultry mash.

Having given that further consideration, I agree that his objection was valid and members will note that this Bill differs from the previous one in that I have inserted the words "in respect of which laying mash coupons for meat meal are required to be surrendered." Poultry mash is usually distributed as No. 1 or No. 2 mash. Some firms issue it under different names. No. 1 mash contains meat meal, for which coupons have to be surrendered to the department. No. 2 mash contains no meat meal whatever,

and therefore the man with only 10 or 12 birds can buy it without a permit. In accordance with the wishes of the member for Koorbourne I have had inserted the words to which I referred.

Since the previous amending Bill was before the House, another nail has been hammered in the coffin of producers of mash. A poultry farmer in Kenwick, not far from where I live, rang me up recently and asked me to look at some chick starter which he had, as it appeared to be sweepings off the floor. With him, I took a small sample—about 5 lb. to 7 lb.—of this mash to town and it was analysed by a gentleman who is very well known to members of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd.—namely, Mr. R. G. Lapsley, an analytical chemist. His report was as follows:—

I have to report that I have examined the sample of "chick mash" handed in this day by you and report as follows:—The material consists chiefly of a coarse bran grade. The remainder (20 mesh) is of wheat origin resembling pollard with a very small amount of material of the nature of dried blood insufficient to aid in its nutritive nature.

That particular chick starter was registered with the Department of Agriculture, (vide "Government Gazette" of the 30th April) as showing 16 per cent. animal protein; and the cost of a bag, containing 120 lb., is 23s. 6d. I submit that it does not matter what one buys, the contents should be in conformity with what is on the package. If one buys a packet of cigarettes which is alleged to contain 10, one is entitled to find on opening it, that it does contain 10 and not nine. The poultry farmers have had that experience over the last two years, as very few prepared mashes have been up to standard; but at long last, with the co-operation of the Agricultural Department and the Prices Branch—who may know that I do not intend to let up on this matter—I hope that poultry farmers will be assured that the contents of the bags containing foodstuffs issued by the manufacturers will be up to the standard registered with the department and in accordance with the fixed price. I trust that now the amendment to this Act has been inserted in the right place, the House will pass the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

BILL—THE WEST AUSTRALIAN CLUB (PRIVATE).

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [4.50] in moving the second reading said: Parliament, in its wisdom, has for many years been concerned with the welfare of people who have estates placed in trust with any other person or body. As the result of that concern we have on our statute book voluminous Acts dealing with trustees, executors and the administration of estates. One of those statutes, the Administration Act, passed in 1903, deals particularly with the administration of deceased estates. The whole purpose and design of that Act is to protect the beneficiaries under wills and ensure that the executors or administrators of wills are properly controlled and must give an account of their actions to the appropriate authority. The law provides that no company or corporation shall carry on business as an executor or administrator of deceased estates except by authority from Parliament.

So serious a view is taken of this aspect that a special and private Act of Parliament is required to authorise a corporation to carry on business as an executor and administrator of deceased estates. In Western Australia there are two such companies. One of them is the Western Australian Trustee and Agency Company, which operates under an Act of 1893, and the other is the Perpetual Trustee, Executor and Agency Company, which operates under an Act of Parliament passed in 1922. In addition, of course, we have the Public Trustee Office which, in turn, acts under special powers given to it by Parliament.

The two companies to which I have referred are purely Western Australian concerns, owned and controlled in this State. Such importance was placed on their operations that they were each required by law to place a sum of £5,000 in cash with the Treasury as an earnest of their bona fides to carry out their task to the satisfaction of the law and of the beneficiaries. It has come to my notice that, owing to a weakness in the Administration Act, the pur-

pose of Parliament can be and is being defeated, inasmuch as corporations outside of Western Australia are seeking and carrying on the business of executors and administrators of deceased estates in this State without any authority from Parliament. All they need do under the present set-up is to appoint an agent here to act on their behalf. So far as I have been able to ascertain the practice, in a number of cases that have come to my notice, it is that the foreign companies—to call them that—need only have a will made out appointing them as executors of the estate to ensure that they can obtain the necessary probate from the court.

Although the major part of the estate may be in Western Australia, and only a minor part in another State, because of that small part existing in another Australian State they are able to go to the Supreme Court in that State and obtain probate of the will, which is then merely re-sealed in Western Australia, an agent being appointed here to administer the estate. It will readily be seen that if this practice is allowed to continue the purpose of Parliament in providing safeguards for the administration of deceased estates will be defeated. In New South Wales there are five trustee companies, in Victoria nine, in Queensland three, in South Australia five and in Tasmania four, or 26 in all. At the present time it would be possible for any of those 26 companies to appoint an agent in Western Australia, first of all to ensure the company being appointed as executor of an estate, and then to administer it as agent in this State on behalf of the company.

In this way the companies appointed by Parliament to protect the interests of beneficiaries will serve no purpose and the object of Parliament may be defeated, allowing anything to happen in the case of such estates. I do not say that these other companies are not reliable, but the position does arise that a beneficiary under an estate has no redress against the company in Western Australia because that trustee company is outside this State and is responsible only through an agent to the courts here. As an instance of what does go on I have here a statutory declaration sworn to by one Arthur M. D. Sargent, in which he says—

I am one of the beneficiaries pursuant to the Will of the late W. A. T. Sargent, deceased. The executors named in the Will are Elder's Trustee Company, Adelaide, and probate of the said Will was granted in South Australia

and was subsequently resealed with the seal of the Supreme Court of Western Australia. The assets of the said estate in Western Australia were sworn for probate at a net value of approximately £31,000. I have been informed by the trustees, by letter, that the assets of the estate in South Australia do not exceed in value the sum of £50.

No syndicate or attorney has been appointed to act in respect of the estate in Western Australia. Mr. Sargent then continues and makes the solemn declaration. Here we have an estate of £31,000 being administered by trustees outside Western Australia. All they have in this State to administer the estate is an agent responsible to no-one but themselves. The beneficiary can have dealings only with that agent or, through that agent, with the executors of the estate. The circumstances surrounding this case are such that the House might well be informed of what actually happens and of the dangerous situation that can arise and will arise unless Parliament makes an effort to close the open door that at present exists in our law.

The testator, in this case Mr. Sargent, had already made a will. He was 66 years of age when he died and had resided in Western Australia for 45 years. He was admitted to the Katanning Hospital for treatment and, on admission, expressed the desire to make a will. One of his friends took a local solicitor to see him in hospital but that solicitor, when he saw Mr. Sargent, was unwilling to make a will because he doubted the mental capacity of the testator at that time. He did not make the will. He later had one of the Perth representatives of Elder Smith and Company call at the hospital in order to get the testator to make a will. The doctor in charge of Mr. Sargent at the time objected to the representative seeing his patient for the purpose of getting him to draw up a will because he considered the man was of unsound mind.

Mr. Reynolds: Was that Cornwall or House?

Mr. LESLIE: I do not know his name; but the doctor was Dr. Pope. However, the agent managed to see the testator, a will was made and Elders, the trustee company in Adelaide, were appointed as executors. I can see under the present Act every agent throughout the country districts in Western Australia, if he cannot be appointed agent for our own Western Australia.

lian trustee companies, accepting an agency for a trustee company outside the State, and all he would wish to do would be to work in the interests of that outside corporation. I have facts to prove that a trustee company outside Western Australia, handling the case of a testator who had no estate in another State, in order to operate had lodged £4 or £5 in a bank account in the testator's name in the State where the Company was incorporated. All it then had to do was to draw up a will in Western Australia and work under an agency.

With these facts known, surely it is time that we should attempt to remedy such a serious flaw in our laws. The Bill provides an amendment to one section of the Administration Act of 1903. This section provides that where a person is entitled to probate and the administration of that person's estate is outside the jurisdiction of the court of Western Australia, then that person cannot claim probate. There is no limit. The section also provides that such a person may appoint an attorney, who of course, is a corporation, to act on his behalf in Western Australia. My amendment is to provide that no probate may be granted by the court to any corporation operating outside of Western Australia unless it appoints one of the authorised trustee companies in Western Australia as its attorney to operate as executors under the will.

Either one of our trustee companies or the Public Trustee can be appointed as attorney and it will be readily realised that that gives the beneficiary the necessary pull over the executor to make certain that the intention of the testator and the law of the country are being carried out. Either a private company or the Public Trustee is authorised by Parliament—

Mr. Marshall: So is any administration that has to comply with our laws, whether it be an agency, an individual or anybody else.

Mr. LESLIE: I am not disputing that fact. Members will realise the difficulty with a corporation where the matter is placed in the hands of somebody outside the State who makes it his business. It is not making it an office of trust but is carrying out the job for profit. It is purely a concern doing business in this direction. The other clause in the Bill is merely a consequential one which seeks to amend Section 61 of the Act, and this again pro-

vides that it will be a limiting factor only with a corporation. People appointed to carry on the business of executors will then have proper control over these corporations. The ordinary law, as the member for Murchison has pointed out, gives protection, such as the trustee and administration laws.

Mr. Marshall: Can you show where an injustice has been done to a beneficiary by the Administration Act or by any other Act?

Mr. LESLIE: Yes. I have just quoted the case of a particular estate. This beneficiary and the testator were accustomed to putting their normal business through certain channels. After the death of the testator the whole business of the estate was transferred to Elder Smith & Company which, prior to the death of this man, had not been conducting any business whatsoever with the estate. The beneficiary now finds that regardless of what his wishes may be in connection with the estate, the will which is with the trustees in Adelaide is the one that operates, through agents in Western Australia. In other words, it is not a question of what is in the best interests of the beneficiary—and that is how this is operating—but a question of what is of benefit to the business of Elder Smith & Company who are conducting the agency.

Mr. Marshall: They can conduct that business only in accordance with the law of the land.

Mr. Fox: Should not the beneficiary be permitted to choose any agent he desires?

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, but when the trustees appoint their agencies to carry out the business, the beneficiaries have no say in the matter because the trustee is handling it. Elder Smith & Company are doing the job and that firm will do it, as would any other firm, to their own benefit. If Elder Smith & Company were operating in this State as a trustee company, they would do so purely as trustees. Whilst the estate is being wound up, Elder Smith & Company or Goldsbrough Mort & Company—or anybody at all—the predominating interest with them must be their own business. They are not interested in the testator.

Mr. Fox: The testator's wishes must be considered.

Mr. LESLIE: I have just told the hon. member that the testator was of unsound mind.

Mr. Fox: Even if he is of unsound mind his wishes should be respected.

Mr. LESLIE: I will leave the Bill with the House and I am sure members will realise that it is necessary for us to close the door to a position that is unsatisfactory and will continue to be so unless remedied. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Housing, debate adjourned.

BILL—GOLD BUYERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th October.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [5.10]: There is very little in this measure. It involves three or four amendments but there is only one that should be thoroughly considered by the House. I well remember the attack that was made when the Bill for the parent Act was introduced in Parliament in 1921. It was about that time that the organisation known as the Primary Producers Association was making a bold endeavour to convince the goldmining industry that its members were primary producers and should be connected with that organisation. So it appears that the parent Act was passed by this Chamber by means of a measure which was seen by that organisation before it was presented to the House. In consequence, when it appeared the House gave that piece of legislation and the Minister a nasty thrashing.

Most of the amendments sought by the Bill are of a minor character and need not be considered very seriously by the House or in Committee. However, the Minister did not give sufficient information to convince me that wrought gold should be brought under the Gold Buyers Act. In giving close consideration to other provisions in the Bill, it would appear to me that the Minister has created an anomaly in regard to the dealings in wrought gold, but this aspect can be considered in Committee. I suggest to the House that this is the only amendment to which I think serious consideration need be given, because it seems to me that it will be somewhat difficult to trade in ordinary trinkets if they are manufactured of gold.

There will be a limitation as to the places where one can sell or buy. Not only is that so, but it would appear from one provision of the Bill, that if one took along anything manufactured in gold to a jeweller for repair with sufficient wrought gold to effect such repair, he would not be allowed to use that gold but would have to purchase his requirements from a bank or a licensed gold dealer. In other words, no-one would be permitted to take two pieces of wrought gold to a jeweller to have one piece repaired or altered which would require the use of some additional gold. Surely that is not fair or just. The Act provides that a jeweller can buy wrought gold or smelt it without a license, and sell it in the course of his business without a license but it would not be permissible for him, under this Bill, to use a piece of wrought gold brought to him by a client to repair another piece of wrought gold.

In other words, if a client desired a wedding ring made a little larger and brought a second ring to the jeweller for that enlargement, the jeweller would not be permitted to use it. He would be forbidden to do so. I shall require from the Minister, when we deal with this measure in Committee, some justification for wrought gold being brought under the Act at all. I have on the notice paper an amendment that can be better discussed in Committee. My object is to remove the onus of proof from the defendant. These are the only comments I wish to make at this stage.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 to 11—agreed to.

Clause 12—Amendment of Section 27:

Mr. MARSHALL: I desire an explanation from the Minister. Section 27 deals with the purchasing of wrought gold by jewellers and others in the course of their business. In the first instance, the Bill provides an amendment setting out that a jeweller can purchase, without license, gold for the manufacture of goldware and that he can purchase wrought gold with that object. A jeweller is allowed to buy

wrought gold from the Mint, a bank, or a licensed gold dealer. The Minister, however, seeks to include a provision that creates the position I referred to during my second reading speech. A new subsection is to be added to Section 27 setting out that no gold except that purchased from the Mint, a bank or a licensed gold buyer, shall be used in manufacture.

No exception can be taken to that, but the subsection does not mention wrought gold at all. It means that a jeweller will not be able to use wrought gold for the purpose of manufacturing an article although he is allowed to smelt it and sell it in the ordinary course of his business. I take exception to new Subsection (4), which sets out that no wrought gold, except that contained in any article the property of any customer, received by a manufacturing jeweller or other manufacturer of gold for the purpose of alteration or refashioning, shall be used in manufacture. That is a remarkable provision. A person may bring in a ring in order to have another ring enlarged, but the jeweller will not be able to do the work except with the aid of pure gold, not wrought gold. I certainly cannot subscribe to such a provision.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The object of the amendments is to prevent jewellers who are not scrupulous from acquiring illicit gold and converting it into manufactured articles so that the gold cannot be traced. Reputable jewellers usually buy their gold from the Mint, but I understand there are instances where the manufacturer may be utilised by gold stealers as a means by which stolen gold is converted into manufactured articles, with the result that, as the gold cannot be traced, it greatly accentuates the difficulty of sheeting home any illicit transaction. At the same time, I find myself somewhat in agreement with the member for Murchison. I am not satisfied that the treatment of the matter is entirely logical.

