

Legislative Council.

Friday, 6th December, 1946.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.30 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

COUNTRY HOSPITALS.

As to Earnings of Matrons and Sisters.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON (for Hon. J. G. Hislop) asked the Chief Secretary:

Is it a fact that sisters in country hospitals, because of the shortage of staff, work many hours overtime and for this reason, some do or can earn greater salaries than the matrons who carry the responsibilities of administration and also work many hours overtime but draw no extra pay?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Yes, but arrangements to meet the difficulty are in an advanced stage.

COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Breakdown at Agnew.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary:

1, Has the attention of the Government been given to the report dated the 27th

November, in the "Kalgoorlie Miner" referring to the water supply at Agnew and the inactivity of the department responsible for attending to the breakdown of the mill?

2, If so, what action has been taken?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, No, but repairs are in hand.

2, Pump and windmill have been railed to Leonora and arrangements are in hand for installation.

EDUCATION.

As to Closing of Agnew School.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary:

Is the statement under date the 27th November contained in a report from Agnew in the "Kalgoorlie Miner" that the school at that centre, having over 30 children on the roll, is to be closed due to lack of accommodation correct?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

No.

BRETTON WOODS AGREEMENT.

As to Tabling Copy.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary:

In view of the importance to Western Australia of her oversea export trade and the decision of the Commonwealth Government to defer acceptance of membership, will the Government lay on the Table a copy of the Bretton Woods Agreement?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

If a copy of the Bretton Woods Agreement is available, it will be laid on the Table of the House.

BUSINESS NAMES ACT.

As to Proclamation and Prosecutions.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

1, Is it a fact that the Business Names Act, 1942, was proclaimed to come into operation on the 1st September, 1944?

2, If so, how many persons have been prosecuted for failing to comply with this Act?

3, Who is responsible for the enforcement of the Act?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, Yes.

2, It has not been found necessary to prosecute any persons for failure to comply with the Act. Every person found to be carrying on business under a business name without effecting registration under the Act has been warned and has invariably taken steps to comply with the Act.

3, The Registrar of Companies.

BILLS (7)—THIRD READING.

1, Comprehensive Agricultural Areas and Goldfields Water Supply.

Returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

2, Country Areas Water Supply.

Returned to the Assembly with amendments.

3, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.

4, Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment.

5, Financial Emergency Act Amendment.

6, Companies Act Amendment.

7, Marketing of Potatoes (No. 2).

Passed.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT.

Third Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [2.45]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [2.46]: This is a small measure which was brought in, we were told, with a great deal of reluctance. The Minister did not like bringing it in. Other small Bills passed year after year have been brought in with reluctance, but to suit particular cases and particular happenings. I wish to draw the attention of members to the serious effect this Act is having on the country districts. Sawmills from which farmers in the Great Southern areas used to draw their supplies

of timber have been instructed that the material is to be sent to Perth. A regulation has been promulgated that any lengths exceeding 9 feet shall not be sold except under a permit. I ask any member whether he has had an opportunity to get a permit for material for any person in the country. In the metropolitan area it might be possible, but there is no chance of getting a permit for a home in a country district.

The Chief Secretary: That is not true.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I got one the other day.

Hon. A. THOMSON: We will leave it at that, without introducing politics. I have applied for quite a number and have not been successful.

Hon. G. Fraser: You might not have had a good case.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Perhaps not, but Mr. Bennetts could get a permit. I consider that I had a good case. A man who had carried on as an orchardist for many years had a breakdown in health and the doctor ordered him to sell his property and get out. The purchaser required the house and so the seller had to leave. He wrote asking me whether I could get a permit for him and I have not even received the courtesy of a reply, let alone a permit. There seems to be some stalemate as regards building operations and the issuing of permits. These restrictions are all in favour of the metropolitan area. Mr. Bennetts says he got a permit, but he lives in Kalgoorlie, which is a much larger place than any of the centres I represent. This man had to get out of his house and could not even get a place built by the Workers' Homes Board.

The Honorary Minister: Because of the priorities for children and babies.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The bulk of the timber in my area has to be sent to Perth. Why should not the farmers who desire to make small additions to their homes be able to get supplies of timber? How many hundreds of homes have been built in the metropolitan area?

Hon. G. Fraser: And in the country, too.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I have never seen so many new homes as there are at Dog Swamp and Karrakatta; I have never seen so many houses perched together as one finds on the Scarborough bus route. Therefore, I claim it would be only just to provide

that greater consideration must and shall be given to the people living in the country. What are the people living on—on the city or the produce from the city? By restrictions under an Act such as this we make it impossible for people to carry on. I was at Cottesloe the other day and I met a certain contractor of my acquaintance. I asked him whether he had plenty of materials. He said, "Yes, from the mill down your way." I said, "How do you manage to get it from there? We are not able to do so." He replied that he had an order from the Workers' Homes Board and that all his material was coming from that mill. It seems to me that a little more consideration should be given to country districts. I could tell of a case in which a man was away on Service for five years, and he is now living with his wife's parents. He has two young children. He made a special visit to Perth but he could not get a permit. There are too many priorities. Is not a man who has been away for five years and has a wife and two children entitled to priority?

Hon. G. Fraser: Why did he not try under the war service section?

Hon. A. THOMSON. He has tried both and has not been successful.

The Chief Secretary: There is something wrong with your case.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is always the method adopted. It is always said that there is something wrong with one's case. I do not want to produce letters, because that might prejudice this young man in getting a permit to build, perhaps in the near future; but so far he has been unsuccessful, despite appeals by his father-in-law and by others. I have kept out of it, being interested, though not so far as the building is concerned. Two men in a small way are the contractors. Six or eight months ago the Workers' Homes Board called for tenders for four wooden houses in Katanning. The contractor there was only granted two. The others were handed to somebody else.

I do not know what influence was brought to bear. I am not inquiring. But those two houses were completed and are occupied today. The people concerned have two more to build and nobody has been asked for prices. Such things make one wonder whether one would not be justified in asking for an inquiry into this permit system.

When inspectors are placed in the position of autocrats and bureaucrats the poor little cow that comes from the country has little hope of securing redress. I would be wanting in my duty if I did not draw the attention of the Government to these facts—and I presume my remarks will be passed on to the Workers' Homes Board. If the board can prove to me that we have been given all the consideration in Katanning to which we are entitled, I will humbly apologise; but I do not think I will have to make an apology.

For my part, I would like to see this Bill defeated, though I know there is no hope of that. But at least I have exercised my right as a country resident to draw attention to the serious position with which people in the rural areas are faced as a result of these controls. Everything is controlled from Perth and all the materials from the country mills are being sent to the city and people in the country districts have Buckley's chance of getting anything. There is something wrong. The requirements of farmers and other producers of the wealth of the country are entitled to more consideration than they receive at present. I know that homes are required in the city, but we want them in the country too. I have instanced the case of a man who had to give up his orchard on account of ill-health. Where was that man living when his sister wrote to me? He was living in a tent at Emu Point.

The Honorary Minister: Has he any children?

Hon. A. THOMSON: No, but surely a man who is sick is entitled to some consideration! Do we want to take all the old people and throw them out and cut their throats? Are they not entitled to some consideration, or must the young men get everything? The young people need these places, and I do not object to that; but here is a case in point. This man has not any children, but he is sick and is unable to work. He cannot get a house or a room and is living in a tent in the bush. Some of my friends say they have lived in tents and it is quite all right. So have I. But tents provide no comfort for a man who has had to give up a lucrative business and is sick, and it is not fair for him to have to live under such conditions. I have made my objection and I hope that it will do some good. There seems to be a dead-end some-

where. I am not in a position to say where it is, but certainly the situation is not satisfactory.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [2.56]: One can possibly understand Mr. Thomson voicing a complaint, but I think that if he had made inquiries in the right direction he would not have submitted it today.

Hon. A. Thomson: Rubbish! This is the right place to voice an objection when one cannot obtain redress elsewhere.

Hon. G. FRASER: It is much better to go to the people who are dealing with the business and find out the true reasons for refusals.

Hon. A. Thomson: I could show you letters containing the reasons that have been given.

Hon. G. FRASER: Letters are nothing. I can show the hon. member letters, too.