What the clause really means is that if a jeweller takes a manufactured article in respect of which some work is to be carried out, he can only do so in a manner that will retain the identity of that particular article. That might be quite a suitable amendment, but when it comes to the phase to which the member for Murchison has drawn attention, where the man is licensed to buy wrought

gold in the first instance but then a prohibition is placed upon its use, I frankly confess that I cannot follow the intention. I am prepared to meet his wishes, either by passing the clause as it stands with an undertaking to recommit it if considered necessary, or else by reporting progress with a view to making further inquiries. The matter is rather technical and concerns a subject on which I cannot speak from personal knowledge.

Mr. MARSHALL: There is another aspect to which I shall draw attention, because to report progress in order to deal with the point I have raised would be of little avail if the necessity arises to consider other aspects. As the matter stands now, a jeweller is allowed to buy wrought gold only from the Mint, a bank or a licensed goldbuyer. That means that if a person had some jewellery that required mending or altering, and he took to the jeweller another piece of wrought gold to enable the work to be done, the manufacturer could not buy the extra gold, and he would have to hand it back. That is not altogether acceptable. While there may be unscrupulous jewellers, the individual who took extra gold in order to have some repair work carried out might lose by it. I could not go to a jeweller and say, "Here is a ring that I want altered and here is another piece of wrought gold which I would like you to use when making the alteration; you can purchase whatever gold is left over." Will the Minister also consider that point?

The Minister for Housing: Yes.

Progress reported.

BILL—BUILDERS' REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of three amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

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

No. 1. Clause 3:—In paragraph (a) delete the word "six" in line 20 and substitute the word "eight."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In considering this amendment, which is quite important, members should bear in mind that

the purpose for which the parent Act was introduced was to protect prospective homeowners from jerry-builders and builders of immature age. We should not interfere with that purpose. At present, unregistered builders may erect a building the value of which does not exceed £400. That was the amount fixed in 1939, but since then there has been a substantial rise in wages and in the price of all kinds of materials. I assess that rise as equivalent to 50 per cent. I made inquiries from numerous builders and the consensus of opinion was that the rise was certainly not below 50 per cent. and possibly a little above.

The amendment would increase the present limit of £600 to £800. I can see no justification for this increase. The member who moved the amendment in another place said he did so for the reason that he had a graph showing that building costs had risen since 1939 by 100 per cent. He then went on to say that a house which cost £500 in 1939 now costs £1,100 to £1,200. That is an increase of 140 per cent., so the conclusions arrived at by him are strangely at variance. I would not mind fixing the limit at £700, as I do not wish to risk losing the Bill. I said on the second reading debate that if suitable reasons could be advanced I might be prepared to go as far as £650 or even £700. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to subject to the deletion of the word "eight" and the substitution of the word "seven" in line 2.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I am surprised at the Minister's compromise, as I had hoped that he would have the courage to stand by the measure. The effect of the Council's amendment would be virtually to scrap the Bill. The Minister has contended all along that there has been an increase of 50 per cent. in the cost of building since 1939. I am not in agreement with him. The wages paid to the artisans have not increased to that extent by any means; while the increase in the basic wage—at all events prior to the last increase—was about 35 per cent. Even if we accept the Council's amendment it would not result in one additional house being built, nor would the Minister's amendment result in increasing the number of tradesmen available.

The Minister for Works: Did anybody pretend that?

Mr. NEEDHAM: The real intention of the amendment is to abolish this legislation altogether. If that happened, we would revert to the old position when any person could erect jerry-built houses. In moving his amendment the Minister said that the original intention of the Bill was to prevent the continuance of jerry-building and to safeguard the wages of employees in the building trade. It was also to protect the merchants who supplied the materials. If the Committee accepts the amendment, we will be reverting to the old position of jerry-building. I will not support any amendment of that nature.

Mr. LESLIE: The Minister's amendment goes beyond the £600 mentioned in the Bill, and the Council's amendment goes further still. I would like to see the Council's amendment accepted, but at the same time, I would not like the position to arise that we get nothing at all. The member for Perth was quite right when he said that since the Bill was introduced a deputation from the housing committee of the R.S.L. waited upon the Minister and asked for the amount to be raised to £1,000. I would be happy to see that. The arguments I advanced then are sound, namely, that there are any number of men who are capable of building a cottage, but nothing else, and who would undertake that work.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They would not be able to build a very good one for £800.

Mr. LESLIE: They could not build anything at all for £400, nor could they build very much for £600. The obvious thing is to raise the amount to £800. I understand the course of study required to be undertaken by a tradesman in order to obtain registration under the Act is such that by the time he passes the necessary examinations he is capable of building anything from a cottage to a 13-storey building.

Mr. Rodoreda: It has been made a close preserve.

Mr. LESLIE: I am not much concerned about that. Many tradesmen could build a cottage or a house costing £2,000, but would most definitely be incapable of constructing a four or five-storey business building or block of flats. What do we get in the way of a house for £800? Prior to the war the maximum advance for a war service

home was £850. Today it is £1,750, and I guarantee that many such homes are being constructed to the limit of the cost, which is, I think, £2,200, under the State Housing Act. The housing committee of the R.S.L. believes there are men who would be prepared to go to £800 for a house under the war service housing scheme, and they would get it quickly and the house would be built under supervision—if it were possible for these unregistered men to do the work.

Many returned men apply for houses costing from £1,000 to £1,750 and only registered builders can accept the contracts. Hence there is a long waiting list of people desiring war service homes and private houses. The member for Perth suggests that this will not increase the rate of building, but I say it will because it will bring into the building game people who are out of it today for the reason that they are not permitted as a result of the £600 limit to build much more than a lean-to. The Minister quoted figures indicating the tremendous number of potential builders who started on the building course, but failed to complete it, and did not even sit for the examinations. It is ridiculous to say that a man who is asked to build only a cottage, should have the qualifications to construct a large block of flats.

The Minister for Works: Many of the trainees do not wait for the examinations. They start and then slacken off.

Mr. LESLIE: That is so. They slacken off because they find they are called upon to enter into a course of study to qualify them to be able to construct the largest building likely to be erected. While that is beyond their capacity, many would make first-class tradesmen and be able to build houses costing up to £2,000. What actually is wanted—and I think this would meet the wishes of the member for Perth—is that builders should be graded so that some men could be registered to construct buildings costing up to a certain sum, say £600, others could be allowed to contract for buildings costing £2,000 while still others could go to £30,000 and even more. At the present time it is necessary for us in order to speed up building operations, to lift the restrictions which are keeping skilled and capable men out of the trade. I oppose the Minister's amendment, but will support that of the Council.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Will you tell me, Mr. Chairman, what the amendment is?

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister has moved that the Council's amendment No. 1 be agreed to subject to the deletion of the word "eight" and the substitution of the word "seven" in line 2.

Mr. STYANTS: The Minister would not be doing any great wrong if he agreed to the proposal from another place. The original Act was for the purpose of safeguarding people who wanted to build a house. It was a protection against builders without qualifications. This Chamber, and another place, decided that £400 at that time was a reasonable sum to provide the class of home that was contemplated. Now we have to consider what increase should be allowed so as to provide the same class of home. I think the member for Perth has very much under-estimated the figure. He is probably the only one in the Chamber who would agree to such a conservative estimate. I think the increase of 140 per cent., suggested by a member in another place, is slightly exaggerated. I would say, from evidence placed before us during the session, that about 100 per cent. would be the correct figure. It must be remembered that the cost of construction of brick houses has not increased to the same extent as that of timber-framed houses. It would not be any exaggeration to say that the cost of the latter has increased considerably more than 100 per cent., and that is the class of house with which we are dealing, because no one would attempt to build a brick house for £800 at the present time.

The Minister for Works: No one considered building a brick house at £400.

Mr. STYANTS: That is so.

The Minister for Works: Your calculations are on a wrong basis.

Mr. STYANTS: It is the additional cost of a timber-framed house that we have to consider. A brick house costs about 100 per cent. more today than pre-war and a timber-framed house about 120 to 130 per cent. more. I also remember the information given only last week in connection with the increase in the cost of construction of McNess homes when it was pointed out that a house that cost £300 or £350 in 1930, cost about £450 to £480 in 1940, and today it is estimated that a slightly better house would be in the vicinity of £1,000. The Minister

would be doing no great injustice to anyone if he agreed to the Council's proposal. I am certain that a house that could be constructed for £400, pre-war, would cost at least £800 to build today—that is a timber-framed house.

The Minister for Works: This has reference to brick houses as well.

Mr. STYANTS: It would be a very modest cottage that we could erect today for £800.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I move —

That the amendment be amended by striking out all the words after the words "agreed to."

We have a right to agree to the amendment from the Legislative Council.

Mr. Styants: That is a change for you.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: Yes. I am sorry to agree to anything from the Legislative Council, but on this occasion it will not do much harm. The member for Perth talked of jerry-built houses. I do not think the Builders' Registration Act has done away with such buildings—there are still jerry-built houses. It is only fair to give tradesmen, who are able to do the work, the right to build houses costing up to £800. Many tradesmen do not like working for a boss; they prefer to work for themselves. I think those people should be given a chance. When we realise that it is possible to get a four-roomed wooden asbestos dwelling only for a sum of £1,200, surely it is not going to be a magnificent house which can be built for £800.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The important thing with regard to housing at the present time is that there shall be provided a maximum number of houses. There is a scheme in operation which is called the self-help scheme, under which a certain number of permits are granted at different times for persons who are in a position to erect places for themselves. The idea behind the scheme is that such houses will not make a claim upon the existing pool of skilled labour and therefore will not retard the rate of building but will in effect accelerate it by permitting certain persons who could not accept contracts for others to build houses for themselves.

With present-day costs it is not possible to erect anything worthwhile for £400 and one would not get anything very much better for £600. I understand the reason

which actuated the Legislative Council in making the amendment was that when a man, under the self-help scheme, was given a permit to build, it was felt that he should get something reasonable, and there is no reason why such a person should be limited to the poorest type of house because he is not a registered builder. There is a good deal of merit in that thought and I am disposed to agree with the Council's amendment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Perth stated on the second reading that if the amount was increased to £600, it would not have any effect whatever in increasing the number of houses likely to be built. The hon. member just does not know. I cannot say that I know but I do not think it would have that effect. I have noticed a tendency from the last three speakers to alter entirely their previous views with regard to amendments made by the Legislative Council. When the Bill was in Committee it accepted the limit of £600 by a very substantial majority and yet in a short space of time members are prepared to jump from a 50 per cent. increase of the amount now in the Act, to a 100 per cent. increase.

Mr. Styants: I expressed the view that £600 was not enough, which proves that I knew my own mind.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think the hon. member has travelled a little further on the road upwards since then. However, members are justified in their fears regarding increased prices because, even in the short space of time since the introduction of the Bill, there has been a rise of 4s. 2d. in the basic wage and that has added fairly substantially to the cost of homes.

Mr. Marshall: What is your experience as to the quality of building since we registered builders?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is asking me to embark upon a very long story; one, too, which he well knows is not permitted under this particular amendment.

Mr. Marshall: Yes it is.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the hon. member is anxious to know my views there is nothing to stop him from pursuing his inquiries outside. I am opposed to the amendment of the member for Fremantle.

Mr. FOX: I am inclined to agree with the amendment. When the Bill was originally introduced I did not feel that any limit should be placed on the amount to which private people could build.

The Minister for Works: There is no limit now.

Mr. FOX: I do not believe that by lifting the price even to £800 we are going to build more houses, but it will give those who wish to build a reasonable house for themselves an opportunity to do so. I have seen a number of homes built in Spearwood and the people have built them on their own, and they compare more than favourably with houses built in any other part of the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Works: There is no bar to the owner-builder in this Bill.

Mr. FOX: Every school boy should be taught how to build a home while he is at school because after he leaves, unless he becomes a tradesman, he has no idea at all of building. If a lad could get tuition at school he would be able to help himself by erecting a home. Many people are now making bricks from cement and we should encourage such industry.

Mr. READ: I agree with the amendment of another place, because when the question of limitation arose I did not think there should be any registration at all for builders. The work on the buildings in Perth, which were erected by men who were not registered builders, is a credit to their skill. The member for Perth said that we might as well abolish legislation of any kind if we raise the amount from £600 to £800. That is not so because we have building bylaws issued by the local governing body and they demand plans and specifications, etc.

The Minister for Works: If the building bylaws had been sufficient of themselves, what was the object of voting for the Bill in 1939?

Mr. READ: Many of us do not agree with the registration of builders. In my ward, which is the largest in the metropolitan area, there are houses which have stood for 20 or 30 years and they are a monument to unregistered builders. The men who built those houses are capable of continuing their work but are precluded because of the Act. Previously it was possible for

a man to build a house under the supervision of the building surveyor of the local governing authority. The men who built those houses, during the period of depression, were scattered all over Australia, and when the war came along they enlisted and went away and did not apply for registration. Because of that they are not registered builders. Those men are available and they have the skill to build houses for the people. Yet they cannot build or accept a contract because of the Act. Some of these unregistered builders can erect a fine type of house, but the man who is licensed under the provisions of the Act accepts the contract and then gets these men to do the job.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Subletting?

Mr. READ: Yes. I am surprised that the Minister did not accept the Council's amendment. It is rather strange that members on his side of the Chamber should disagree with the Legislative Council and the Opposition should agree with it. I support the Council's amendment.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Amendment on amendment put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 3:—In paragraph (c) on page 2, delete the word "six" in line 11 and substitute the word "eight."

No. 3. Clause 4:—In paragraph (a) of proposed new section 4A delete the word "six" in line 25 and substitute the word "eight."

On motions by the Minister for Works, the foregoing amendments were agreed to.

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

BILL—WHEAT POOL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 13th October.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (North-East Fremantle) [7.34]: I ask the House to reject the Bill on two grounds, firstly, that scarcely any information has been given to Parliament to justify the passing of the measure and, secondly, that it would be

quite wrong for us to give this extended power without first of all determining the ultimate destination of the fund, which could become very considerable. The reserve fund which this Bill proposes to give power to deal with has already reached the sizable proportions of £139,000. Neither Minister told Parliament that but it is the position, and the fund could conceivably reach half a million within a reasonably short space of time.

Before we give the extended power that is sought, we should determine what is eventually to become of the money; otherwise there will be a fine wrangle on the hands of some people. Whilst it might not arouse a great deal of interest at present because possibly the shares would not exceed £30 or £40, if the fund became half a million, which it could easily do, the position would be different and there would be a lot of argument as to what should happen.

The Government should have taken steps to ensure that sufficient information was given about the Bill, which is a very important measure because it proposes a very far-reaching departure from accepted practice. If we take the speeches of both Ministers who have handled the Bill so far, the total time occupied in presenting it to both Houses was less than five minutes. The Minister in another place used exactly 179 words, of which 65 were a direct quotation from the Bill, so that his actual speech occupied less than one minute. In the course of using those words of his own, he made two statements that purported to be statements of fact—only two—and they were both wrong.

When the Bill was launched, the Minister launching it, in a speech of his own that lasted less than a minute, gave incorrect information to the House to justify its being passed. He said that the Bill was being introduced because it had been requested by the trustees of the Wheat Pool who, he stated, had not the power to invest the reserve fund. Of course they had power to invest the reserve fund; that is why the fund has reached a total of £139,000. Let me read the report of the trustees of the Wheat Pool for the season 1947-48 under the heading "Reserve Fund Earnings." It says—

In addition to the revenue from agencies mentioned above, the pool receives revenue

from investments of pool funds which were built up, firstly, from the undistributed final small fractions of less than $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per bushel from each of the voluntary pools, and secondly, from the investments of those fractions.

Yet the Minister in another place said the reason for introducing the Bill was that the trustees could not invest the reserve fund. His final statement was—

Actually the Bill seeks to give power for people to invest their own money—trust money—that the Wheat Pool has in hand.

The Premier: I think he said that the trustees could not invest the money in anything other than Commonwealth bonds.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, he did not. I have read every word he said. It will be found in "Hansard" No. 11 at page 1,344.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Premier thinks that that is what he should have said.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So there is the Minister's justification for the Bill. It was requested by the trustees who, he said, did not have the power to invest their reserve fund, and he also said that the Bill was intended to give people the right to invest their own money. During the discussion in Committee in another place, some members became a little curious and suggested that the passage of the Bill should be held up so that some information could be obtained from the trustees of the pool. To that suggestion the Minister made this remarkable statement—

There is no use delaying the passage of the Bill because the trustees would not give the information.

So here is a Bill being introduced at the request of the trustees—no other reason was given—and the Minister states that if they were asked to say why they wanted the Bill introduced, or if they were asked to give any information, they would refuse to do so. Finally, he made another remarkable statement—that whether the Bill was passed or not, the trustees already had the power.

Mr. Marshall: That is not bad!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So another place was first informed that the Bill was necessary because the trustees had not power to invest their reserve funds; and then the House was later informed that, whether it passed the Bill or not, the trustees already had the power. What sort of case is that for a Bill?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: A very woody case!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Ultimately the Bill arrived here; and the Minister for Lands did not spread himself, either. He took less than three minutes to launch the Bill.

The Minister for Lands: I dealt with the question the Bill was dealing with.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In 320 words.

The Minister for Lands: Quite sufficient.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I will tell the Minister what he said, and we shall see whether he gave the House the information that was necessary. He mentioned that the date of the coming into operation of voluntary pools was 1922. He said that the Wheat Pool was incorporated in 1932, and since 1939 it had acted for the Australian Wheat Board as sole broker, as a paying agent and a shipping agent.

The Minister for Lands: For the sale of wheat within Western Australia.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: He said that—

Since the pool's inception, the undistributed final fractions . . . from each of the voluntary pools and the investments of these fractions have built up a substantial fund.

This fund, he said, had already proved of great value to wheatgrowers. He said that one instance was when experimental work was done in the early stages of bulk-handling. The reserve fund was used to the full at that time, and wheatgrowers in Western Australia were now reaping the benefit. The trustees felt that they might be restricted in their choice of investments—though they were told in another place that the funds could not be invested at all! He said it was 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 the trustees were prevented by the Act from so doing. The Minister in another place said they had the power, whether the Bill was passed or not. The Minister for Lands went on—

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—

that is the Minister's reason—

—of any good suitable investment, whether it be shares, bonds, debentures, real estate or any other investment which they may think beneficial for the wheatgrowers of Western Aus-

tralia. 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 amendment merely states this in unambiguous language.

That is the sum total of the information made available by both Ministers. There has been a further speaker on this Bill—there were only three speeches on the second reading in both Houses, and the second speech in the other place was one of 82 words.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They are getting shorter.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The hon. member said—

There is nothing very much in this Bill. . . . A very considerable sum was accumulated, probably £130,000. It has been lying idle—that is what he told another place—

—and this Bill will enable it to be invested.

Yet the trustees in their own report say that these fractions have been so invested that the fund has now reached £139,000.

Mr. Marshall: Who is telling the truth?

The Minister for Lands: We will find out.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: So the House was informed that the fund had been lying idle, the Minister having said that the trustees had no power to invest the money. So the House was completely misled into believing that the purpose of this Bill was to give power to the trustees where they had no power to invest a fund which is lying idle. No such thing! As a matter of fact, the Wheat Pool Act says that the trustees may in their absolute discretion invest the money. I will quote from Subsection (5), paragraph (g), of Section 15, as follows:—

(5) Without in any way limiting the general powers of the Corporation hereby given or by law implied, the Corporation shall have the following subsidiary powers:—

(g) To apply all such reserve funds and the accumulations thereof, and the investments representing the same, in such manner as the Trustees may, in their absolute discretion, consider beneficial to the system of co-operative wheat pooling and/or to growers of wheat in Western Australia, and in such other manner as the Corporation may be authorised to do by contracts made with contributors to any fund or funds, for purchase of shares in any company the activities of which relate to the handling, shipping, delivering, marketing or treating of wheat, or which is in any way connected therewith, whether in Australia or elsewhere; for purchase or acquirement of

plant and machinery for handling, reconditioning, storing and/or treating wheat; and for the establishment and maintenance of any scheme or system as aforesaid for the handling of wheat and/or other grain in bulk.

The Minister for Lands: Would you not say that limited them?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would not say that it said they had no power to invest their funds.

The Minister for Lands: They admit they have certain powers.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: They have a lot of power, all the power of trustees to invest in trustee securities, and there is a very sound reason, I suggest to the Premier, why he should not agree that this power should be extended. Does the Premier know there are four trustees of the Wheat Pool and that the Act provides that any two of them present in person or by proxy shall form a quorum? Does the Premier also know that the chairman of the meeting shall have a casting vote as well as a deliberative vote? So we could get to this position: There could be a meeting of trustees at which only two were present, one a proxy. The decision of the chairman, by virtue of the fact that he had two votes, would be the one that would be carried, so that one trustee could determine what was to be done with the whole of this fund or any part thereof. Whilst I have complete faith in the existing trustees, this is legislation for the future, and it is conceivable that at some time a go-getter could become a trustee.

Mr. Marshall: And probably would.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Should a go-getter become a trustee and find himself in the chair at a meeting where only two persons were present, he could irrevocably invest this fund to bolster up some tottering industrial concern with which he was associated, if he so desired. That could be done, and who would there be to prevent it, if we agreed to the amendment? Would we be doing our duty to the wheatgrowers if we so enlarged the scope of this Bill, without adequate safeguards, as to permit of that being done? There is a safeguard at present, because even though a go-getter might find himself in the position of determining what should be done with the fund, as the Act stands he could use the money only in trustee investments or in investments out-

lined for the benefit of wheatgrowers. Remove that protection and we do not know what might happen to the fund. That is something that I feel Parliament would not be justified in doing. I think Parliament was entitled to be told the size of the fund, how it came about that this money had grown to the present total and how it was that these fractional parts were available to the trustees. No such information was given, at all. As a matter of fact, the real reason why the Bill was introduced was not given, and I do not know that the Government is aware of the reason, because the Minister in another place was not prepared to ask the trustees, believing that they would not tell him.

The Minister for Lands: The Minister in this place did ask.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If he did so and was given the real reason he will be able to tell the House whether this is the reason or not. I say the reason for this Bill being introduced was not to open up other avenues of investment for idle money, but to validate something that has already been done and about which the trustees are somewhat doubtful. Is not that the position?

The Minister for Lands: The trustees say they feel that they may be restricted in their choice of investments.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is not my point. In my opinion the real reason for the Bill being introduced was not so much to open up fresh fields of investment—though that may be one of the reasons—as to make sure that certain acts already done by the trustees, and actually beyond their power, might be validated. If that is so, Parliament should have been told about it.

Mr. Marshall: What is the Legislative Council doing that it does not find these things out? Is it in this conspiracy?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I submit it is highly improper for a Government to introduce a Bill to do certain things, at the request of some outside party, without telling Parliament what the reasons for its introduction are. If the Minister knew the reasons he is culpable for not having told the House about them.

The Minister for Lands: I did not know that reason.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then the trustees withheld the information from the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: That is so, if your statement is correct.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I hope the Minister will check up on it.

The Minister for Lands: I will.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the Minister has any difficulty in finding the facts and will tell me, I will give him the details of the transaction.

The Minister for Lands: That is very helpful.

Mr. Marshall: We have to put you right on many things.

The Minister for Lands: No, you do not. Do not try to cause trouble.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The main reason is to validate acts already done, which the trustees feel were beyond their power. They may have—I would not say they have not—in contemplation investments in certain directions that are not covered by their powers, though the Minister in another place said that, whether the Bill is passed or not, the trustees already have the power. I do not know who advised him to that effect, but, if it is true, I cannot see the reason for the Bill.

The Minister for Lands: If that were true there would be no need for the Bill.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Read what that Minister said.

The Minister for Lands: I have read it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Are we as a deliberative assembly, in the circumstances, justified in passing this measure—

Mr. Marshall: Definitely not!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN:—when the information given in the first place, that the trustees had no power to invest these funds, was definitely wrong, when the real reason for the introduction of the Bill was not disclosed, and when there is that danger of one trustee being in a position to direct the money into channels that might suit his own interests best—in saying that I am not referring to any present trustee or impugning the honesty of any present trustee, though I have to contemplate the possibility that there could be a trustee who was not over-scrupulous. I must refer to another factor; that the Wheat Pool Act contemplated that there would be regular elections of trustees. It was contemplated that one trustee would

retire every year on the 30th September and that in the month of July in each year in which a trustee had to retire another election would take place for a successor, the trustees to be elected by members of the Wheatgrowers' Council. I understand there has not been a meeting of that council since the early years of the war, though I am open to correction on that.

Mr. Ackland: Those meetings are held regularly, three or four times a year.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am informed that there has not been a meeting of that council since the early years of the war. That was the information given to me, and I would like to have proof to the contrary, because the Act provides that in the event of there being no meetings of the growers' council or no elections, the trustees who should have retired shall continue in office, and so the present trustees would continue, quite legally, if there had been no meetings of the council. I would like to know whether such meetings have been held, and the Minister should have given the House that information. Members should have been told whether elections have been held regularly, but we have not been informed. There are many unsatisfactory aspects of the matter and nobody seems to know definitely to whom the £139,000 belongs.

Hon. A. H. Panton: They could soon divvy it up. It would help the Premier with his deficit.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I believe it belongs to the farmers and should be safeguarded for them. I do not think it has become lost to them. I believe the trustees are simply holding it in trust for the farmers, whose money it really is. I got my opinion from a clause in the contract dealing with the 1937-38 season, headed "Conditions of Pool." The passage to which I refer reads as follows:—

The grower doth hereby irrevocably appoint the trustees his agents to sell the pooled wheat at the best price obtainable under market conditions and to pay to the grower the sum received after deducting therefrom the whole of the expenses (whether preliminary or otherwise) incurred in and about the receiving handling sale and disposal of the wheat including all salaries wages and other payments made in connection therewith or otherwise in respect of the operations of the trustees it being expressly agreed that the whole of the net proceeds up to the next lower one-eighth of one penny per bushel as apparent at the

date of the declaration of the final dividend shall be distributed amongst the growers as hereinafter provided.

So all it has to do is irrevocably to appoint trustees as agents for the growers and tell them that, so far as the net proceeds are concerned, they shall distribute them less the small fractions up to $\frac{1}{8}$ d. per bushel. So the understanding is that practically all the proceeds will be distributed but the small fractional parts shall be retained by the trustees as agents for the growers. Therefore, it is the growers' money which is undistributed and it belongs to them no matter what trusts or otherwise are set up, or what powers are given to the trustees to deal with it. It is the growers' undistributed funds which have built up this reserve and it is now proposed that under certain circumstances one man shall determine the disposal of such funds. Whilst £139,000 is a fairly large sum, its distribution at present would not amount to very much per farmer; but if the fund became half a million, and it could quite conceivably reach such a figure, it would be a different proposition altogether. Yet we find that one of the conditions is that if at any time the trustees decide to distribute this money they shall distribute it to the people who are growers at the time of the distribution. So if this fund were built up to half a million and the trustees at that time decided to distribute money, it would be a present to the farmers who were then producing wheat, without any reference to those who had gone before or those who had contributed money to the fund.

The Minister for Lands: Does not that work with the stabilisation fund too?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I believe it will, but I am referring to this fund which has to be built up and enlarged and dealt with by trustees no longer under the restriction of trustee investments. I do not think that is a reasonable proposition in view of the paucity of information which has been given to Parliament in connection with the subject. Before we agree to a proposal of this kind we should have the fullest information; we should have information to show us conclusively how the wheatgrowers have suffered because the trustees did not have this extended power. If a case could be made out to show that because of the restrictions it was desirable to remove them in order that certain benefits would accrue to

the farmers and to the industry, that would be all right, but there has been no attempt made by the Government to give that information. The Premier is occupying the most responsible position as head of the Government which has given its blessing to the Bill. I think the Bill ought to be withdrawn under the circumstances I have set out—

Hon. A. H. Panton: They will want a Select Committee on it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN:—until some justification is given for having it passed. When I reflect that the Minister in another place said it was useless to hold up the Bill and ask for information because the trustees would not give any, I think that is one of the strongest reasons I know for refusing to pass the Bill.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We are told that this Bill has been introduced because the trustees want it. Members know the two chief ways by which Bills get into this Parliament. There are Bills that are introduced in order that Government policy may be implemented, and there are those which have been requested by responsible bodies or organisations on whose behalf strong cases have been put up for having such Bills passed. Surely a Government does not introduce a Bill and ask Parliament to make it law without being in a position to supply adequate reasons for so doing. Yet it seems that no such proper inquiry was carried out in connection with this matter, and the people who are responsible for introducing the Bill and those who requested it, so we have been told, will not give any information about it. Under the circumstances, are we justified in passing this Bill or should we not most definitely hold it up until a case is made for it? No such case has yet been made. I think, too, there is another pre-requisite; that is, that we should be more definite about what is to become of this money eventually. It is quite conceivable that in the initial stages when power was being given to the trustees to withhold these fractions the idea did not occur to anybody that steps should be taken to determine what should become of the money. However, over the progress of years a substantial sum has been built up and surely the question must now present itself as to what is to become of this fund if it keeps on growing.