Hon. A. Thomson: They reveal the departmental attitude.

Hon. G. FRASER: If the hon. member went into the position thoroughly, he would not have to make inquiries as to why permits are refused. Those permits are refused in the metropolitan area for exactly the same reasons as they are refused in the country; for the same reasons the hon. member has mentioned in this House. But we in the metropolitan area do not make a song about it.

Hon. A. Thomson: You are getting all the houses.

Hon. G. FRASER: We realise that permits are being issued to people who have greater priority than others. Mr. Thomson quoted an ex-Serviceman. He has an advantage over the ordinary civilian, because an ex-Serviceman can make application under both the civilian section and the ex-Serviceman's section.

The Chief Secretary: There is something wrong with his case.

Point of Order.

Hon. A. Thomson: On a point of order Mr. President. I demand that the Chief Secretary withdraw that remark. I do not submit a case which has something wrong with it. The Chief Secretary has accused me of making a mis-statement. I do not like that, and I ask that it be withdrawn.

The President: Mr. Thomson has asked for a withdrawal by the Minister.

The Chief Secretary: I will withdraw the remark, but I will have a talk in a moment!

Debate Resumed.

Hon. G. FRASER: I was mentioning that the ex-Serviceman has two avenues open to him; and the ex-Serviceman's section, in turn, is divided into two sections under which he can apply for a home. He can ask for a loan for his house the work on which is to be supervised by a private architect.

Hon. A. Thomson: This man has plans from an architect.

Hon. G. FRASER: Then he comes under the section controlled by the Commonwealth Government; but the number of permits issued is governed by the money made available by the Federal Treasurer.

Hon. A. Thomson: That does not help him to get a house.

Hon. G. FRASER: I know. I am trying to tell the hon. member why a person who is just making an application cannot get a house.

Hon. A. Thomson: He is not just making an application; he made it months ago.

Hon. G. FRASER: Does the hon. member not know that there have been no approvals of permits since October last year under the war service section? Under that section a man does not have to prove acute need; but the ex-Servicemen who have applied since October have not received permits because money is made available by the Federal Treasurer sufficient to build only 50 or 100 at a time, and the war service section acts on the principle of first in, first served. Consequently, no-one in the metropolitan area who has made application since last October under the war service section has had a home built, and where that applies to the metropolitan area, it applies also to country areas.

Hon. A. Thomson: They might be able to get into a worker's home.

Hon. G. FRASER: There have only been two or three of those built in the last seven years.

Hon. A. Thomson: Nonsense!

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member referred to workers' homes. What he prob-

ably meant was the Commonwealth rental scheme.

Hon. A. Thomson: Yes.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is an entirely different proposition. No person in the metropolitan area has been able to get a Commonwealth rental home until an eviction order has been issued against him. There are many persons with eviction orders who have not been granted a Commonwealth rental home. Many who have had eviction orders against them have had to be placed in camps at Melville and other localities because there are not sufficient homes or material available to ensure their getting a Commonwealth home. I could quote hundreds of instances where people, through illness, have had to sell their properties and get away. They have been refused a permit in the metropolitan area, just as others have been refused a permit in the country, for the reason that there are cases more urgent than theirs. The policy of the board is that it does not entertain applications from persons who comprise only a man and wife. Because of the shortage of materials it has had to give consideration to people with the most units in the family. So far, no permit has been granted and no consideration given to cases where there is only a man and his wife.

I could instance dozens of cases similar to that quoted by Mr. Thomson. Numbers of persons have come to me for assistance in this direction but, knowing the circumstances and the policy of the board, I have not even submitted their applications. Had Mr. Thomson set out his case to the board in full, he would have gained all the knowledge in connection with it that he desired. What he should have done was to examine the facts of the case with the persons who had refused to entertain the application. That would have been the more satisfactory method to adopt. If there are requests which have not been taken into consideration by the board, then the hon. member could stress the facts with the officials concerned and thus learn whether anything had been overlooked. Figures have been given showing the number of homes built in the country and in the metropolitan area. Any fair-minded member would agree that the proportion between the city and the country is satisfactory.

Hon. A. Thomson: From your point of view.

Hon. G. FRASER: It is not a question of my point of view. If the hon. member wants all the homes to be built in country areas, he still would not be satisfied. Were he to review the figures showing the number of permits which had been granted in the metropolitan area and in country districts, he would, I am sure, agree that the proportions are fair and reasonable. I am sorry that at this late stage Mr. Thomson should have raised the point he did. Had he made inquiry in the right quarter, I feel sure he would not have voiced his complaint.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West—in reply) [3.5]: Many people in the last ten months or so have become hot and bothered about the refusal of buildings permits. A member of this Chamber, holding as he does a responsible position, should show some control and moderation in his views. What Mr. Thomson has said about the Workers' Homes Board is capable of a grave interpretation. When introducing the Bill, I stressed the fact that up to October of this year 1,978 permits had been refused. Amongst these were 1,764 for new houses to the value of £1,617,330. Every person who has had a building permit refused and is not able to get the information that Mr. Thomson could have obtained had he taken the trouble to do so, is very indignant, and naturally cross and bad-tempered over the position.

I also stressed the number of persons waiting to go into McNess homes. No-one is allowed to live in a McNess home unless he is either sick or an invalid pensioner, or the person is a widow with children or is an invalid. About 493 people are waiting to get into McNess homes. They are in a very unfortunate position. This indicates the tremendous problem confronting the authorities in dealing with these applications. More than 7,000 people are waiting for houses to be built. The Workers' Homes Board has to determine who shall get these places first. With all due respect to Mr. Thomson, I say that married people with little children, babies, or large families, who are compelled to live either in the country or in the city in crowded accommodation, are entitled to first consideration, and the board has taken the proper course of giving them first priority.

Hon. A. Thomson: I am glad to know that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: A friend of mine from Tambellup, who knows Mr. Thomson, and has a wife and is very sick himself cannot get a house to live in, and I have been battling for him for 15 months. I know, however, that other people with young children have a greater priority than my friend has. The authorities have to do the best they can. It is not a matter of merely asking for a permit. All applications go before the board every Friday morning, I think it is. The board then decides who shall get permits from amongst those applied for. Mr. Thomson's remarks constituted a reflection on the honour and integrity of those who are issuing the permits. Had I been in his place, I would have made an appointment with Mr. Wallwork, and told him my story. I guarantee it would soon have been discovered whether or not the hon. member had made a mistake. I am sorry that Mr. Thomson let himself go as he did, for usually he is more careful concerning the remarks he makes in this Chamber.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time, and *passed*.

BILL—STIPENDIARY MAGISTRATES ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—LOTTERIES (CONTROL) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [3.10] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to validate the purchase of new premises to house the Lotteries Commission and to enable the commission to lease any part of such property, there being no authority in the Act at present for it to take such action.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The Government will soon own half the city, the way it is buying up properties today.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It has a long way to go yet. For some considerable time the commission has been in need of

increased accommodation, but efforts to secure it have been unsuccessful. All the available space in the present premises is in use and even walls have been removed to make more room. Nothing further can be done with the space available, which 36 persons are now occupying and which can comfortably cater for only 20.

Another difficulty that would be obviated were the commission to possess its own premises is in connection with the drawing of lotteries. As members know, the drawings take place in the Town Hall. This building, however, is not always available when required, and drawings sometimes have had to be postponed. Each delay of this nature means the loss of approximately £350 daily to the commission. The possession of its own premises would result in a reduction of expenses. At present the commission pays £515 per annum for its office premises, plus £100 for the use of the Town Hall. In addition, other expenses connected with the drawing of lotteries under present circumstances would be obviated if the commission had its own premises.

For a long time the commission's efforts to obtain suitable premises were unsuccessful. No Government offices were available and private accommodation seemed to be at a premium. However, the commission was eventually offered a suitable site on the south side of Murray street between Barrack and Pier streets, at present occupied by Macrow and Sons, and Dunn Bros. Negotiations were conducted through the Crown Law Department, and the premises purchased by the commission for £15,000. Owing to there being no authority in the Act for this transaction, it was necessary to purchase the property in the names of the four members of the commission as trustees for it, and the necessary caveat was lodged by the Crown Law Department. This will enable the trusteeship to be immediately ceased should this Bill be passed by Parliament.