The Minister for Lands: I feel that finally they would be forced to distribute it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Would they?

The Minister for Lands: If they built up huge and valuable assets, what would be the result? Who would get them?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know.

The Minister for Lands: No, neither do I, so I think they would be forced to distribute the funds.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not think we should leave it to assumption.

The Minister for Lands: Neither do I.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is a large sum to hold, and under the extended powers it could become still larger, or disappear altogether. This is a possibility that cannot be overlooked. The Bill, if agreed to, would give trustees power to invest money wherever they wished. One member in another place said it would give them power to buy racehorses and it would, too.

Mr. Marshall: What is wrong with that?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: But when the Honorary Minister chided the hon. member for making such a suggestion the latter felt he had overstepped the mark a bit and said he was exaggerating, but he was not.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: He never does.

The Minister for Housing: They cannot invest money on racehorses.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Well, let us see what the amendment proposes. That is the only way to decide this matter.

Mr. Marshall: I do not know what the Legislative Council is doing or what good it is to allow things like this to go through.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: What about the Government that introduced the Bill?

Mr. Marshall: I never realised their usefulness until now. I think there is a conspiracy by some members to get hold of this money.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: At this stage I think it is necessary that we should know what the Bill proposes to do.

Mr. Marshall: Your crowd on the other side cuts a sorry picture.

The Minister for Lands: That is your opinion.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: To Section 15 of the Act the Bill proposes to add—

... "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."

The Minister for Housing: I could give you a free opinion.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is as wide as it can possibly be.

The Minister for Housing: It does not cover racehorses.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would like to hear from the Minister later what part of the clause prohibits that intention. It says—
... "and from time to time to invest any moneys forming part of any such reserve funds or the accumulations thereof in any investments. . . ."

They may invest the money in any investments or securities which they think fit. If, as we are told, they can invest money in any investments I would consider that as a completely open cheque.

The Minister for Housing: Do not go on that opinion.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That is what the clause says; they are without restrictions of any kind. Is it wise, in view of the way the trustees are elected and the way in which they can carry on their business, to open the door as wide as that? In my opinion, it definitely is not and I think we would forfeit our claim to being a deliberative body if we agreed to such a proposition in view of the fact that no case has yet been made out for the extended power. I hope that the Government will think better of this and not push on with the Bill, because I feel that we would be failing in our duty if we did not defeat it. Rather than press it to a division for the purpose of defeating it I think the Government ought to recognise that further information is necessary to justify it and not proceed with it.

On motion by Mr. Brand, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1948-1949.*In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the previous day on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £3,454:

MR. HEGNEY (Pilbara) [8.14]: This is one of the occasions on which private members may exercise their right to discuss any matters of public importance and I propose to take the opportunity of making a few remarks on matters which I think are of first-rate importance to the people, not only of Western Australia but the Commonwealth of Australia as a whole. The recent announcement by the Arbitration Court with respect to the substantial increase in the basic wage has prompted me to make some comments on matters in close relationship to the basic wage. I shall then proceed to discuss the vexed question of price control. Firstly, to show the changes in the purchasing power of money, the Commonwealth and State Statisticians regularly compile indices of retailed prices. These investigations covered the items of food and groceries; housing, including the rent of four- and five-roomed houses; clothing, and miscellaneous household expenditure. Separate index numbers are compiled for food, grocery and housing. These are known as the "B" series of index figures.

Then there is another series comprising all items and these cover all factors. Again, we have what is known as the regimen, which is a list that comprises all commodities that are the subject of investigation by the statisticians. So that the list will be a fair sample of the commodity group it purports to represent, the articles selected must be of a kind in common use and their usage must comprise a relatively constant proportion of the group as a whole. It must be clearly and definitely described and be capable of standardisation so as to ensure that the prices collected are for goods of constant grade and quality. It will be seen that the principle which the statisticians follow is that such commodities as vegetables and fish are not included in the regimen because their prices are subject to some violent fluctuations, much more so than other commodities. The following is an

outline of the "all items" regimen of the statisticians:—

1. Food and groceries—41 items.
 - (a) Groceries, 20 items.
 - (b) Dairy produce, 6 items.
 - (c) Meat, 15 cuts.
2. Housing—Rental of four and five rooms.
3. Clothing—77 items (5-unit family).
 - Man, 17 items.
 - Woman, 21 items.
 - Boy, 10½ yrs., 12 items.
 - Girl, 7 yrs., 16 items.
 - Boy, 3½ yrs., 11 items.
4. Miscellaneous—41 items.
 - (a) Household drapery, 9 items.
 - (b) Household utensils, 20 items.
 - (c) Fuel and light, 4 items.
 - (d) Other miscellaneous, 8 items.

Under the State Statistician's Act of 1907 and also under the Commonwealth Act, the statisticians in Western Australia collect prices from representative informants in the metropolitan area, Kalgoorlie and Boulder, Northam, Bunbury, Geraldton and Collie. With regard to food and groceries, other smaller towns are taken into account and tapped by the statistician's staff. Under the legislation informants are obliged to furnish particulars monthly regarding food and groceries and quarterly particulars respecting house rents, clothing and miscellaneous items.

Now we come to that aspect of the retail price index figures which is known as the weighting of the regimen. To determine from the representative prices of selected items collected the ratio of change in the several commodity groups referred to, a method known as the "weighted aggregate of prices" is used. By this method each of the constituent items is weighted in accordance with its relative importance. In the Statistician's index numbers the weights or multipliers used are known as "mass units." The multipliers represent the relative consumption per head or per household per annum of each unit of quantity of the items concerned considered either as individual commodities or, at times, as representatives of other similar commodities not included in the regimen. I propose to outline generally the method the statisticians use with regard to the mass units for the group index series. Index numbers of retail prices are primarily used accurately to measure the changes in general price levels. The basis for the group in the index figures for food and groceries is computed on the mass unit for

each item included in the group and the estimated consumption per head for household purposes.

With regard to housing, the figures cover the weekly rent converted into annual consumption per household and for clothing the figures are grouped for man, woman, boy, girl and boy. The estimated annual consumption per head is the basis for this group. That heading is followed by "miscellaneous," covering the various items of annual consumption per household for drapery, utensils, fuel and light. Then, finally, a definite sum per household is assessed for their other requirements. At this stage I would point out that in the Piddington basic wage inquiry, certain items of expenditure were laid down for clothing which was regarded as being required for a 5-unit family for stated periods of one, two or three years, and in the final analysis these were equated on an annual basis.

I propose to indicate just what conversion is made by the officers. The prices are multiplied by the mass units per household and the products so derived are totalled to obtain the "weighted aggregate" cost of each sectional or group regimen. The result of that is multiplied by the population factor relevant to each section or group. The population factor is taken into account from various sources. The resultant product and the total are converted to the index figure by expressing some ratio to the corresponding totals on some base period—for example, as for the period 1923-1927—at some base locality, namely, the six capital cities of Australia and by multiplying the result by 1,000. That is how the statisticians arrive at the index figures. The retail prices are primarily used to measure the changes in general price levels taken into consideration and are used to adjust the basic wage. Consequently a considerable amount of misunderstanding arises in that respect.

The index figures do not measure the absolute cost of any standard of living nor the relative cost in the changes in the cost of living. The index figures do not measure standards, and so I come to the point of Australia's needs in measuring standards. As far as Western Australia is concerned index figures are used to compare price levels at different periods and in different places. The State declares the basic wage annually and prior to declaring the basic wage of 1947 the court used as its standard

that which was laid down in 1938 which was much the same as that prescribed in 1926. But in 1938 an additional 5s. was granted by the court which divided wages into four elements, namely, groceries and food, rent, clothing and miscellaneous. In the 1938 inquiry, the court took into account the Piddington standard respecting food and groceries and added 1s. to the figure.

So far as food and groceries were concerned, they took into account as a basis the Piddington Commission's findings but equated the weekly amount for a family of four units as compared with a family of five units prescribed by the Piddington Commission. With respect to rent they took the average rental of four and five-roomed houses. Following the interim basic wage of 1947, the court made a fixed loading of 5s. The figures, as used by way of illustration a few days ago by the State Arbitration Court, do not measure the variation in the cost of living as applied to the basic wage but they merely measure certain changes in price levels. That is where many workers and members of the community are under a misapprehension regarding the primary use of index figures compiled by statisticians from time to time.

The court certainly does use, with respect to its adjustments of the annual declaration of the basic wage, the figures supplied by the State Statistician on a quarterly basis. As will be seen from my remarks, the adjustments of the basic wage as set down by the court follow upon the statistician's figures and there can be no argument respecting the fact that wages are chasing prices and that it is wages that lag all the time. While it is true that the statisticians have been doing a very good job within their sphere regarding the measure of changes in the general price levels, I think it will be generally agreed that, with respect to the basic wage adjustments, the worker in receipt of the basic wage, artisans and people in the middle income group are to a great extent penalised by the existing trend of increases in prices generally.

While the court has just recently granted an increase of 4s. 2d. per week to metropolitan workers, I submit that every housewife could put up a strong case to prove that the extra 4s. 2d. per week does not nearly compensate for the increased prices to which people are subject today. The price of com-

modities is a matter of major importance to the people in the lower income groups in Western Australia, so I propose to proceed from the aspect of the measurement of price levels to that with respect to price control.

The States recently had placed in their hands the power to control prices. In my opinion, legislation in connection with the control of prices is a matter of first-rate importance not only to the people of Western Australia but to those of the Commonwealth as a whole. If we look back upon the history of price fixation in Australia since the outbreak of the recent war, we must realise that the administration and control of prices went through certain phases. The first step commenced approximately on the 31st August, 1939, when the Government of the day pegged prices at the then existing figures. The Government of the day was at that time faced with guess-work; but in October, 1939, and the period which followed up to April, 1942, the Administration was obliged to permit advances in prices in accordance with the formula prescribed by the Prices Commissioner. The basic principle laid down by him was that traders were allowed to add the gross marginal profit which they were adding on the 31st August, 1939. The third phase of price fixing under the Commonwealth commenced in April, 1942, when the monetary margin was substituted for the percentage margin.

The fourth phase began in April, 1943, and continued until 1946. We all know that this was the period of price stabilisation, when the prices of goods and services were stabilised as at the 1943 level. The fifth phase was entered into when the war ceased. Prices did increase to a certain extent in the immediate post-war period. Those are the phases of price control as I see them. It was at the end of May this year that the people of Australia, in their wisdom or otherwise, decided that the States should assume power to control prices. I propose to deal now with some aspects of the present-day position, because I believe the trend, as far as prices are concerned, is dangerous and will prove detrimental to the interests of the great mass of the people. I will read in detail the remarks of the chairman of the Ministers in control of price-fixing legislation in the various States. The following report appeared in "The West Australian" of the 2nd November, 1948:—

DE-CONTROL DEFERRED.

"Unreasonable" Price Rises.

Melbourne, Nov. 1: The States have decided to postpone the abolition of controls on a new long list of goods because some traders have, since September 20, abused the abolition of price controls. Announcing this tonight, the New South Wales Minister of Prices (Mr. F. Finnan), who was chairman of the interstate conference on prices, said that State Ministers had suggested that consideration of further lists for de-control be deferred, at least, until the next conference in Sydney on December 3.

Many small lines of manufactured goods and proprietary lines had been raised in price without reasonable cause, said Mr. Finnan. Ministers had been particularly perturbed by the sharp rise in bacon and ham prices and in grocery goods which formed part of the housewife's budget. There were many reports of increased prices but not a single report of a price having been lowered. Ministers had suggested that a drive be made to encourage consumer-resistance in cases of unreasonable price rises.

"Housewives should boycott all manufacturers and retailers who have abused price decontrol," said Mr. Finnan. "They should even boycott such items as potatoes, if necessary, and the boycott should be an organised one. Sydney housewives are already boycotting items which have risen steeply in price."

That state of affairs occurred two months after the States assumed control of prices. We have the chairman of the State Ministers suggesting that housewives should boycott traders who charged unreasonable prices. I have no hesitation in saying that this State—we already have the necessary legislation—should take immediate action to jail those who are trying to rob the people. That is what should be done. The people should not have a gun held at their head and be made to pay unreasonable prices. Our people should not go without the necessities of life in a land of plenty merely to fight those who control the production and distribution of certain goods. I hope the Government—and I point out that Parliament will soon be rising—will not suggest to the people that they should half-starve themselves until the traders agree to reduce their prices. On the contrary, I hope that drastic action will be taken and that those unscrupulous traders will not only be fined for holding the country to ransom but also jailed. They should not be permitted to exploit the people.

I shall now make a further quotation. It would be rather amusing, were it not so amazing and so serious to the people. I recollect that when the prices legislation was

passed some few weeks ago by Parliament, the very next day those in charge of the sale and distribution of fish raised the price by 2½d. per lb. The price has gone up much higher since, but the ink was not dry on the Act of Parliament when those traders increased the price. They did not have the decency to wait for two days or a week, but overnight they increased the prices, and they have been able to increase them to a great extent since. The quotation I said I would make is as follows:—

Trouble Over Fish in Melbourne.

Melbourne, Nov. 1: Squads of mobile police were sent to the Melbourne fish market today to restore order when fishmongers demonstrated against fish being auctioned by weight in boxes.

The Retail Fishmongers' Association has announced that no fish will be sold in its 250 shops until its demands are met. The trouble has arisen because of disagreement on how fish are to be sold now that controls have been lifted. A box of gummy shark was sold today for £8—almost twice its value under control last week.

Here is another quotation from "The West Australian" of the 30th October—

Changes in Meat Prices From November 8.
Melbourne, Oct. 29: An over-all increase of about one penny per lb. in the retail price of beef and veal will follow decisions in Melbourne today by State Ministers of Prices.

This indicates that the increase will take place as from the 8th November. On the 1st November, the following article appeared in "The West Australian":—

Changes in Meat Prices.