The present tenants, who are paying a rental of £12 10s. per week to the commission, will remain in occupation until they can secure other accommodation. In addition, £5 per week is received for portion of the rear of the premises which has been leased, as it will not be required by the commission for some time. The leasing of these back premises was a condition of the

contract of sale. When the commission eventually obtains possession of the property, considerable renovations will be required and these will be carried out by the Public Works Department.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: What priority has it?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A very low priority. I would say that the commission has acted in a business-like manner in securing the premises in the hope that it will be able to occupy them. The commission will then have approximately 7,000 square feet for its use, compared with the present cramped quarters of approximately 3,000 square feet, and will be able to expand if necessary. The purchase price of the site, plus the cost of renovations, will enable the commission to reduce its future expenditure with a consequential increase in donations for charitable purposes. In view of the position in which the commission finds itself, the Government is anxious to put this matter right by giving it power to purchase and own its own premises as well as to lease those portions not required for its use. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch, debate adjourned.

BILL—LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (WAR TIME) ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kilson—West) [3.20] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is similar to the Electoral (War Time) Act Amendment Bill, which dealt with the franchise for another place and was approved by Parliament earlier in the session. The parent Act, which was passed in 1943, gave authority for the exercise of the franchise by qualified members of the Forces not resident in their electorates, including personnel of the Civil Construction Corps and the Allied Works Council. The duration of the Act was for 12 months, and continuance Bills have been approved each session, the Act at present remaining in force until the 31st December next. As there are still a number of Western Australians in the Armed Forces, this Bill proposes a further extension to the 31st December, 1947.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: We have not got the Bill before us.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I understood it had been distributed.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: No, we have not the Bill at present.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is a very simple measure and will not cause any debate.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Why not proceed, and adjourn the debate till the next sitting?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: As a matter of fact, I have very little more to add and the measure is so simple that there will, I am sure, be no opposition. To proceed, the interpretation in the Act of "qualified member of the Forces" does not include men who are serving in Japan or Borneo, there still being substantial numbers of Western Australians in those countries. To allow these men to record a vote, the Bill proposes to extend the definition of "qualified member of the Forces" to include men serving in Japan or Borneo.

The Allied Works Council and the Civil Construction Corps having been disbanded, provision is made for the section relating to voting by members of these organisations to be deleted. Incidentally, I notice that the Bill has now arrived and is in the hands of members. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. S. W. Parker, debate adjourned.

BILL—WHEAT INDUSTRY STABILISATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [3.24]: I was rather surprised last night when the debate on the Bill was resumed, to notice that no great opposition was offered to the legislation. I consider this is the most important measure that will be before the House this session. I say that for the reason that a vital principle is involved, which is that the product of the producer shall remain his property until all claims for compensation have been paid on a fair and just basis and that compensation must be paid to the

person who has the right and interest in the wheat—and to no other. In my opinion, that is the plain fact.

Here we are with a Bill before us involving a matter of millions of pounds and we are being stampeded into passing it. The Chief Secretary said that we have had the whole of the facts before us for some considerable time, but it was on the 29th November when the Bill was in another place that it was amended to enable a poll of the wheatgrowers to be taken to decide whether or not they desire the legislation. On top of that, yesterday in the Commonwealth Parliament notice was given for the introduction of another wheat Bill. I do not know if anyone is aware of the full implications. Others spoke to the Minister for Agriculture about it, and he does not seem to know anything regarding the Federal legislation. In the circumstances I think when the debate on the Bill today concludes, the Chief Secretary would be wise if he deferred further consideration until next week when we may have additional information.

The Chief Secretary: Neither of those factors affect this Bill.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I think they do. From what I could gather in speaking to other members, it would appear that the new Commonwealth legislation is an excise measure. If that is so, then there will be nothing to prevent the Commonwealth Government from collecting this money and if the litigation that has been referred to should prove successful the Federal authorities can take the money with one hand and pay the wheatgrowers back with the other hand. In my opinion, it definitely affects the Bill and the wheatgrowers as well.

The Chief Secretary: Neither of those factors affect the contents of this Bill.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Then we will agree to differ. Under the Federal regime our wheat is sold on the basis of 5s. 2d. per bushel f.o.r. ports, which amount will be liable to contributions and deductions. Western Australia is vitally concerned in the matter, being the only State that has an exportable surplus of wheat. We are certainly financially interested in what is happening in more ways than one. This season New South Wales will be importing 9,000,000 bushels of wheat from this State and Queens-

land 2,000,000 bushels, the price for which will be 5s. 2d. bagged f.o.r. ports. Our wheat at Fremantle is worth today 12s. 6d. bulk.

The Chief Secretary: Do you want to charge New South Wales that price?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Yes.

Hon. A. Thomson: We have to pay full price for all the products we get from New South Wales.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: When the Commonwealth Government sold Australian wheat to New Zealand, the arrangement was for the disposal of 5,000,000 bushels, to be sold at 5s. Who pays for that? The Australian wheatgrowers. When we have an exportable surplus we should be able to sell at the world market price. If we sell for less it is the growers who suffer. They certainly buy at the price demanded by other countries for the goods we require from them. On the latest figures available, it is estimated that Australia's harvest this year will amount to 96,000,000 bushels, of which 66,000,000 will be required for home consumption, and 30,000,000 will be available for export.

If we take the figures that have been referred to, we find that for the 66,000,000 bushels for home consumption on the 4s. basis, the amount involved is £13,200,000. Then we have the 5,000,000 bushels sold to New Zealand, subject to the direction of the Minister, at 5s., representing another £1,250,000, and allowing for a 25,000,000 bushel surplus at 12s. giving another £15,000,000, we have a total return on that harvest of £29,450,000. The contributions to the stabilisation fund being half the difference between the overseas price and the guaranteed price, represent £5,000,000. The home price is 4s. a bushel, while the export price is 12s., thus accounting for the difference of 8s. That is the amount that should go to the wheatgrowers of this State. We have all our commitments to meet. The price of super goes up and this present period is our one chance in the cycle of years.

All States have their cycles and this is our good year. In August the estimate of the yield was 128,000,000 bushels, but the dry period during September and October resulted in a drop in the yield, in consequence of which the revised estimate is now 96,000,000 bushels for Australia. The

amount that the growers should receive on the basis of the figures I have mentioned, should be 5s. 1d. at ports, if we sell our wheat to New South Wales and Queensland and dispose of the proportion I have mentioned for home consumption. I do not agree with the idea that the wheatgrowers should subsidise stockowners. If we buy wheat for our pigs and sheep we pay 4s. 6d. a bushel at sidings. The wheatgrower gets 4s. 2d. at sidings, whereas, as I mentioned earlier, wheat at Fremantle is worth 12s. 6d. a bushel for oversea sale. One section of industry should not be required to subsidise another unless the difference in price is made up by the Commonwealth Government. If that course were adopted, well and good; at present it is not so. This State has suffered great disadvantage owing to wheat restrictions, more so than has any other part of the Commonwealth. The averages during the five years ended 1938-39 were as follows:—

	Acres.
New South Wales	4,168,000
Victoria	2,522,000
South Australia	3,096,000
Western Australia	2,864,000

This season the areas for the various States are as follows:—

	Acres.
New South Wales	5,978,000
Victoria	3,469,000
South Australia	2,834,000
Western Australia	2,065,000

Western Australia's average was therefore down by 800,000 acres. Yet the statement is made that Western Australia has not suffered under the restriction measures. I have heard Sir Hal Colebatch say, and I agree with him, that we should not have restriction of acreage in Australia, because while Western Australia may enjoy a good season the Eastern States may be suffering from drought. Even in Western Australia, one portion of the State may be suffering from drought while another portion is having a good season.

During the war years production decreased for various reasons, such as lack of manpower, machinery and super. All this had an effect on wheat prices and production. With wheat at 12s. 6d. a bushel it would be an excellent thing if we had the bins, such as those at Bassendean, filled with grain. I hope we shall get that price, but I am sadly afraid we will not. There should

be no talk of reducing our wheat areas still further. I think one can only obtain a permit to grow wheat for a season, but a wheat-grower must plan ahead at least 12 months.

Hon. A. Thomson: Unfortunately for himself!

Hon. A. L. LOTON: A person desiring to grow wheat must plan ahead for 12 months. The land has to be fallowed.

The Chief Secretary: A three-year plan is necessary sometimes.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I would like to have a ten-year plan.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: A ten-year plan with wheat at 10s. a bushel!

Hon. A. L. LOTON: As much as we can get for it. If people in Australia want to buy it, they should purchase it at the oversea price. The Bill envisages a five-year plan. The 1945-46 crop has been acquired and there is litigation pending with respect to it. Some of the 1946-47 crop has been harvested and is being acquired. That leaves only three years of the plan to go. The best authority on wheat in Australia has stated that in no circumstances can the price of wheat fall below 10s. a bushel for the next ten years. The wheat farmers of Australia—and of Western Australia in particular—are going to pay a big contribution to the stabilisation scheme. I would like to read an extract in order to ascertain what members think of it. It is from "The West Australian" and is as follows:

Growers would not be asked to contribute more than 50 per cent of the export price surplus from any crop and the stabilisation fund would not be allowed to become excessive.

I would like to know what members would say if the parliamentary officer said to them, "You had better leave 50 per cent. of your salary to be paid to a stabilisation fund."

The Chief Secretary: Who will get the 50 per cent?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The farmers will get it—perhaps! I say perhaps, because we are still waiting to get some of our wool money back. We will—perhaps! I have a further extract to read from the same source—

The Bill provided that the tax might be deducted from amounts payable to the growers, a method convenient to all.

I do not know whether it is convenient to all; it is certainly convenient to one section. I ask the Chief Secretary to hold the measure over until next week in order that we may get further information with respect to the proposed Commonwealth legislation. I know this Bill has nothing to do with that legislation, but some members are suspicious of the position and view it from a different angle from that which they did yesterday. There is something cooking, as our friends the Americans say. I am not a lawyer, but it seems to me there is some ulterior motive.

The Chief Secretary: I think you have developed a suspicion complex.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I am suspicious of the wheat position, and justly so. I was caught on the wool business. We were promised that we would share in the proceeds of the wool. Having been caught once, one becomes suspicious the second time. My wish is to protect the wheatgrowers and we must protect them before this Bill is passed. We shall have little chance to do so afterwards.

The Chief Secretary: I think you provided for the poll to protect the growers' interests.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: That might protect their interests, but I am also suspicious of polls. The safeguard is here. If we pass this legislation and then go to the Commonwealth Government and say we are not satisfied with it and want it amended, I do not think we shall meet with success. The time to put the Bill in order is now, or reject it altogether. I favour rejecting it altogether. I make no bones in saying that. I do not want to be misunderstood, however; I say that I am not opposed to stabilisation.

The Chief Secretary: As long as somebody else pays for it.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: No, on a just and fair basis.

Hon. L. Craig: The hon. member does not like bushrangers.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I regret the absence of our late member who referred to bushrangers and brigands. I would like to inform members what Canada is doing for its wheatgrowers. Canada has enacted a plan to pay the growers a first advance of 135 cents, which is equal to 8s. 4½d. Aus-

tralian. The net amount paid to the grower for bulk wheat of No. 1 grade equals 7s. 3¾d. Australian at their home siding. There is a big difference between that sum and 4s. 4½d. Wheat is only wheat, after all. I will not support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [3.40]: I am, and always have been, entirely opposed to this Bill; and if the representatives of the wheatgrowers in this Chamber elect to divide the House on the second reading, they can rely upon my support. I would add that what happened in the Federal arena yesterday would completely justify any member of this House in reversing an opinion previously expressed and voting against this Bill as the only means of indicating his disapproval of the arbitrary and high-handed action of the Commonwealth authorities. What does that action amount to? It is well known that the wheatgrowers of Australia—including Western Australia—have subscribed considerable sums of money in order that they might test in the High Court the validity of certain action of the Commonwealth Government in practically taking away the property of the wheatgrowers. What did the Commonwealth Government say? They said, "We do not care a rush what the High Court may decide. We will not wait for its decision. We will anticipate it by imposing an export duty on wheat. We will take all that we had previously intended to take in another fashion."

Hon. A. Thomson: Shocking!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Surely we are entitled to enter some sort of protest against such arbitrary and high-handed action. Even apart from that, the provision for a ballot never appealed to me, and for two reasons. In the first place, it is "passing the buck." I think that is the popular phrase. It is transferring to the wheatgrower a responsibility that properly rests with Parliament. It is Parliament that is entitled to say whether this is a good Bill or a bad Bill, but Parliament says, "We will not bother about that. We will pass the buck. We will transfer it to the wheatgrowers to see whether they think the Bill is good or bad."

The Chief Secretary: Did not the wheatgrowers want that decision?

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: My second objection is this: Whilst the wheatgrowers are very deeply, very fundamentally, interested in this matter, they are not the only people who are interested. The State of Western Australia is fundamentally interested in it.

Hon. A. Thomson: Very much so.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Anything that prejudices the interests of the primary producer, and particularly the wheatgrower, is going to react with frightful force upon the entire economy of our State; and it is for Parliament, for the representatives of the whole of the people, to say whether the Bill relating to wheat is a good Bill or a bad Bill. I say it is wrong to suggest that Parliament can abrogate its responsibility and say to the wheatgrower, "We will leave it entirely to you." Therefore, I say that the provision for a poll, if the Bill is carried, would have my support; but I cannot agree that we are entitled to hand our responsibility over to the wheatgrowers. I regard the whole scheme of stabilisation with a great deal of suspicion. In the first place, I have not the slightest doubt that it is an attempt to reconcile the primary producer who has been robbed for a long period of years—

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: —to the continuance of the high protection policy of Australia. That is what it is, an attempt to reconcile, or to say, "Oh, yes, we are taking away from you in order that we may build up the secondary industries of the State. Now we are going to give you something back." I do not think that can be done, but that is what it is for. What does it amount to? It is supposed to be a world-wide scheme. What guarantee have we that other countries in the world would comply with the conditions that might be laid down under a general stabilising scheme? Is there the slightest indication of any measure of unity among the nations of the world today? Have we the slightest justification for believing a worldwide scheme might be adopted and adhered to by all the competing countries? We have not.

The second point is this: The stabilisation contemplates—and the Bill makes it very clear—some restriction of production. It was said the other day—I do not agree with it, but I am not going to argue about it

now—that a reduction in the production of potatoes was necessary because they are a perishable commodity. Well, there is nothing perishable about wheat, and the demand for wheat the world over is intense. But when we start restricting production, what must we do? We have to restrict everyone; we have to restrict the good, the progressive and the enterprising farmer along with the one who takes things more easily. Each is to have his area of production cut down. What will that mean?

Wheatgrowing, like other industries, depends essentially on the efficient, the progressive and the enterprising man. If we are going to restrict the production of those who are progressive, enterprising and thoroughly efficient it is inevitable that we destroy the economy of the industry—nothing else can happen! We will drive the good man out of production and the effect of that upon the economy of Western Australia will be drastic, fatal. We have to remember a third matter. Wise heads get together and say, "The wheat required for this year is so much. We will restrict production to that quantity." Then some higher authority, call it what we like, intervenes so that we have floods, droughts and other things that create a scarcity.

Let us take the experience of Australia this year. It was generally recognised that the more wheat we could produce the better. Therefore not so many restrictions were imposed as might otherwise have been applied. But what has happened? The harvest is not what was expected. We are not going to make anything like the contribution we hoped towards relieving the suffering and starvation in other parts of the world. Every attempt to regulate, order and restrict production according to what is the anticipated volume of consumption is likely to prove fatal for that reason. The whole matter seems to my mind to be decided, to a large extent, by the action that the Commonwealth Government took yesterday. But we are still entitled to put up a fight for ourselves.

I do not know whether members have read—I hope they have—the article by Mr. Teasdale that appeared in a recent issue of "The West Australian." I do not think any man in this State, or in Australia, is better informed on this subject, or more entitled to express an authoritative opinion than Mr. Teasdale. He dealt, to some extent, with

the prejudice that had been imposed upon the Western Australian wheatgrower by the failure of the harvest in New South Wales and Queensland. Before there was any indication of a partial harvest failure in different parts of Australia the wheat-grower might have felt content with the local consumption price, which was far below world value. He, no doubt, was anxious, as we all are, that the bread of the people should not be at too high a price.