Revised maximum wholesale and retail prices for certain classes and cuts of meat will operate from today.

The Prices Commission announced on Saturday that the price of mutton will decrease by 1d. per lb. when the meat is from the neck, shoulder, forequarter or breast. Retail beef prices will go up 1d. per lb., cooked tripe by ½d. and sweetbreads by 3d.

Under date the 28th August the following report appeared in "The West Australian":—

Melbourne, Aug. 27: The six State Governments, at a conference today, agreed on a list of 30,000 items to be released from price control. No decision was made on six important items.

The report proceeds—

The lists of items on which price control will continue or be lifted will not be disclosed by the States until September 20 to prevent cornering or hoarding. Commonwealth control ends on that date. More information about

the six items still in doubt will be gathered and a decision made at the next meeting at the end of October.

Items decontrolled will include 8,000 grocery items and thousands of items in the machinery lists.

Mr. Finnan said that the Ministers had received official advice from high Commonwealth quarters that woollen supplies were being hoarded by manufacturers and merchants in the expectation of a price rise. It was believed that about four or five months' supplies had been hoarded throughout the country. About £8,000,000 in subsidies had been paid on these supplies.

"Thieving."

"This is much worse than black marketing," Mr. Finnan said. "It amounts to thieving, because the £8,000,000 had been paid to make the goods available to the public at the present price. Ministers were unanimous that a definite warning should be issued to all concerned in this hoarding and cornering and that the States will deal with them. It is a very serious matter. Consumers should get these goods now. The States have the right to enter and seize cornered or withheld goods and they will leave no stone unturned to trace them."

The withdrawal of the Commonwealth shipping subsidy was discussed at length and it was decided to appoint a committee of the conference to continue to investigate the position and report back to the next meeting.

After having read that report, it is rather a coincidence to find, as reported in today's "West Australian," that the president of the Chamber of Commerce indicated that there would be a substantial increase in the price of clothing and household drapery, and that Ministers were endeavouring to plan so that these increases might be cushioned in a way that would bring about a gradual impact rather than a sharp demand on the consumer. There is a close relationship between the remarks of Mr. Finnan at the end of August and the remarks of the president of the Chamber of Commerce as reported in today's "West Australian." The extracts I have read are relevant to the remarks I shall make, but at this juncture I would like to quote a report that appeared in "The West Australian" of the 24th August. It deals with the matter of subsidies. At a conference of Premiers, in consultation with the Prime Minister, Mr. Chifley was asked to retain the subsidies. He is reported as follows:—

Mr. Chifley said that he had issued warnings many times about subsidies. The Commonwealth could not properly pay public money to subsidise production which could not be policed. There was no co-ordinated State plan

of control. The subsidised supplies of textiles already in stock would provide the cushioning effect if the States controlled prices as effectively as they claimed they could.

The Wool Realisation Committee had stated that Australian manufacturers had been bidding "any price" for special lines of wool because they knew it was being subsidised. The Federal Government began the year with an estimate that the subsidy on wool be £2,000,000 or £3,000,000, but it appeared that the figure might reach £11,000,000. Overseas buyers felt that they had a grievance and in some cases they had been inclined to "stand out."

The subsidy on tea was being retained because the Commonwealth was the sole buyer. The butter subsidy was being continued because the Minister for Commerce (Mr. Pollard) had the machinery to ensure that the consumer benefited.

The quotations I have read indicate the trend taking place in the control of the necessities of life. Unless strong measures are taken by the Government, the position will get out of hand in a short time. The indications are—and the decision of the Arbitration Court on the variation in the the basic wage proves—that prices are on the increase. Anyone who likes to make an investigation will find that prices generally are on the increase. As Mr. Finnan indicated, many increases have been effected, and some unreasonable increases have been imposed on the people since power was granted to the States to control prices, but in not one instance have prices been lowered.

The Honorary Minister: In some.

Mr. HEGNEY: I propose to detain the Committee for some time in order to disclose to members and, I hope, to the people, some of the propaganda used by members of the Government, the Liberal Party of Australia and its subsidiary organisation, the Citizens' Rights Association, during the last referendum campaign. I quote first of all from "The Australian Women's Weekly"—

Your husband's wages are at stake, and your's too, if you are in business or industry. If you give the Chifley Government permanent power to control prices, it will mean that they can hold down wages as well. Unless you want this to happen, vote "No" in the referendum. A vote "No" does not mean that control over prices and rents will disappear. It simply means that if the Commonwealth does not extend the present legislation, your State Government will keep rents and prices down.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: And now the State Ministers tell the housewives to protect themselves.

The Premier: One State Minister.

Mr. HEGNEY: The advertisement continues—

Safeguard your wages. Vote "No."

That advertisement was authorised by the Liberal Party of Australia. The decision of the Arbitration Court proves that prices are on the increase. I venture the opinion that by the time Parliament resumes next July—it is incumbent on the Arbitration Court to accept the statistician's figures and to equate or adjust the basic wage in accordance with them—the basic wage will have risen by 10s. to 15s. a week. This Government has the right to cancel or issue regulations to decontrol prices and, unless it takes stringent action to ensure that prices are not increased unreasonably, the basic wage must go up, and, by so doing it will only be following the prices that are charged.

The Honorary Minister: Would you suggest the pegging of wages?

Mr. HEGNEY: The following advertisement was authorised by the Citizens' Rights Association, a subsidiary of the Liberal Party of Western Australia.

The Premier: A subsidiary?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Its master, I think.

Mr. HEGNEY: The advertisement is—

Do not fall for political trickery behind the referendum. The referendum is only another cunning trick to further the Federal Government's plans for the socialisation of Australia. The real question is not whether rents and prices shall be controlled but whether Canberra is to have that power permanently. The answer, of course, is "No." When Canberra's temporary control ceases, every State will immediately take over its own control. Every State is willing and ready to do this, and has said so. Be wise and keep the control in your own State where you do at least have a say in what goes on.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: That is a funny one!

Mr. HEGNEY: Is it not amusing? That was from "The West Australian" of the 15th May last, and a most amusing advertisement it is, in the light of the facts as they are today. Only the other evening the Legislative Assembly was kept here through the night until about 6 o'clock in the morning because the Legislative Council insisted on its amendments, but in the final analysis the Assembly thought it had won a brilliant victory. Some of us went home and had a

couple of hours rest on the strength of it, and then we found, a few days later that the Legislative Council obtained its amendments by regulation, and we were obliged to have a division here over the cancellation or disallowance of certain regulations. The advertisement states—

Keep the control in your own State where you do at least have a say in what goes on.

What say has this Chamber if the Legislative Council, representing about 30 per cent. of the people, decides what shall happen?

The Minister for Housing: But it did not.

Mr. HEGNEY: The advertisement says, "Keep the control in your own State where you do at least have a say in what goes on." What did a member of the Government say last night? What did the member for Beverley say on the question of the comprehensive water supplies for the agricultural areas? He said that the scheme proposed in 1946 by the then Labour Government was sandbagged and sabotaged by one member of the Upper House.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: Dictated to by the Upper House.

Mr. HEGNEY: Is that not clear and definite evidence that this section of Parliament has no say in what goes on if another place says that such and such shall be done? Of course it is so much eye-wash that we have a say in what goes on. How many people have a voice in the running of the country? Thousands of timberworkers have no say. They have some say in the election of a representative for this part of Parliament, but none in electing someone to its counterpart, the Legislative Council. What say have hundreds of prospectors in the ultimate making of the laws by another place? And what about the thousands of young men and women who do not own property but are 21 years of age, and were in the Services for years? Because they do not own real estate to the value of £50, they are not entitled to vote. No matter how impartial one is to that aspect of our Constitution, it will be found in the final analysis that the minority of the people of this country, through the personnel of the Upper House, dictate what shall be done in Western Australia. These few remarks are prompted by the paragraph of the advertisement that states, "Be wise and keep the control in your own State where you do at least have a say in what goes on."

The Premier: Yet you are living under the most democratic laws in the world.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Yes, because everyone has a vote in both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament.

Mr. HEGNEY: Here is another, of the 18th May—

W.A. has nothing to lose, and everything to gain, by voting "No." For several years, your State Government has been controlling rents with the consequence that rents in W.A. are the lowest in Australia. Did you know that? It is quite true and your State Government is ready to control prices, too, immediately Canberra's temporary control ceases. Western Australians have nothing to lose but everything to gain by voting "No."

The Minister for Housing: Hear, hear!

Mr. HEGNEY: Here is another one—
Stop this robbery of State rights.

The Minister for Housing: Do you believe in transferring all power to Canberra?

Mr. HEGNEY: This is another gem, under date the 22nd May, 1948—

It is another cunning move towards nationalisation. The Federal Government's plans for the socialisation of Australia include the complete and permanent control of rents and prices. That is the real reason behind the referendum. It is just another cunning move towards nationalisation. Do not fall for it.

It goes on—

You have nothing to lose and everything to gain by keeping prices and rent control in Western Australia.

This advertisement is one of the misleading types of propaganda being used against the Labour Party throughout Australia. Although our opponents like to criticise the Labour Party and try to warp the minds of the people against nationalisation, I challenge the Government to get rid of a nationalised concern—the State Shipping Service. I also challenge the Premier to dispose of the Wyndham Meat Works, a national trading concern. I challenge the Minister in charge of the State Engineering Works to dispose of them to private enterprise, and I challenge the Minister for Housing to get rid of the State Brickworks and the State Sawmills. The Liberal Party executive has even criticised the Premier and his Government for extending, in some little way, the nationalised bus services in the metropolitan area. Yet, for propaganda purposes, they say, "This is a cunning attempt at further nationalisation." The nationalisation that

Labour has introduced over the years has stood the test of time. I have noticed that whenever a National Government is placed on the Treasury bench, it has not the courage, even if it has the will and the idea, to dispose of the nationalised concerns inaugurated by Labour from time to time.

The Minister for Housing: We got rid of one the other day.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And bought one for £3,000,000.

Mr. HEGNEY: The advertisement states, "This is another cunning move towards nationalisation." That is all right while it lasts, but the people of Australia are not going to be fooled all the time. The advertisement that has been used for the purpose of advancing the "No" campaign will be seen by the people, as time goes on, to be so much eye-wash. The electors are entitled to vote, but I have no doubt that some of this misleading propaganda has had an effect on them, and they voted No as a result. On the 24th May, 1948, this advertisement appeared—

Be wise and keep control in your own State. You have seen how prices have soared in recent years' haven't you? You know how the cost of living has gone sky high and how you get 10s. worth of goods for your hard earned pound? Well, that's under Federal price control. How do you think you are going to get on if Chifley gets prices and rent control permanently? At present your rents are the lowest in Australia. But that is under State control. Say "No" to Canberra.

The definite inference there is—keep prices under State control and they will be the lowest in Australia.

The Premier: They are.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What about chaff?

Mr. HEGNEY: The Premier has had only a couple of months of price control.

The Premier: This is the cheapest State in Australia in which to live.

Mr. HEGNEY: This is another advertisement of the Liberal Party—

Chifley tries political blackmail. Threat to withdraw subsidies is culmination of deceptive referendum campaign. Mr. Chifley's inference that subsidies will be withdrawn if his socialist Government is defeated in the referendum is on a par with his false statement that price and rent controls will also disappear if Australia votes "No."

The Minister for Housing: Do you think he was right in withdrawing subsidies?

Mr. HEGNEY: I am still quoting from the advertisement. It states—

If you vote "No" subsidies will not be withdrawn.

Price controls will not disappear.

Rent controls will not be lifted.

Don't be bluffed into socialisation.

The Minister for Lands: Good advice.

Mr. HEGNEY: The advertisement continues—

Vote "No."

Although this pamphlet, or this advertisement, tries to point out to the people of Australia, or prove to them, that Mr. Chifley was a political blackmailer and that he was using bluff when he said he would withdraw the subsidies, he was honest enough to tell the people of Australia, and the Governments of Australia, why he would withdraw the subsidies if the people in their wisdom decided to hand the power to control rents and prices over to the State Governments. Mr. Chifley did that, but at least he was honest.

The Minister for Housing: But not very wise.

Mr. HEGNEY: I have indicated the reason why he did it but the advertisement states that the subsidies would not be withdrawn. Subsidies have been withdrawn.

The Minister for Housing: And they should not have been.

Mr. HEGNEY: I do not very often reply to interjections but from what I can make out, and the noise I have heard coming from the opposite benches, it appears that the members over there are inclined to squeal at what I am putting up. But during the referendum campaign the members on the Government side of the House, as they have the right to do, advocated a "No" vote, and they pointed out very deliberately that if the people of this country would give the States control and take it away from Canberra, everything in the garden would be lovely. They stated that prices were going up under the Chifley regime, that price control was making prices and commodities dearer, and that if the States were given the power to control prices, they would be reduced. Now, because Mr. Chifley, as Leader of the Commonwealth Government, says that as the Commonwealth has no control over the production of certain commodities, that Government will not subsidise

those commodities, members on the Government side of this House are squealing. The people were told by the State Governments, who were in favour of a "No" vote, that if the Commonwealth Government was not given the power to control prices, the States would do it in an admirable way.

The Minister for Lands: They have not made a bad job of it.

Mr. HEGNEY: I have kept the pamphlet on the Premier until last. The Premier takes a very good photograph, too.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It flatters him.

Mr. HEGNEY: The Premier is shown pointing the warning finger but it is we on this side of the House who should now be pointing the warning finger. The advertisement states—

Price Control.

"I say this to you now! . . . A "No" vote will NOT end price and rent control. The State Government has always controlled rents and WILL control prices when the Canberra control ceases."

Say "NO" to Power-hungry Canberra!

The Minister for Lands: That is honest.

Mr. HEGNEY: The advertisement is authorised by C. Palmer, of the Liberal Party of Australia.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It was not even true.

Mr. HEGNEY: I am not criticising the Premier's right, or anybody's right, to advocate just what he thinks fit, but what I am pointing out is the possible reaction to the States' taking over control—and I say this in no personal sense—of such important phases of our economic and industrial life as prices of essential commodities.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Attorney General will be looking after the business interests.

Mr. HEGNEY: The powers that the Commonwealth held over prices were, I believe, administered to the best ability of the price-fixing commissioners who were doing it in a comparatively sound manner. There was, to a great extent, unanimity as far as prices were concerned.

Mr. Bovell: But the Commonwealth Government wanted permanent control.

Mr. HEGNEY: We find now that there are six States of varying political colours and they have had this legislation for a

short while only, but if one looks ahead a little one must realise that before very long there will not be that unanimity of purpose, there will not be that uniformity of action which we were led to believe would take place if the States were given power. I have not the slightest shadow of doubt that once this Parliament rises—this legislation is largely dominated by regulation—the pressure, and I use that in no uncertain sense either, of those whom the Liberal Party represents in this country will be such as to make the price-fixing legislation in Western Australia innocuous. As soon as Parliament rises the soft pedal will be applied and the interests represented by the Liberal Party in the Government of the day will be such that they will ensure that the price fixing legislation of this State will be made harmless.

The Premier: A false prophet.

Mr. HEGNEY: We will just see whether I am a false prophet or not. I say quite clearly—and I mean it in no personal sense—and definitely that those for whom the Government stands will ensure that the price fixing legislation will be made harmless once this Parliament rises. I have said earlier that that being the case and the State Arbitration Court being obliged to adjust basic wages in accordance with the level of prices, the basic wage will increase by ten or fifteen shillings a week.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: Chasing the prices.

Mr. HEGNEY: In the interests of the people of Western Australia I hope that I am entirely wrong. Only recently the president of the Chamber of Commerce was appealing to his members not to make it too hot. Take it steady, he suggested, and do not increase the prices unreasonably just yet because instead of decontrol—

The Premier: He did not say that. He was giving some sound advice.

Mr. HEGNEY: He warned and appealed to his members not to increase prices unduly, but I have no doubt that profit being the main incentive to those in industry they will not take heed of the president of the Chamber of Commerce if they can find they can force or demand profits over and above a fair figure. Of course they will not, and the president of the Chamber of Commerce or the Chamber of Manufac-

tures, even though he made the appeal in good faith, cannot do anything about it and we must look at industry in the light of hard cold facts.

The Premier: I have had business men give me advice not to release control of certain articles.

Mr. HEGNEY: With respect to prices generally, as I have said before, it is in the administration that good or evil can accrue. We all know that in times of adversity or when Acts repugnant to certain interests are placed on the statute-book, if the Minister in charge or the administrator in charge of that Act administers its provisions in a sympathetic way it will not be half as cumbersome or half as bad as the actual wording of the Act would indicate. On the other hand, a good Act can be placed on the statute-book and we can get a bad administrator which can make it awkward for all those interested in it.

With this price-fixing legislation, including land sales control that has recently been placed on the statute-book, if the Government puts its shoulder to the wheel and gives the Minister for Prices the help he needs it will ensure that the provisions of the Act and the regulations are carried out in their proper form. It will be necessary to ensure that the requisite number of inspectors are appointed to police the regulations, and if the Government is prepared to take action against those who transgress the regulations and any price-fixing authorities, whether they be Labourites or prominent members of the Liberal Party or anyone else, then the people of Western Australia will be protected.

I might be unduly biased but I cannot help reiterating that when the price control legislation gets under way in this State and Parliament rises early in December—and it will not meet again until about the end of next July—the Liberal Minister in control can issue regulations and can repeal them when and how he likes. That being the case, I believe that there will be a number of regulations repealed and that the administration will be such that there will be no drastic action taken against those charging unduly increased prices.

Mr. Bovell: This Government stands for all sections of the community.

Mr. HEGNEY: Having passed that aspect of the matter of price control I would like to say that as far as decontrol is con-

cerned—I notice that the term has been introduced—there have been 30,000 items decontrolled.

The Premier: They would have been decontrolled under the Commonwealth, too.

Mr. HEGNEY: And 8,000 grocery items have been decontrolled.

The Honorary Minister: Thank God!

Mr. HEGNEY: And if we are going to have the six States decontrolling items—and that is the tendency of this Government and it has made no apology for it—it will mean that we will get away from price control as quickly as possible. I have stated in this Chamber before, and I repeat, that if there is going to be effective wage control there must be effective price control laid down by the Minister. I do not intend to read the provisions as set out in the "Mining and Commercial Review" by Mr. Saw, secretary of the Perth Chamber of Commerce, but he has indicated what happened after the 20th September. If we are going to get away from control as quickly as possible and have wages still controlled, we will be in very serious danger of inflation. I say that quite candidly and if this Government does as it states it will do that, as soon as supplies come forward to meet the demand, the price control will be lifted, I think it will be going one too far. The Government may be forgetting that there are such things as combines where years ago there was competition.

We have found that while a commodity may be in plentiful supply, it will be placed on the market for the benefit of the public at the producer's price or at the price of those who are in the ring. If meat is decontrolled tomorrow, even though there is a plentiful supply, the prices will not come down. We all know that the meat on the market is controlled by the meat ring, which would control it in such a way that it would permit a mere dribble on to the market and the consumers could have their meat at a price. It is ridiculous to expect that the people on wages will take it lying down and without a fight. It is not fair that the wages of the people should be controlled by a tribunal and yet the commodities that those wages buy should be left uncontrolled. I am one of those people that believe there is a definite need, even under normal conditions, to exercise control over many commodities that have not been sub-

ject to control in years gone by, because certain people have held the country to ransom and have compelled consumers to pay extortionate prices for commodities necessary to their daily lives.

In conclusion, I issue a warning to the Government and make no apologies for so doing. Although Ministers agitated from one end of the country to the other for the delegation to the States of price-fixing legislation, I am firmly convinced that it will so get out of control in Western Australia—apart from the other States—that prices will increase and so hit the pockets and stomachs of the people that they will conclude it was a sorry day when they voted “No.” The Premier will realise that it was an unfortunate act on his part when he held his finger up and said, “I say this to you now . . . A ‘No’ vote will not end price and rent control. The State Government has always controlled rents and will control prices when the Canberra control ceases.” I consider that to have been so much eye-wash, but we shall see what happens.

The Premier: You will be proved to be a false prophet.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Geraldton) [9.17]: From the member for Pilbara we have heard various strictures on the Government, and I should like to be allowed to read a few remarks made by Mr. H. R. Howard, president of the Perth Chamber of Commerce as reported in this morning’s newspaper. He said—

Reverting to the incidence of the 40-hour week, the Tariff Board has published figures to show that in certain essential industries to date, while the man-hour productivity has increased approximately 5 per cent., over-all production showed a loss in the region of 10 per cent. It is disturbing to know that an important factor in bringing about this net loss of 5 per cent. is the increasing absenteeism in all directions. The inevitable result is higher costs in manufacture and distribution, of which the public is naturally called upon to bear its share.

The member for Pilbara did not dwell upon these facts, but simply quoted arguments to bolster up his case. There is an entirely different industry, one that means much to the economy of State—the coalmining industry—to which I should like to refer. During the last few days we have been able to read divergent statements made by the executive of the Collie Miners’ Union and the general manager of Amalgamated Col-

lieries, Ltd. I shall not weary members by reading a long extract, but there is support for the views of the president of the Chamber of Commerce. The general manager of the company was reported as follows:—

The executive of the Collie Miners’ Union, in its statement published on Monday, got away from its original argument. The union’s contention that there would be a reduction of 250 tons a day in coal production at Collie because of the impending dismissals on the Griffin mine and rearrangements in his company’s mines was an alarmist statement. Under present conditions, because of absenteeism, more men were required on the mines than before the war. For example, only 12 of the 84 miners employed on the Proprietary Mine had attended every shift in the past fortnight.

What a shocking state of affairs that is!

Mr. May: If it is true.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The member for Collie, of course, represents the men, and I shall be pleased to hear him give their side of the case.

Mr. May: The Premier might not want to hear it.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It is not a matter of what the Premier wants; it is a matter of what the House wants. That statement by the general manager of Amalgamated Collieries supports the remarks of the president of the Chamber of Commerce and, as a matter of fact, is something that we of our own knowledge are aware is occurring far too much nowadays. It is of no use a member rising in his place here and talking as the member for Pilbara has done during the last couple of hours. That will accomplish nothing towards remedying what is occurring in our midst, namely, the rise in the cost of living. I happen to be one of those who support the Government, but members on this side of the Chamber have a right to criticise it whenever they feel justified in doing so. All have that right but do all members exercise it. Through long years of experience we know that the discipline of the party to which members opposite belong is very strict indeed and their loyalty to party is well-known. Although we have little opportunity actually to see the absenteeism that is occurring, we know that it has become quite a big factor in the rising cost of living.

Would anybody with a desire to be fair castigate the present Government because of the increases that are occurring in the cost of living? Only recently has the Govern-

ment assumed the power of control. The Minister in charge is in the Eastern States at present on price control business. Anyhow, I say that my guess is as good as that of the member for Pilbara, whom I have known for many years. In 1914-15 I was quartermaster at the A.I.F. camp and he was a member of the Army Service Corps, and I can say that he has never had a day's business experience in his life. He has not found himself in the position of having to run a business successfully in order to be able to pay wages to employees, and consequently he has been talking about things of which he knows very little.

For him to blame the Government for the increase in the cost of living was altogether unfair. I make bold to say that my guess is as good as his, and that the Government has no intention of allowing the business people of this State a free go to make the cost of living unreasonable for workers on the basic wage. The hon. member should make those wild statements at Pilbara, not here. However, to speak as he has done during the last two hours will not cut much ice with people who know the facts. I wish to ask the Government whether it proposes to pay any attention to the recommendations made by the Royal Commissioner, Mr. Gibson, in his report on the supply of local coal.

Mr. May: Now you are talking.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Ever since I have been a member of Parliament, I have endeavoured to take the widest possible view of all matters affecting the interests of the State.

Mr. Graham: And have been very unsuccessful.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: One can only try. Of course the member for East Perth knows everything. The Royal Commissioner reported—

Mr. Dumas stated that he had made recommendations to the Minister regarding opening a mine for the use of the Electricity Commission. In the light of the proposals I am making, this action, extending as it would the uneconomic and ill-regulated development of the field, will be unnecessary.

Further on, he stated—

I think it can be assumed that any industry which is given the opportunity of earning profits from concessions specially granted to it by the State has a responsibility to the State to see that its operations are such as to meet

fully its obligations in order to justify the concessions it may receive, and to develop and use its asset for the economic benefit of the community.

With that statement, I entirely agree. Has the Government given any consideration to Mr. Gibson's recommendations? The report also stated—

To meet the above conditions, the suggestion is made that the State should be the controlling partner in a company to be known as the Western Australian Coalmining Co. Ltd. established for the development of the coal resources of the State, in which the existing companies who are actually producing will be shareholders.

To gain the full benefit of mechanisation and to put the industry on a sound footing for future development, I agree with the suggestions made by Messrs. J. P. Hindmarsh and S. McKenzie and by J. McLeish and R. P. Jack that a new mine with development up to 2,000 tons per day should be opened up.

There is some indefiniteness as to where this new mine should be situated, but I have heard of the suggestion that it should be in the area of country between the Proprietary and Stockton mines. This area is virgin country and the indications are strong that the coal seams already being worked at the Proprietary and Stockton Mines will be found within the area. Immediate steps should be taken to prove the presence of the coal seam referred to, which would be part of the general boring programme for the field, but which, to enable sure development to take place at an early date, need do no more at this stage than prove the coal.

The Government commissioned Mr. Gibson to make a report and has to some extent given effect to his recommendations, but does it intend to give consideration to the recommendations on this most important industry—coal—of which the State is by far the largest user? I consider that the number of inquiries made into the industry warrants action being taken, and if the Government proceeded along the lines suggested by Mr. Gibson, it would at least be something attempted, something done.

Mr. May: You wait until the overburden is removed from the Black Diamond leases.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Members sitting in Opposition have their job to criticise the Government, but I think there can be no two opinions about the credit due to the Minister controlling the Child Welfare Department—the member for Katanning. He had not held that portfolio long when he took steps to bring about much-needed reforms; and I saw in the Press of the 28th October that at last a psychiatrist has been

appointed to the Children's Court. I congratulate the Minister upon making that appointment. I have also heard that the number of probation officers has been increased from two to four. I consider that very important, because a great deal depends upon those officers.

There is one direction in which I have felt for many years that we have been sadly lacking. I refer to the fact that we have not taken any action of a reformatory nature or in the way of providing adequate punishment—though I am not so much concerned with the latter aspect as with the former—in connection with those misguided—I use the word for want of a better one—men who interfere with children. I saw in one of our local papers recently that a member of the Victorian Parliament is moving that the Government should set up a special clinic to treat sex offenders. The paper stated that the Liberal member who is taking this action, when speaking on a Mental Hygiene Authority Bill, said that provision for such a clinic could be included in recommendations listed in the Bill. He added—

The community had been clamouring for such a move for several years. In his court experience, he had seen good citizens, who had one sex offence against their name, permanently affected because they were not given a chance.

A competent medical clinic would give them an opportunity to recover.

I do not want to be accused of being bitter or wild about this matter; but it is a duty devolving upon the State to protect little girls from people with twisted minds, especially when some operation or some treatment could bring about a remedy. It is shocking to think that men are brought before the court, I do not say several times, but often, on the same charge.

Mr. Marshall: Would not Heathcote be a suitable institution for such men?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Yes. I have seen reports indicating that such men have been arrested more than once for the same offence. I am not an authority on the subject but I am given to understand that some folk have a weakness in that direction. If that is so and it can be proved, after inquiry by medical men, that it is a fact in any particular case, then I think that action should be taken to protect inoffensive girls of very tender years. I do not know whether other members have

noticed it, but I have seen the small sentences imposed on these men. Sometimes it is a fortnight or a month or two months. What happens after that? Nothing of a remedial nature is undertaken. The Minister for Housing is not in his seat.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He is not the only one over there who is absent, either.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Many years ago I was on a platform in Perth with him on this very same subject at a meeting convened by the Women's Service Guild. The hon. member was in Opposition at the time, and he said that our laws were sadly lacking in this respect. He has been giving a lot of attention to various matters with a view to improving home life by means of the Bills he has introduced; but I would like him to take this matter up and see whether he cannot do something to improve the law.

Mr. Marshall: He has been too busy with tortfeasors, up to date.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Although I am a supporter of the present Government I do not think it expects me to follow it blindly or dumbly; and where I think it wants criticising it is my duty on the floor of the House to say what I believe, after taking into consideration the difficulties it has had to face.

Mr. Marshall: When we were over there, members opposite did not admit that we had any difficulties.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Yes, they did.