But it is quite certain that though the wheatgrower was willing for his wheat to be sold for local consumption at less than its world value, he had in mind that he would get substantial compensation because of the high export price for a large volume of wheat. Now he is not going to get that compensation. In addition, he has to face the fact that a considerable portion of what would have been his surplus harvest, at the high price, has to go to New South Wales—10,000,000 bushels—and Queensland—2,000,000 bushels—so that the return he will get as a result of the export value will be cut down. In Mr. Teasdale's article, the figures in which are beyond contradiction, it is made abundantly clear that the difference to the Western Australian farmer between the scheme now contemplated and the one that might have been set up for this State amounts to a loss on this coming harvest of something over £3,000,000.

I do not know whether the Western Australian farmer can afford that, but I do know that the State of Western Australia cannot afford a loss of that kind! Let me give an illustration of the different ways in which people are treated. We have to supply our wheat to the New South Wales and the Queensland people at something less than half the export price. How do those people treat us? Take New South Wales. Nearly all the industries of that State are buttressed up by high protective tariffs which the primary industries of this State have to pay. If we turn to Queensland we find that its great industry—sugar—has, over a long period of years, been supported by a high local consumption price and the prohibition of imports.

So we have had to contribute to that industry by paying, for many years, at least double what we would have paid had we been allowed free import: and that has been the case with a great many of our industries. But now the Queensland people, who

have profited so largely by this imposition, are to be supplied with our wheat at less than half what we can sell it for to other countries; less than half what we charged the hard-pressed people of Great Britain! What happened in the Commonwealth Parliament yesterday goes a long way towards putting this Bill out of office altogether, but I do say that we have now a wonderful opportunity of showing our protest against that action, and that is by voting against the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. L. B. Bolton, debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 3.55 to 4.15 p.m.

BILL—TIMBER INDUSTRY REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.15] in moving the second reading said: This Bill proposes to amend the Timber Industry Regulation Act, which provides for the inspection and regulation of the timber industry, in order to rectify an anomaly. Under the Act there are three classes of inspectors—district inspectors, special inspectors and workmen's inspectors. District inspectors are appointed by the Minister and are allotted to one of the three districts, or portions of such districts in the State. District No. 1 is roughly south of a line running from Bunbury to Wagin. District No. 2 is the area south of a line from Trigg Island to York down to District No. 1. District No. 3 covers the remainder of the State. The inspectors must have had not less than five years' practical experience in the timber industry.

Special inspectors are appointed to make inspections, inquiries and investigations requiring special technical or scientific training or knowledge as the Minister may from time to time direct. Workmen's inspectors are elected by the timber workers in each district and must have had at least five years' general practical bush and mill experience. The Act states that these inspectors may enter, inspect and examine any timber holding, and that is where the anomaly to which I have referred occurs. The definition in the Act of "timber holding" is:

"Timber holding" means and includes the area of a timber concession, or of a timber lease or sawmill permit granted under the

Land Act, 1898, or the Land Act Amendment Act, 1904, or of a permit granted under the Forests Act, 1913, or any land of freehold or other tenure, used for the like purpose as Crown land held under lease or permit as aforesaid.

The timber yards in the metropolitan area, except one which is mainly cutting logs, do not come within the scope of the definition, and therefore the inspectors have no legal authority as far as these metropolitan timber yards are concerned. It is necessary that these yards should be inspected by trained inspectors to ensure the safety of employees. Various saws and other machinery are used which, in the interests of the employees, should be inspected regularly.

Hon. A. Thomson: Are not they inspected by the factories inspectors?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. There have also been complaints that adequate preventive action is not being taken for the eradication of dust, and this is a matter where inspectors should be available to give attention. The Bill proposes to enlarge the definition of timber holding by adding the words—

and any place, whether of a kind similar to or different from any included in this definition, at which timber is stacked, sawn, split, hewn, used in joinery construction or otherwise fashioned.

This will have the effect of including metropolitan yards, thereby giving the inspectors the statutory powers they now lack.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Would that include a woodyard?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Not the ordinary woodyard where firewood is sawn.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Anyhow, you do not intend that it should.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so. Dealing with Mr. Thomson's interjection, metropolitan yards have, to some extent, been inspected by officers of the Factories and Shops Department, but these men, although fully qualified for their own particular work, have not the specialised qualifications needed for the inspection of timber yards. As there are approximately 1,500 timber workers in the metropolitan area, it is essential that their working conditions and safety should be subjected to regular inspection.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Is there any inspection of boilers and other machinery in those places?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, they come under the Inspection of Machinery Act. I emphasise that the workmen's inspector in the timber industry has not the legal right to enter a timber yard in the metropolitan area for that purpose. This Bill will give him that legal right, which we consider it is absolutely essential he should have. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 2:

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Chief Secretary said the Bill is not intended to include woodyards. The definition refers to any place "whether of a kind similar to or different from any included in this definition," etc. That would include everything. The words "or different from" should be deleted. Perhaps we might add to the definition "but shall not include a firewood yard."

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No-one would claim that a firewood yard was part and parcel of the timber industry, as we understand it. The words, however, might be construed as the hon. member has said.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I do not want to move an amendment, but the point should be considered.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Let it pass and have the Bill recommitted next Tuesday if necessary.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Then I should have to put the amendment on the notice paper and there is not time to do it. The matter might be important. Why not report progress?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I agree to report progress.

Progress reported.

BILL—MINES REGULATION.*Second Reading.*

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.28] in moving the second reading said: This measure is similar to the Coal Mines Regulation Bill, which I introduced at the last sitting, inasmuch as it is mainly a consolidation of existing legislation and the opportunity is being taken to include a number of amendments designed to improve conditions in the industry. I therefore propose during my remarks to deal only with those provisions that are not part of the existing Act. I point out that this Bill bears no relation to coal mining, but refers to metalliferous mining only, including, of course, gold mining.

As in the Coal Mines Regulation Bill, the first proposal is to divide the measure into parts, the idea being to simplify reference to the Act. The divisions are: Preliminary, Inspectors, Management, Accidents, Employment, Sunday Labour, Engine Drivers, Plans and Miscellaneous. Opportunity has been taken to insert several new or amended definitions. These relate to the words "mine," "shaft," "rise" and "winze." In each case these definitions have been agreed to by the Chamber of Mines, the union and the industrial committee, and should help to remedy differences of opinions and doubts that have arisen in the past.

Attention has been given to the qualifications of workmen's inspectors. These inspectors are elected by their fellow-workers and are charged with seeing that the provisions of the Act are being complied with and that all steps are taken to ensure the safety and well-being of employees. They are entitled to enter and inspect any mine at any hour of the day and week, provided that the work of the mine is not unnecessarily impeded or obstructed. No workmen's inspector may be appointed unless he has had five years' experience as a practical underground miner.

These inspectors have very important responsibilities, and it is agreed by the Chamber of Mines and the workers' representatives that only thoroughly experienced and capable men should be selected for the position. In order that suitable men should be chosen, all parties have agreed that a qualification for appointment should be the possession of a Commonwealth Laboratory

certificate and an underground supervisor's certificate of competency. An underground supervisor, as members may be aware, is, in other words, a shift boss. As in the Coal Mines Regulation Bill, the term of appointment of a workmen's inspector has been extended from two to three years. This has been done at the instance of the union, which is of the opinion that better service will be obtained from these officials over the longer period, and to this the Chamber of Mines has offered no objection.

An important obligation of both district and workmen's inspectors is the responsibility to enter into a "report book" a record of every inspection they make, and to mention any defect they have observed in regard to the mine and machinery. It is obvious that this information is of considerable importance and that a record of it should be kept. Unfortunately, on some mines this responsibility has been treated in a rather casual manner, with the result that these records are far from well kept. In order to impress on managements the necessity for giving this matter its due importance, it is proposed in the Bill that a "record book" be kept that has been approved by the Minister.

Under the Act the Government Geologist and any assistant geologist may visit and inspect any mine. No-one in the industry objects to this as these visits are usually of value to the mine management. The only alteration in the Bill to the existing provision is an amendment making it incumbent on the department to advise the mine management of the date of a geologist's visit. This is to obviate any inconvenience that might otherwise occur.