The Premier: We were most sympathetic and helpful towards the then Government.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Members now in office promised—and there will be a roar of laughter at this, I suppose; but so long as there are no tears I do not mind—that Royal Commissions would be appointed to inquire into various matters of importance to the State. When they were returned to the Treasury bench they kept their word. One commission the Government did not appoint of its own accord but which was appointed as a result of disclosures in this House was the Royal Commission which inquired into housing. The first recommendation of the Royal Commissioner was—

Members of the State Housing Commission not to enter into any contracts with the Commission.

I regret that for some reason or other the Government has not seen fit to honour that recommendation. I take it that when a Government appoints a Royal Commission it does not choose just anybody but makes due inquiry and satisfies itself as to the ability of the man it chooses. In view of that, I think that when the Commissioner submits his recommendations, if it is at all possible to give effect to them that should be done. I do not happen to know this gentleman on the Housing Commission who has entered into contracts with the Commission; but the Royal Commissioner dealt very fully with the matter, and I have read his recommendations. I do not make any suggestion against the honour of that gentleman, but it does not seem to me to be right that this practice should continue. That is what the Royal Commissioner thinks, and he has said so. Yet that member of the Housing Commission is retained in his office.

The second recommendation of the Royal Commission was the appointment of a full-time chairman. Last night this matter was referred to by the member for Perth, who had previously asked questions on the subject. I do not forget that in his speech on the Address-in-reply, the Leader of the Opposition—notwithstanding that the Royal Commission was appointed as a result of a motion introduced by a member who sits behind and supports the Leader of the Opposition—said that he thought the best thing would be to forget all about the matter. Evidently members of his party do not agree with that opinion. They are free to express their own ideas on the subject; and, being opposed to the Government, they have not been afraid to do so.

I would point out that the Government is not responsible for the present set-up of the Housing Commission. The members of the Commission, with the exception of the lady and the returned soldier, were appointed by the previous Government. It might be said: What has that to do with it? The present Government appointed a Royal Commissioner to inquire into the whole business, and he made certain recommendations. The Government would have been entitled to say to the Housing Commission, "We did not appoint you. The Royal Commission has made certain recommendations and we are going to make a change." But

it is not taking that attitude. By its inactivity it would seem to me to be saying, "What the Labour Government did is quite all right for us," notwithstanding the report of the Royal Commission.

Mr. May: What are you going to do about it?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: There is a silly interjection from the member for Collie! He knows as well as I that I am doing the only thing I can do—just voicing my disapproval. I realise, as everyone realises, the very great difficulties associated with housing. That the Government has improved matters since it took over is a fact. The member for Perth said that it was only to be expected that there would be an improvement because there are more men and materials available. I think that perhaps there is something in that statement. I am with the member for Perth that this subject is of the utmost importance to the people that matter—the mothers. I have spoken before of the untold wretchedness and unhappiness of people who are herded together, living in one room or with "inlaws."

Only last week a married couple got on the train and travelled from Geraldton to enlist my aid. The man, who was employed by the Railway Department, had been issued with a summons through the Commissioner. We went to see the Commissioner, and he said that there were 27 other men who had priority over this particular man and it was necessary for him to get out to make room for someone else. He said, "You managed to get in there, but there are three unions on the job trying to get you out. You would not go, so a summons had to be issued." The woman started to cry, and it was most painful.

I am not worried to anything like the same extent as are metropolitan members over this business; yet we have a part-time Commissioner dealing with this all-important question, one that so vitally affects the lives of the people. The member for South Fremantle asks what more we can do. This is not a job for a part-time Commissioner. We heard a lot about an administrator for the railways. I am behind that. But we want an able administrator in this job also.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Why do you not follow the lead of the member for Beverley and join the Independents?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: If I were like the interjector, and had something to do with "Rimfire" I would be able to bring about the change; but I am not like that. I was not lucky enough. I have to mark time and make my protest here about the ignoring of the Royal Commissioner's recommendations.

The Minister for Housing: Many of the recommendations have been implemented.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I am making these remarks so that we can get some information.

The Minister for Housing: Quite right.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I shall be happy to know the recommendations are being observed, because they should be. If the Minister knows of something that prevents his giving effect to any of the recommendations, we should be told. I want it to be understood that so far as I have been able to judge, and as others better than I have concluded, the gentleman who occupies the position of chairman of the Housing Commission is a very able man. In view of our financial relations with the Commonwealth, as a result of which we play a secondary part, would it not be helpful were the Government, if it did not want to displace Mr. Reid from the chairmanship, to appoint him full-time chairman and his understudy as acting Under Treasurer or even as Under Treasurer? I believe that an able man as full-time chairman of the Commission would do a lot more good for the people of the State than the Under Treasurer, seeing that we are tied up with the Commonwealth.

Here is another matter to which I have drawn attention and which has dragged on year after year. It is something that vitally affects this State. I may not be in total agreement with my party or the other half of the Government, but I have very definite views about this matter. I refer to a statement made by Mr. Willcock when he was Premier and Treasurer of this State. He said that the people of Western Australia had not sufficient money to do the fair thing by the North-West. Why do we not do something about it? We are continually being told by Governments of all political colours that we have not the funds with which to do justice to the South-West land division. In that case, in fairness to the North-West, we should enter into negotiations with the Commonwealth Government in an effort to get that Government to take

the North-West off our hands. From the Murchison River southwards would be quite sufficient for the State Government to handle. I am going on what Mr. Willcock said.

It might be asked why the Commonwealth Government should not lend us the money with which to develop the North, but we have recently heard it asked why one Government should make available money for another Government to spend. I know some members are critical of the Commonwealth Government, but there is no use in closing our eyes to the fact that on our own we cannot handle a huge part of our territory in the North. We should not adopt a dog-in-the-manger attitude. I wish now to draw the attention of members to a book, which I obtained from the Parliamentary library, entitled "Kaiser Wakes the Doctors." It shows what can be done by co-operation between workers and employers in the matter of providing not only hospital accommodation but medical treatment of the highest order. Members have heard of Kaiser's boat-building programme, but this book deals with something new and tells of the successful part he played in the United States in providing medical and hospital facilities for people both in the large cities and in the country areas. The book is written by Paul De Kruif, and in it he says—

Yet Kaiser's health plan is in no sense charity. By a few cents daily deducted from their wages, if they want it deducted and nearly all of them want it, these working men and women prepay their medical care so that it is no burden. But they do more than that. The sum, accumulating from their individual few cents a day, is rapidly paying off the building of the magnificent new hospitals that have risen nearby with the same Kaiserish speed as that of the building of the ships. So, under Henry Kaiser's guidance, it is the workers themselves who are building the model of a Mayo Clinic for the common man. Here where there is no money consideration between the sick man and his physician, you see a blue print for group medical practice for the common man.

Later he says—

"But such hospitals," I protested, "they'd have to be built by vast Government appropriations and I understand you're opposed to big Government handouts." Then he uncovered one of the secret weapons that he was sure would bring us victory in America's coming fight for nation-wide health. "We won't need Government handouts," he explained, with fire in his eyes and a slow smile. "Our medical chief, Dr. Garfield, has proved at Coulee Dam

and is proving now at Richmond shipyards, that if you properly organise and distribute the burden of payment for the best kind of hospital and medical care, the hospitals will quickly amortise themselves; they'll pay themselves off."

At a later stage he says—

But the authorities, the gloom-boys, have a last objection. What about remote rural regions, far from industry? Already it has been demonstrated that even here the building of a hospital will pay itself off, when the pre-paid health plan is well managed and the hospital is staffed with doctors who are centralised and work on good salaries. Led by a tough and brave man, Dr. Michael Shadid, the farmers of south-western Oklahoma began a co-operative health plan in the grim years of the early 1930's. Shadid and his doctors had the bitter and powerful opposition of organised medicine's invisible hand. The farmers had God himself against them in those dry and dusty years of the middle 1930's. Today Dr. Michael Shadid and the farmers are proud of their Elk City Community Hospital. They own it free and clear, lock, stock and barrel, with a 70,000 dollar surplus in the bank.

It is a wonderful story which fills me with envy and dismay when I see the bickering that is going on in connection with our Commonwealth health scheme. The Prime Minister recently said that he expects his social services programme to cost £100,000,000 per annum. I favour doing all we can for the bottom dog but, with some knowledge of human nature, I feel it is possible to go too far. It is a pity that the attention of the Prime Minister could not have been directed to what has been done in America so that he could have taken a leaf out of Kaiser's book.

MR. HILL (Albany) [9.50]: Every year when the Budget is brought down I wonder what a board of directors would think if similar balance sheets were handed out to them. Last night I turned up some data and compared the figures given in Sir John Forrest's first Budget after the proclamation of responsible Government with those given so recently by the Premier. The comparison is as follows:—

Year, 1891.		Year, 1948-49.	
Population, 47,000		Population, 514,000.	
Revenue estimate	£ 439,165	Revenue estimate	£ 20,491,980
Expenditure estimate	435,303	Expenditure estimate	20,527,257
Surplus	£3,862	Deficit	£184,278
Public debt per head	£28	Public debt per head	£194 15s. 9d.
Indebtedness (December, 1890)	£1,367,444	Indebtedness	£100,120,245

On page 13 of the Estimates, Return No. 10 gives a summarised classification of Loan Assets. The summary shows under the heading of "fully reproductive" a surplus of £127,269, under "partially reproductive" a deficit of £824,393, and under "totally unproductive" a deficit of £3,325,207. The capital adjustments and unallocated costs of raisings are shown at £105,520 and special deficit loans at £100,243. The net deficiency is £4,310,228. Those figures would cause anyone to think hard. It must be agreed that one of the worst features of this State today is the disproportionate growth of our capital. Between the last two censuses the population of Western Australia increased by roughly 60,000. The metropolitan area absorbed not only that 60,000 but 1,000 more from the country districts. If one of the guns from Leighton Beach were placed in King's Park it would have more than half the population of the State within its range.

There is in the Irish Sea a speck known as the Isle of Man. In Western Australia, the biggest self-governing community in the world, half of our population is in an area less than that of the Isle of Man. Different remedies have been suggested, and one that we hear periodically is that we should have smaller States. I was at the Tambellup conference last September when it was suggested by the Albany Road Board that we should have a southern State. That is by no means a new suggestion. As a small boy I saw an immense petition at Albany, signed by the people of the Goldfields, Esperance and Albany, asking for a separate State, apart from the Swan River Colony. Thirty years ago Sir Earle Page visited Western Australia and advocated the setting up of smaller States. When I was in South Australia eight years ago, the then Speaker, Sir Robert Nicol, said "You have a great country at the back of Albany. You should be carrying a population of 2,000,000." When I came to this House I managed to pick up an old map of Western Australia. It showed the Blackwood River as a very dark line. I followed that line across and continued it out to the rabbit-proof fence.

I suggest that members visualise a map of Western Australia and draw a line half way between Fremantle and Albany, out to the rabbit-proof fence and thence south

to the coast. That gives an area not dissimilar in shape to that of Victoria. Holding a position corresponding to that of Melbourne we have the town of Albany. Ten days ago I had the privilege at Albany of attending the centenary service at St. John's Church. The preacher was Canon Jones, of West Perth. On that Sunday afternoon I heard one of the finest services I have ever listened to. The canon chose a most appropriate text. It consisted of three words, "Blessed are ye." If there is any part of the world more blessed than the southern portion of Western Australia, I would like to see it. Truly we have a country of which we should be proud.

I have here a book, borrowed from the Parliamentary Library, which gives a description of the settlement at King George's Sound and of the colony of Western Australia, together with a map. It is dated 1846. The map shows just the south-western corner of the State, with the bulk of Western Australia shown as New Holland. On the eastern side of Australia there is shown only the State of New South Wales. The map showing Western Australia covers the area from about Doubtful Island to Nornalup and then to Katanning. Apparently this portion should still be the old Swan River Settlement. There is some interesting matter in this book, and one paragraph was written by Captain Vancouver in 1791. The south-west corner of Western Australia was discovered in 1627 but Captain Vancouver says of King George's Sound—

The port is safe and easy of access anywhere between the outer points of entrance. It may be entered at all times by vessels of the largest size and is in every respect one of the best harbours in the world.

What was the position a couple of years ago? "The Bulletin" spoke the truth when it described Albany as one of the best harbours in the southern hemisphere but the most neglected port in the British Empire. I congratulate the Government on its decision to develop the southern end of the State.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Is that why it sold the Meat Works?

Mr. HILL: I am pleased it did.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I thought you would be.

Mr. HILL: About five years ago a suggested smaller State, in the South-West corner, was more or less seriously considered. We were to have Albany as the commercial centre, Katanning as the administrative centre; the member for Katanning was to be Premier, and I would have been Minister for Transport and Forests. I went through the figures to see what debt we would have had to take over. I found we would have been lucky. If we had taken over that part of Western Australia, our debt would have been a long way below £194 per head. We did not, however, go any further with the matter. We realised it would be in the interests of Western Australia that it should retain that part of the State. Last September I was waiting at Tambellup for the conference to begin, and I saw trains with super. going south and others with wheat going north. One of the outstanding features of our railways is that they have fallen down badly on the job of hauling wheat and super. Albany's economic zone is capable of absorbing about 60,000 tons of super. per annum. Not one ton of super. came through Albany, and the result is a loss of at least £50,000 to the taxpayers of the State. Of the 120,000 tons of wheat produced in our economic zone, not one ton goes through Albany. That represents a loss to the taxpayers of at least £20,000 a year. A little while later, I saw a train come into Tambellup and I was interested to see what it was carrying. I found it was carrying explosives for the L.S.T. at Albany.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Were they going to blow up Albany?

Mr. HILL: It was intended to dump it in the Indian Ocean. When Singapore fell, Commodore Collins wanted to get out of Fremantle and go to Albany, but he was not allowed to do that because of some interested politician. Albany was intended to be the original base for a big offensive against the North.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It is a wonder they did not want to go to Bunbury.

Mr. HILL: Let the hon. member talk sense. He has enough to worry about in Fremantle. The taxpayers of this State have been robbed of £3,000,000 or £4,000,000.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What about reading Buchanan's report?

Mr. HILL: Admiral Fraser stated in Melbourne, "I cannot understand why they want to use Fremantle when there is the finest harbour in Australia at Albany." The final result was that millions of pounds worth of ammunition was taken down the Great Southern line and dumped into the Indian Ocean.

Mr. Styants: If Albany had had half as much money spent on it as has been spent on Fremantle, we would have a good port there.

Mr. HILL: Yes.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: And a great city.

Mr. HILL: Yes, instead of the white elephant at Cockburn Sound.

Mr. Fox: It was an anti-Labour Government that was responsible for the set-up in the early days.