In regard to the use of horses underground, I understand that on only one mine—the Sons of Gwalia—are these animals used, as it is now customary for electric equipment and plant to do the work previously carried out by the animals. Although no reports of the neglect of horses have been received, the opportunity has been taken to insert in Clause 22 of the Bill a provision to safeguard the animals as well as persons from all possible danger.

Dealing with managers of mines, the Act provides that if a manager is absent from the mine for more than three days, a deputy manager must be appointed and advice sent to the inspector, warden, mining registrar or

to the department. For the reason that some mines are isolated, the period that a manager may be away from the mine without the necessity to appoint a deputy has been extended to five days. In regard to underground managers, all parties agree that these officials should possess some degree of qualification that should be higher in mines where larger numbers of men are employed. The Bill therefore proposes that where 25 or more men are employed underground, the underground manager must possess either a mine manager's certificate of competency or of service, or an equivalent certificate approved by the Board of Examiners.

Where fewer than 25 men are employed, the underground manager must have an underground supervisor's or shift boss's certificate of competency or of service, or its equivalent. Where a manager is absent, through no fault of his own, it is not essential that his deputy possess a certificate of competency. If such absence is for more than a month the deputy's appointment must be approved by the Inspector of Mines; and, if exceeding a month by the Minister.

At present it is obligatory for a mine management to advise the department of the abandonment of any mine. In some instances, this obligation has not been observed, and the mines have been flooded before the department was aware of the abandonment and had been able to check the plans of the mines in its possession. It is necessary that abandoned mines be inspected to verify the accuracy of these plans in order that any person desiring to re-open the mine may know where the workings are, what work has been done, and the value secured from such work. The Bill therefore requires a mine manager to advise the district inspector prior to abandonment.

Some amendments have been made in regard to accidents. It is now provided that serious accidents must be reported forthwith instead of within 24 hours; and that in order to keep a close track of fumes, any lapse into unconsciousness of any miner must be reported. In order that there may be a proper record of accidents the managements are required to keep an "accident record book" of a type to be approved by the Minister, which shall be open for in-

spection by inspectors, workers' representatives or any persons authorised by the Minister. There is a stipulation in the Act that the Inspector of Mines must be informed immediately an accident is reported, in order that he may examine the scene of the accident and obtain full details of the occurrence. There are times, however, when the inspector is not available, and the Bill therefore provides that the warden or mining registrar may appoint any person, but where possible an experienced miner, to act on behalf of the inspector.

In connection with the hours worked by miners, a similar provision to that in the Coal Mines Regulation Bill is included. Although the Act provides for a maximum working period of 48 hours weekly and eight hours daily, the miners for very many years have worked seven hours 12 minutes a day, and 40 hours a week. These hours conform to the Arbitration Court award and it is proposed to incorporate a similar provision in the Bill. Sunday labour on mines is prohibited with the exception of certain exemptions necessary to the industry. To these exemptions the Bill adds men engaged in the operation of power plants and water supplies, which are now a feature on many mines and which are required to be continuously operated.

With regard to stationary engine-drivers, the Act provides that an engine-driver holding a first-class certificate may control a winding engine by which men or materials are raised and lowered in a mine. This is contrary to the provisions of the Inspection of Machinery Act which was amended in 1922 to stipulate that where men are raised or lowered, a driver must possess a winding engine-driver's certificate. Where materials are concerned, a first-class certificate is sufficient qualification. These qualifications are included in the Bill in order to conform with the Inspection of Machinery Act. They need not, however, apply where hoists of 12 h.p. or less are hauling from a depth of under 250 feet. The Minister may in certain cases give approval to the employment of engine-drivers who are not fully qualified, but such exemptions must be reviewed bi-annually.

Under the existing Act, general rules are provided for and are included in the Act. These are not shown in the Bill but are to be dealt with by regulation. Such progress

has been made in metalliferous mining that systems and methods are constantly changing, and it has been found that with rules as a part of the Act considerable delay occurs when they have to be amended to meet the changing conditions of the industry, especially when Parliament is in recess. With the rules promulgated by means of regulations any alterations will be far more expeditiously effected.

Members will recall that last year an amendment to the Act was passed providing for the making of regulations dealing with the prevention of silicosis or other prescribed industrial diseases. Unfortunately, this provision was overlooked when the Bill was drafted, and I propose when in Committee to move two amendments, one to cause the insertion of the necessary provision and the other to amend the schedule in order to include the amending Act of last year among the Acts repealed by the Bill. That is a brief explanation of the amendments incorporated in the Bill which mainly consist of the consolidation of existing legislation, together with the few alterations to which I have referred and which, of course, are designed to improve conditions in the industry. I hope the House will agree to the amendments as they appear in the measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [4.45]: I support the second reading of the Bill. The Minister has kindly agreed to defer the Committee stage until the next sitting of the House in order that certain amendments which I believe he contemplates, and others to which I shall invite the consideration of members, can be placed on the notice paper. In the circumstances, I do not think any good purpose would be served by discussing the proposed amendments at this stage and so I shall confine myself to speaking generally on the Bill and dealing with one or two phases.

The importance of the goldmining industry to Western Australia has been generally recognised and, in the circumstances, members will be prepared to give the closest consideration to a measure of this description. It is a fact that before the outbreak of the recent war, 20 per cent. of the population of this State was, directly or indirectly, dependent upon the goldmining industry. It was also felt that no other in-

dustry offered greater opportunities for the rehabilitation of ex-Service men or furnished a more fruitful source for the employment of migrants than the goldmining industry. That hope has been by no means abandoned. Progress has not been as rapid as we could have wished but there are reasons for that which can be readily understood.

A great deal of capital is necessary in order to restore a number of mines from the condition into which they have lapsed because of the lack of labour during the war period. As I say, capital is required. Costs have risen very considerably and not only that but, because of the industrial disturbances the world over, it has been extremely difficult to obtain a great many of the materials not only urgently required but absolutely necessary for the rehabilitation of the industry. Doubtless that position will in time be overcome, but it is a factor that we must keep constantly in mind.

The future of the goldmining industry with its ability to employ large numbers of men and to contribute to the prosperity of the State will depend in the long run on costs. It will depend on its ability to treat at a profit low-grade ores. I have been in one way and another associated with the goldmining industry of this State for over half a century. I well remember some 50 odd years ago standing at the head of the shaft of the Great Boulder mine with the then recently-appointed general manager, Mr. Richard Hamilton, a man of outstanding ability and one of the most competent exponents of mining practice ever to have come to this State. That gentleman said, "I have advised my directors to reduce the average value of ore treated to two ounces to the ton."

That is to say, it represented a value 10 times that of a good deal of the ore that is being profitably treated in Western Australia at present, but that does not alter the fact that every 1-dwt. we add to the cost of mining will cut out a number of mines. There are some that can work 6-dwt. ore profitably or even 5-dwt. ore, but every increase we make in mining costs puts up, as we may say, the payable standard, even if it is merely 1-dwt., to that extent we may reduce the number of mines that can be profitably worked and the number of men that can be profitably employed. While I

welcome the Bill, which I believe is a good one, we should endeavour to keep in mind all the while that we must encourage the goldmining industry. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [4.50]: I am glad of the opportunity to support the second reading of the Bill and pleased that the Government has seen fit to do something further in the interests of the goldmining industry. I have worked underground as a miner and I appreciate how necessary it is that those in authority in the mines should possess certificates of competency. I have good reason for saying that. Many years ago my father was working on the No. 4 shaft of the Great Boulder mine. He was a driver, and unfortunately his opposite number as a driver caused a serious accident. If the manager or underground manager at that time had held a certificate of competency possibly the accident would never have happened. As a matter of fact, ropes were put round both drums and the engines pulled in the same direction during timbering operations when they were fixing up No. 4 shaft. After the men had been lowered to a certain depth, the weight on the ropes plus the pull of both drums resulted in an accident with the loss of the lives of about 12 men. Had those controlling the operations submitted themselves for examination and secured certificates of competency, that sort of thing could not have happened.

To further emphasise the point I make, I can relate the particulars of an accident that happened to me. At the time I was a new chum and was sent to work underground on the Ivanhoe mine. I was engaged in trucking and bogging, and at the 1,600 feet level I was sent 40 feet into the stope and was told to over-weigh certain dirt from the surface, which ran through the "grizzly" down the stope into the chute. If those in charge had had more experience I would not have been sent on such a task. As it was, as soon as I started the dirt it ran, and with the dirt coming down from above I was pushed through 40 feet down the stope. I was gradually worked out of the chute but it was four hours before I regained consciousness. Many such accidents have happened on the mines largely due to the incompetence of those in charge and through their inexperience.

Coming down to more recent times complaints have been made regarding the sanitary arrangements underground. For many years men have had to rely on the rail system over a pan. It was not until last month that cement floors were put in and pedestals installed. Then again for 50 years the mining industry has operated, but only now have we, through pushing these matters, secured various improvements. There is the matter of ventilation. Questions were asked about that last week, and I can inform the House that there is ample room for improvement in that direction. In dead-ends where the men work in dust and fumes, the need for ventilation is very great. Lack of attention to such matters leads to the men contracting the dreadful disease of which so much has been heard. All too many men on the Goldfields are suffering from miner's phthisis and anyone who has seen men in that condition appreciates what that means.

Inspectors are necessary in connection with firing-out operations. Six holes may be put in and charges lodged, but only four may go off when they are fired. Later on a man comes along and puts in his drill, with the result an explosion takes place and that man is killed or injured for life. A friend of mine named Byfield had such an experience and he lost his eyesight and was disfigured for life. I believe he died recently. If six charges were put in, an inspector should see that they all went off, or if some did not then he should see that they were disposed of before the next shift took over.

Hon. A. Thomson: How could that be done?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: More charges would be put in and fired out. Then there has been some talk about horses underground. These animals are used on the Sons of Gwalia mine, on the underlay shaft. I was an assistant pipe-feeder on that mine, and I remember that we had a mule there. When the animals come to the surface, they have to be kept in a dark place; otherwise they would go blind. It is necessary for an inspector to see that the animals are brought to the surface every now and then to prevent them from losing their sight. Then again, there is the question of benefits for those who work in the mines. Those who follow that occupation experience all sorts of in-

convenience and those who are unacquainted with mining operations cannot appreciate all they have to put up with. Anything that can be done to cater more adequately for them should be agreed to by the House.

Another necessity is that there shall be available plans of the underground workings of all mines. Members will remember that many years ago a miner named Varischetti was entombed in a mine at Bonnievale, owing to the flooding of the shaft. Had the diver who first went to the mine had a plan of the workings, the unfortunate miner would probably have been rescued fairly promptly. As it was, only when Diver Hughes went up, with his knowledge of the underground workings there, could the man be rescued.

Members have probably been interested in the photographs displayed in the lobbies illustrating various phases of mining operations. That brings me to the point that the conditions in our mines today are far from satisfactory. That is particularly apparent if we compare Broken Hill with Kalgoorlie. At Broken Hill, proper shower-baths are installed, and many other conveniences. We talk about health matters in relation to the Golden Mile, but they do not compare with what is provided at Broken Hill. There are change-rooms and lockers enabling miners there to go to work in their good clothes, change into their working togs, and everything is satisfactory.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do they get their pants pressed?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No, but there are coat-hangers and other conveniences in the lockers. In the various levels of the mine there, hot water can be procured by the men and nothing of the sort is available in our mines. Then again, they have proper reading rooms.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: And all this is done by the Broken Hill Proprietary Co.?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, and furthermore, if any of the miners there wish to undertake a first aid course, they can receive tuition equal to that which any doctor could provide. The company has also established an entertainment hall for the convenience of the workers. A person could ask the management about the men and he would be told that they did 100 per cent. work.

That is because the company caters for them and gives them the facilities with which to work.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Is this the much-criticised Broken Hill Proprietary?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes. The Bill also provides that a lad below a certain age is not to be permitted to go into the pits. That is a wise provision. Sir Hal Colebatch spoke about the slow progress being made in the return of machinery taken from the mines. Goldfields members attended some of the conferences between the Chamber of Mines and the representative of the Prime Minister at the time the Japanese entered into the war. It was necessary then to remove some of the mining machinery for war purposes and that machinery is being returned but slowly. The present machinery is suffering from wear and tear and needs to be replaced. Most of this heavy machinery is manufactured in England, where the people are practically starving. Until such time as their position improves, we shall have to wait for this machinery. The mining industry is our main source of revenue and I hope, therefore, that members will assist it by passing the Bill.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [53]: I wish to make a few remarks in support of the Bill. As explained by the Chief Secretary, it merely consolidates the existing law relating to the management of goldmines, while amplifying it in some important respects. The measure apparently has the approval of the Chamber of Mines and of the union representing the miners. That, in itself, is a recommendation for the measure. The Bill will go a long way towards improving the existing Act. No statement is required from me to point out that mining is, first and foremost, a very dangerous occupation. In spite of improved methods evolved and notwithstanding all the skilled care taken, goldmining still remains a hazardous occupation. On the one hand, there is always the unforeseen danger of a fall of earth and similar accidents. On the other, in spite of the aids that science has given us to minimise the dust menace, it still remains a real menace, and men continue to contract silicosis.

It is only right and proper, therefore, that our legislation should be right up to date,

that it should make every provision for proper safeguards in mines and that these also should be kept right up to date. The Bill is an important step forward in that respect. Sir Hal Colebatch pointed out what an important industry mining is to Western Australia. It is not readily appreciated by the man in the street that nowadays, when the industry is not by any means properly under way after the set-back it received during the war, it is producing gold to the value of over £500,000 per month. I am aware that the managers of the big mines are afraid of rising costs. The industry is in a position somewhat similar to that of the man on the basic wage. A few years ago, that man could make do on £5, £6 or £7 a week, but today it is a very different story. Cost of living has increased and it is difficult for him to make ends meet.

Before the war, most of the big mines were able to treat small weight ore profitably; but it seems to me that, unless the price of gold is increased—and there certainly seems to be a good case to be made out for an increase—some of the mining companies will have great difficulty in treating the small weight ore which they dealt with in pre-war days. I hope the solution will be found in an increased price for gold. We have heard a lot about wheat being sold on the open market and about its price. Gold is in a somewhat similar position. Our gold brings a much higher price overseas than producers get in Australia.

Hon. H. Tuekey: Just about double.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: An important feature of the mining industry is the way in which mines are managed. A mine is like a farm or any other industry; it must be wisely and carefully managed. The Bill proposes to raise the standard of efficiency required of mines inspectors. That is a step in the right direction. It also proposes to tighten up the control which managers must exercise over their mines. That also, in my opinion, is a wise provision. Mines in future will not be able to carry managers who are managers merely in name. I do not wish it to be inferred that I am casting aspersions on the managers of the mines on the Eastern Goldfields. Every one of the managers in control of the large mines has proved his capacity. Generally, the Bill is excellent and will go a long way

towards assisting in the proper management of mines. It will also go a long way towards safeguarding the health of the men engaged in the industry, by providing safeguards to minimise the risk of accidents which, unfortunately, is ever-present. I give the measure my whole-hearted support.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Central) [5.13]: Like previous speakers, my association with goldmining commenced many years ago. For the first six years of the ten that I was actively associated with the industry, I worked on the Fingall mine, which at that time was one of the biggest gold-producers in the world. It was at that time producing 20,000 ozs. of gold per month, the value of the ore being an ounce to the ton. Gradually, over the years the tonnage dropped on account of depletion of ore reserves. Values also dropped, so that in time the mine unfortunately had to close down. During the long time it continued, there was a high fatality rate, which I think would have been considerably less had the present Mining Act been then in force.

I quite agree with what previous speakers have said about the value of the goldmining industry generally and the imperative need to study the question of costs. There are mines in this State at present working on high-value ore reserves, but other mines are on very low grade ore. Other properties might lend themselves to operation if costs could be maintained at a low rate or the value of gold increased by possible sale on a free market; if some consideration could be given in the way of the removal of the gold tax, or cheap machinery could be offered to the industry, because it does mean a great deal to the State in the way of employing personnel and furnishing a ready medium of exchange. The Big Bell mine, one of the largest in the State, is working on a head value of about 3-dwt., and I am informed that in the course of a few years that mine would, if it could get the machinery that it is seeking, employ 1,000 men.