Mr. HILL: The hon. member does not know what he is talking about. I ask him to read an early speech of mine on that subject. Lord Forrest always wanted Albany to be converted into a naval base.

Mr. Hegney: No, he did not.

Mr. HILL: I was a sergeant-major at Albany when Lord Forrest visited that port with Lord Kitchener in 1910. Lord Forrest said then, "You have been neglected down here, but a change is coming." Unfortunately there was a change of Government. In 1913, there was again a change of Government and Lord Forrest came back into office. The first thing he did was to suspend work at Cockburn Sound. A leading Admiralty Engineer, Sir Maurice Fitzmaurice was brought out to report on the naval base question. Before that report concerning Cockburn Sound could be implemented, there was another change of Government.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Tell us about the ship that was stuck in the mud.

Mr. HILL: I know of two battleships that came to Fremantle for fuel, the *George V* and the *Anson*, and they had to proceed to Albany. I remember the occasion when it was thought that Japan was going to make a raid on Fremantle and it was found necessary to send the most important ships at Fremantle to Albany.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I was Minister for Civil Defence then, and I remember sending them down.

Mr. HILL: It will also interest the member for Pilbara to know that a senior officer

of the Royal Artillery told me that Imperial Defence wanted Albany as a naval base, and went on to describe the gun emplacements that were to be installed at different places. When Singapore fell, all the motor boats came down to Albany and were anchored in front of my fruit-shed. My son was placed in charge of them, with orders to destroy them if the Japs came here. A naval officer came down and said that the question was under consideration of cutting out Fremantle and going to Albany but politicians got to work and the idea was abandoned. I will go back to the book from which I quoted, and will refer to the production of Western Australia a hundred years ago. The population then was 4,108. That was the figure on the 8th March, 1845. The number of acres under cultivation was 4,867; the value of exports was £13,343 15s., and the value of imports was £36,400. The tonnage of inward ships was 10,002; the revenue was £7,747 19s. 5d., and the expenditure was £14,562 10s. 3d.

Mr. Bovell: They had a deficit even in those days.

Mr. HILL: Yes. Here is what was written a hundred years ago—

That King George's Sound may be reached in less time by three weeks or a month, than South Australia, Port Phillip, Van Diemen's Land, or New South Wales.

That the settlement possesses, in an eminent degree, the chief sources and elements of prosperity, viz.:—A harbour almost unequalled, a delightful and healthy climate, and an abundance of fertile land, capable of yielding, in any quantity, nearly every production of the vegetable kingdom, and admirably adapted for pastoral and agricultural purposes.

That the district is not subjected to droughts, and is known to yield many useful indigenous productions.

That the adjacent seas, and the coasts, bays, and inlets of the settlement abound with whales, and excellent fish of various kinds; and

That capital and labour may be safely and advantageously employed in the settlement.

The land around the shores of the harbour is mostly poor and sandy, but the country improves greatly towards the interior. Settlers requiring good land should, therefore, proceed from twenty to fifty miles beyond Albany.

In the Albany hinterland we have the largest area in the world of undeveloped land in the temperate zone. If we do not populate that area, we shall not hold this country. A large population in the southern part of Western Australia is requisite

to get Western Australia out of the financial hole in which she now finds herself. It is necessary to help Western Australia in order that we may keep Australia as a whole. The production of Albany's natural zone is approximately 120,000 tons of wheat per annum, and the industry consumes something like 60,000 tons of super. every year. In addition, we are producing this year 2,000,000 cases of fruit, only half of which can go through Albany. If shipping were available, and but for the 50-mile gap in the railway between Northcliffe and Nornalup, that trade could better be handled by Albany. The member for Nelson at one time advocated the completion of this railway. It is all rot to say that railways are obsolete. They are the most economical means of carrying heavy loads long distances. The connecting up of that link is vitally necessary to enable the Great Southern and the lower South-West to collaborate in important shipping services.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: At a cost of about £10,000 a mile.

Mr. HILL: A few years ago, the cost was £550,000, but two years ago it had risen to £700,000, very little more than the cost of the new Causeway. There is at Fremantle just now a ship known as the "Port Jackson." We saw her yesterday and had her captain and officers to lunch at Parliament House today. That is a ten thousand tonner, and it cost £600,000 to construct. On the ship, we had an example of the collaboration of science and engineering for the handling of our products. Our shipping suffered heavily during the war. The Blue Star line had severe losses, and is now called upon to replace them at a cost of £1,500,000 per ship. The "Port Jackson" arrived at Fremantle last Thursday. She could not berth, however, until Saturday, and every day's delay meant a loss of £600. Ships like this are specially refrigerated. We require them in order that our fruit may be shifted.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How many can you accommodate at Albany?

Mr. HILL: We can take three at a time. I point out that in the last 24 years, we have had only £175 spent on the harbour.

Mr. Reynolds: Why not ask the member for the district to do something about it?

Mr. HILL: No member has had as rotten a deal as I have had at the hands of Labour Governments. I would like the hon. member to turn up this book on the table and see what Colonel Tydeman says about the Thompson scheme.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What will this Government do for you?

Mr. HILL: Members are always trying to throw on this side of the House the blame for the position at Albany. Let them go back to 1911 when there was a general election. Albany voted Labour and returned the late Mr. William Price. They helped to put in office the Scaddan-Johnson Government. Because Albany voted Labour, the Thompson reclamation scheme for wharves was abandoned. Three years later we were forced to accept as an alternative the deep jetty scheme. We had to accept wheelbarrows instead of motor trucks. The Tydeman scheme is nothing more or less than an elaboration of the Thompson scheme, which had been brought down by the Labour Party. In 1924, Sir James Mitchell had drawn up elaborate plans for the development of the lower portion of the State. He had a proposal to build a railway from Pemberton to Denmark. He had plans for a railway from Cranbrook to Boyup Brook and from Nornalup to Mt. Barker. Again Albany voted Labour. What happened? Railways were built from either end, but a gap of 50 miles was left. In 1926 the Collier Government put through a Bill authorising the construction of the Boyup Brook-Cranbrook, and Manjimup-Mt. Barker railways, but the works were never carried out.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And never will be.

Mr. Reynolds: What will your Government do?

Mr. HILL: When the Mitchell Government was in office there was a depression and strange to say that was the only time the State Government did anything for Albany. During that time it started the land settlement scheme at Walpole and Napier, the latter being the most successful ever carried out in Western Australia. As to the present Government, I have to thank the Premier for what he is doing for our end of the State. He is a big

enough man to realise that it is a national obligation to settle the country there.

Mr. Marshall: He will settle it all right.

Mr. HILL: I am very pleased indeed to know that the Government has sold the freezing works at Albany and that an English firm has taken over the establishment. The fact that it has done so indicates that the firm has every confidence in the Government carrying out its policy. Let me now leave the land and go to the sea. In our waters there is great scope for fishing and whaling. We have a canning factory at Albany which is controlled by Mr. Hunt. The undertaking was established with no thanks to the Wise Labour Government. In fact, the undertaking was launched in spite of the Wise Government. Last year the factory turned out 1,500,000 tins of salmon and herring. The amount paid for fish was £27,000; wages paid £14,000; electric power cost £400, railway freights £3,000, cartage of fish £5,000, tins £20,000, labels £1,400, cases £4,000, sundry repairs to trucks, etc. £2,000, petrol £2,000, nets, etc. £3,000, wiring cases £300, telephone £300. In addition, a representative of the firm has undertaken a trip oversea that will cost some £3,000.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And did you say all this was done in spite of the Wise Government?

Mr. HILL: Yes.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Did not we assist by going down and opening the factory?

Mr. HILL: Yes, the then Premier went down. It was coming close to the election campaign and Mr. Wise asked to be allowed to open the factory.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: You should go back over your history and find out what the Industrial Development Department did in helping to start the works.

Mr. HILL: I give the Labour Government credit in that respect, but not otherwise. I was in Albany when the present Leader of the Opposition told the people there to be very careful about a fish cannery because they might spoil the harbour. Mr. Hunt has so much confidence in the future of the industry at Albany that, as I mentioned earlier, his manager has gone oversea in order to secure the most up-to-date plant and machinery for handling sardines. I will

leave it at that and go from sardines to whales.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: Why, he imports half his fish from Esperance! What are you talking about? He would not be in business if it were not for his importations.

Mr. HILL: There is no doubt that the whaling industry has been neglected in our southern waters. I feel sure that, with proper equipment and the assistance of men who know the game, a lot of money will be made out of it.

Mr. Reynolds: You have certainly done a lot of wailing tonight!

Mr. HILL: Turning next to the loan assets of the State, I find on reference to Return No. 11 with which members have been supplied in connection with the current Estimates, a classification is shown of the various activities. A deficiency is disclosed in connection with the railways amounting to £2,354,294 while losses in connection with the tramways and the electricity supply are £125,766 and £130,885, respectively. I consider the Labour Government is to be congratulated upon having taken the electricity supply away from the control of the Commissioner of Railways, and that the present Government is to be commended upon its decision to place the railways and the tramways under separate administrative controls.

The next division in the return is "Harbours and Rivers." I think this is rather a misnomer. The Harbour and Rivers Section is the constructional part of the Public Works Department and has nothing to do with the administration of our ports. The Royal Commission on Out Ports was a very happy family and we tried to do our job without fear or favour. The most important recommendation we made was that a State harbour board should be set up. Under existing circumstances we have about £7,500,000 invested in our ports, £6,719,178 in our harbours and rivers and another £800,000 controlled by the Railway Department. It is recognised by all port men that railway men should not control ports. At Albany and Geraldton, which are two most important ports, the harbours are under the control of the Railway Department. The stationmasters at those ports are senior men who are not far from the retiring age. It is unreasonable to expect men who would not know the bow of a ship from its stern

to manage such ports. I am glad to know that the Government intends to establish a State harbour board.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: They are long-winded about it.

Mr. HILL: At present, the manager of the Harbour and Light Department is in South Australia where he is to make contact with the South Australian Harbour Board to secure what information he can regarding harbour administration. I do not know why it is that a more efficient method of administration has not been adopted long ago. The general manager of the Port of London Authority, in a presidential address to the Institute of Transport, said that people were blind to the needs of ports. The chairman of the New York Port Authority, in a statement referred to the general indifference with which the subject was regarded. A man I know has considerable knowledge of ports and he recently visited Western Australia. He made some inquiries and told me later that he had never heard so much bally rot about ports as he had here. In this Chamber we have heard interjections about Bunbury and other ports. All this shows that people have a most inadequate idea of the subject.

The Royal Commission on Out Ports dealt effectively with the subject, and we recommended that the ports should be classified under two headings—oversea ports and others. In South Africa they are classified as major and minor ports. I must admit that I was rather disappointed when I perused the terms of reference of the Royal Commission that recently inquired into our railways. I would have preferred the references to have covered transport matters generally rather than that they should have been confined to the railways. Alternatively, I would have liked some drag-net term of reference so that the Commission could have inquired into any other matter affecting the running of the railways. In Mr. du Plessis we had an expert in connection with shipping and ports. I would have liked the State to have the advantage of the views of that expert on our wonderful port zone system. In this State, we are trying to carry a multiplicity of ports with a population of 500,000, whereas in South Africa, with a population of 11,000,000, they are carrying a similar number. It cannot be done here. What we want is a sound

port policy. I am not personally antagonistic to any port in Western Australia. I am anxious that each port shall have the advantage of what nature intended it should enjoy. I do not want any proposition for Albany that will be uneconomic.

Hon. E. Nulsen: What port would you cut out?

Hon. A. H. Panton: Albany!

Mr. HILL: I would leave that to the State harbour board. It might interest members to know that recently I was criticised in Albany for having put in a good word for Bunbury. I told the people at Albany that Bunbury was the proper timber shipping port. When I was a boy, I used to play aboard the sailing ships, and in those days one timber mill could serve several ships, but today it takes several mills to provide for one ship. Bunbury is the timber port, and it is essential that we endeavour to keep it in operation. I was interested in the answer furnished by the Minister for Works tonight when he said that Colonel Tydeman had endorsed the Stevenson-Young idea with regard to Bunbury. I have the greatest respect for Colonel Tydeman and I was anxious to have the benefit of his ideas regarding the silting up of the harbour at Bunbury.

I shall support the member for Bunbury in any effort he makes to keep the port functioning. Unless the silting up can be prevented, we might just as well wipe Bunbury out as a port. On the other hand, that district has a number of advantages that could be used. It has some advantages that Albany does not possess and they should be used for the benefit of the State. Do not let us endeavour to carry on a port for purposes that are uneconomic. As to the North-West, I was interested in what the member for Geraldton had to say. I admit that I am an absolute stranger to that part of the State, but I have every reason to believe that we should be carrying a much bigger population there than is apparent today. The suggestion by the member for Geraldton that the Commonwealth Government should take more interest in the position is worthy of consideration. I also express the hope that more will be done to develop the port of Esperance and that ere long it will come into its own. I feel there

are possibilities at that end of the State, just as there are at Albany.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.28 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 4th November, 1948.

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

QUESTIONS.

MARINE ACTS.

As to Administration.

Hon. H. A. C. DAFFEN asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is the Director of Navigation under the Commonwealth Navigation Act, 1912-1942, a qualified master mariner?

(2) Is the present administrator of the Harbour and Light Department under the Western Australian Navigation Act, 1904, a qualified master mariner?

(3) Are the administrators of similar Acts in other States master mariners?

(4) Is it the intention of the Government that the Bill now before the Legislative Council, viz., the Western Australian Marine Bill, 1948, is to be administered by a master mariner?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(3) This information is not available.

(4) Clause 9 of the Bill before the House provides that the department shall administer the Act, subject to the control of the Minister, and Clause 14 provides for appointment of officials.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

As to Reduction and Effect.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is the information contained in a Press statement correct that there will be a reduced amount of electric power available during and after the Christmas-New Year period?

(2) If so, can an assurance be given to residents of Kalamunda and other Darling Range districts (unless a complete breakdown should occur at the power station) that electric current will be available for motors used for pumping water where the areas are not reticulated by water mains?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Electricity will be available to consumers of the Kalamunda and Darling Range districts at periods throughout each day, but it is impossible to guarantee continuity of supply to the individual consumers referred to.

[The Deputy President (Hon. J. A. Dimmitt) took the Chair.]

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1, Western Australian Trotting Association Act Amendment.

2, Foundation Day Observance (1949 Royal Visit).

Transmitted to the Assembly.

3, Road Districts Act Amendment.

Passed.