The Bill is a good one and I gladly support it and will vote for the second reading, but there are one or two clauses on which I wish to offer a few comments. These matters will be dealt with more fully when Sir Hal Colebatch moves his suggested amendments. The Mines Department in this State is probably one of the best run departments

in Australia. There are excellent men in charge of it, and they can be relied upon to implement the provisions of the Act equitably, and not to ask for anything unreasonable in the way of amendments. When the Commonwealth Government commenced some mining propositions in the Northern Territory it sent for the Western Australian Act, as a guide for an Act under which to work, and also for one, or it may have been more, of our inspectors.

Clause 14 relates to secrecy and confidential information. What it provides is in line with the practice that exists in many other callings. Before a person is permitted to take a job in the post office, the telegraph office or the savings bank, he has to sign a declaration of secrecy. The same can be said about the trading banks and insurance companies, and numerous other businesses and professions. But this clause states that the workmen's inspector shall not divulge any information that is confidentially gained, except to his union. I cannot see that the information would be of much value to the union, or that the Bill should give the inspector the right to pass such information on to the union.

The other inspector has the right to divulge that information only to his superior officer or the Minister, which is quite in order because they, the same as he, are pledged to secrecy, but the union is not. That provision might be left out of the clause. The workmen's inspector could have discretion to pass on to his union such information as had a bearing on the working conditions of the men or the safety factor. It should not be his right, any more than it would be that of the Mines Department inspectors, to pass on confidential information which is, and should be, regarded as the property of the mineowner. Clauses 36 to 39 are concerned with conditions of employment. These are matters that could be well left to the Arbitration Court. I do not think it is the function of Parliament to interfere with the workings of the Arbitration Court or its awards. After all, such a court has much readier access to facts and more comprehensive knowledge of conditions than we can hope to have.

The Chief Secretary: This is not interfering with the Arbitration Court.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: It may not be, but it is putting into an Act what the Arbitration Court could and should do.

Clause 61 refers to a comprehensive set of regulations. From time to time it is desirable and perhaps necessary for the Minister to have power to frame certain regulations. On the other hand, the mining industry has been established for a long time in this State, and I suggest that any regulations that it might be necessary to introduce under this measure would not be of an emergency nature, but could be governed by some provision which would enable them to be submitted to the House before being put into operation. That would be a recognition of the functions and powers of Parliament and it would give the Minister a sense of accountability to members—although I do not say that he has not got that now—and would at least avoid the possibility of regulations being put into force early in January, when Parliament has risen, and remaining in force for six months and then, after having been considered by the House, probably being disallowed. In the main I have pleasure in supporting the Bill and will vote for the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILLS (5)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Canning District Sanitary Site (Hon. G. Fraser in charge).
 - 2, Loan, £5,050,000.
 - 3, State Forest Access.
 - 4, Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board) Act Amendment.
 - 5, Purchasers' Protection Act Amendment.
- Received from the Assembly.

BILL—COAL MINES REGULATION.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Classification of inspectors:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in line 6 of paragraph (c) after the word "appointment" the words "after the first day of January one thousand nine hundred and forty-nine" be inserted.

The reason for this amendment is that only a limited number of coalminers at present hold the necessary certificate. By the date mentioned in the amendment those who are desirous of qualifying for these positions will have had an opportunity of gaining the necessary certificate.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Can no appointments be made until then?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They could be, but they will not be.

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

Clauses 9 to 17—agreed to.

Clause 18—Special inspections and publication of reports:

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (1) the words "or any other person" be struck out.

This clause gives the Minister power to authorise any person to enter and inspect a mine. That power is too broad. A man concerned in one mine might by some subterfuge get authority from the Minister to inspect a rival mine. Some undesirable person might, by a plausible story, get authority to inspect a mine. Some prominent member of an Eastern States coalminers' union might come here and demand from the Minister authority to inspect various mines, and while the companies do not mind any officer of the department inspecting their mines, they would rightly object to that.

We are led to believe that there are some undesirable persons in high positions in coalmining unions in other parts of Australia. We do not want such people to come here and demand from the Minister—who might be placed in an awkward position—the right to go down and inspect some mine, and perhaps cause trouble. That is why I ask members to strike out the words "or any other person," and leave the Minister with the right to authorise any person in his department to inspect a mine. Under most circumstances, I think the private companies would allow anyone to inspect, though not to inspect with a view, perhaps, to creating trouble.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think the argument put forward by Mr. Parker is very weak. The aim of the provision is to

make it possible for the Minister to authorise individuals such, for instance, as Mr. Don, who was brought here from New South Wales by the Minister, to inspect a mine and report to him on certain aspects of it. It might be necessary to instruct a licensed surveyor to go down and inspect a mine.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Would he not be a departmental officer?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. If Mr. Parker's advisers feel that men such as Mr. Don should not be given the right to inspect except at the discretion of the company, that is a different argument. It was recently necessary to bring Mr. Jack to this State, but he had no legal right to go down a mine.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: The words "or any other person" are too broad.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot understand who can have put this idea into the hon. member's mind. He thinks the Minister might agree to some Communist going down a mine.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I do not suggest ill-faith on the part of the Minister, but he might be deceived.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Minister desires this right so that he may obtain necessary reports.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I understand what is in Mr. Parker's mind, but I cannot support him. The Minister may want to send officers of some other department down a mine, and therefore I cannot accept the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 19 to 23—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—CITY OF PERTH SCHEME FOR SUPERANNUATION (AMENDMENTS AUTHORISATION).

Second Reading.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [5.37] in moving the second reading said: This is a small Bill, the purpose of which is to amend the City of Perth superannuation scheme. Under the principal Act the Perth City Council established a scheme that commenced to function on the 1st July,

1937. It provided for superannuation benefits for both the salaried and wages staffs of the council. In 1941 the Act was amended to effect an extension to widows of male employees not provided for in the original Act. The measure before the House is to amend the parent Act, as amended in 1941. It is proposed to alter the amount of the pension that an officer of the council will receive on retirement from the present rate of one one hundred and twentieth part of his salary to a one-sixtieth part.

The intention is to increase the pension for older officers of the City Council who were engaged during the non-contributing period prior to 1937. In order to bring this about the City Council is prepared to pay into the superannuation fund, as a contribution by the Electricity and Gas Department, a sum not exceeding £1,600 per annum and a further sum not exceeding £1,400 per annum as a contribution by the other departments of the council. Those payments will be for a period of 22 years from the 1st July, 1946. On the advice of its actuary the City Council is prepared to pay the amounts I have mentioned.

The other object of the Bill is to enable officers of the City Council, who were absent from their employment because of engagement in one or other of the various Services during the war, to make up the leeway of that time. As the Act stands at present, the officers affected could not have paid their superannuation payments regularly, because the Act would not allow it, nor could the City Council pay the contributions for them. It will therefore be seen that the second object of the Bill is to enable the officers to pay the superannuation fees that they would have paid had they not been absent during those years on service. I should perhaps explain that previously, if no contribution was made by the employee, it was impossible for the council to make one on his behalf.

By means of this amendment the officers are now given the right to choose whether they will make contributions to the superannuation fund by means of instalments distributed over a period of ten years, to cover the contributions that would have been made to the fund had not their service been interrupted by the war. The City Council proposes to make it optional for the officers concerned to contribute in the manner sug-

gested by the Bill. There will be no compulsion on those officers to avail themselves of this provision if the measure becomes law. It will be seen that while the employee is due to pay his contribution to the fund in proportion to the salary he received at the time of enlistment, the council is prepared to pay a contribution on his behalf equal to the sum that he would have paid had he received increases in salary during his absence with the Fighting Forces, and, further, to cover the loss of interest on the contribution during the ten years over which the instalments are to be distributed.

The object of the Bill should appeal to members, and I feel sure it will have their support. It will be understood that, should any officer refuse to join the scheme, no payment will be made on his account by the council. It might be asked why the word "officers" is included and the words "wages men" omitted. The reason is that, as far as the superannuation fund is concerned, wages employees are not affected by their absence in the Services, their pensions being at a fixed rate that is not affected by such absence. I submit the Bill to the House with confidence. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.30 p.m. on Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.47 p.m.