

ago almost to £20 a ton, but has gradually crept up until now, according to the "West Australian," it is quoted at £32 a ton and forward at £32 7s. 6d. Some optimists have told me that lead is going up to £40 within the next three months. It is encouraging to know that operations have recommenced in the Geraldine area. I understand that the Fremantle Trading Co. are also contemplating the resumption of operations in the near future. If lead is going up like this the mines will recommence work. With the resumption of operations at Geraldine, I want the Minister to realise certain representations I have made in regard to the extension of the railway to Geraldine. A permit at all events will have to be granted by Parliament before the session is over, so that tramway facilities may be provided. The proprietors of the Surprise Mine, Green Bros., will require some concession to enable them to work their proposition in a satisfactory manner. These people have undertaken a contract to export to British smelters no less than 30,000 tons of concentrates. If that amount of concentrates is to be carted nine or ten miles to a railway siding it will handicap those who are endeavouring to promote the industry, and will cause enormous expense to the Government in maintaining the roads. This production is from one mine alone. I am given to understand that the Three Sisters leases, in addition to the Surprise mine, will also be working soon. Although the export of concentrates has been suspended during the last six months, the Three Sisters mine has in sight about 10,000 tons of ore. There is going to be a tremendous volume of production in one particular area in the next 12 months. The first shipment of ore from Geraldine on contract is to leave in January. The extension of a railway connected with the base metal fields is altogether a different proposition from railways to the goldfields. On the one hand the production is brought to the metropolis in ounces of gold, and on the other it is brought in tons of ore. If any Act is required to extend this railway or tramway I hope its introduction will be expedited, and that the Bill will be considered before the House adjourns for Christmas.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

BILL—SUPPLY, £975,000.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

RESOLUTION—TRADE WITH STRAITS SETTLEMENTS AND JAVA.

Message received from the Legislative Council asking concurrence in the following resolution: "That in the opinion of this House, in view of the necessity for the encouragement of production by the provision

of adequate markets for the results of such production, it is advisable that the Government of this State should take steps to develop trade and commerce between this State and the Straits Settlements and Java."

House adjourned at 11.12 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 6th November, 1919.

	PAUSE
Bills: Wheat Marketing, 3s.	1241
Land Tax and Income Tax, as to Committee stage	1246
Traffic, Com.	1249
Prices Regulation, 2s.	1253
Motion: Taxation on unimproved land values	1240

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

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Third Reading.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.34]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [4.35]: I must ask the indulgence of the House in taking the somewhat unusual procedure of delivering a speech on the third reading of a Bill, but owing to my position as Chairman of Committees it was impossible for me to make several statements during the Committee stage which, perhaps, would have been better made there. However, I will take the opportunity of making them now. Since the Bill was considered on the second reading, there have been certain events which, to my mind, have created a new atmosphere about the question of wheat marketing. The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth since then has made his policy speech, and has said that the 1920-21 harvest is to be guaranteed to the farmers at 5s. per bushel. As in the past the guarantee has been carried by both the Federal and the State Governments, I take it that this guarantee also will be shared in by the Western Australian Government. Hence the matter concerns us. I take no exception to the principle of giving the guarantee, which is done quite rightly. The Governments give these guarantees to the farmers so as to induce them to put in as large an area as possible under grain. But at this stage the question arises, by what

authority have the State Government the right to enter into any arrangement with the Federal Government in excess of the Bill under discussion? This Bill deals only with the 1919-20 harvest, while the new Federal guarantee applies to the 1920-21 harvest. The new guarantee is shared in by the State Government, and next year this Parliament will again be asked to agree to something which has already been done. I therefore deem it advisable at this stage of the Bill to enter an emphatic protest against the manner in which for some years past things have been done in this connection. War conditions have now ceased, and although things are not yet back to normal, they are getting back to normal very rapidly. Consequently the great necessity which existed in the past for emergency action exists no longer. There has been too much, not only in this direction but in other directions as well, of government of the people by Cabinet instead of by Parliament. In my opinion, Parliament should issue its instructions, and the Government should carry out the instructions of Parliament. Instead of that, Parliament has become a body to ratify the actions of the Government; and in this respect we have been failing in our recognition of the rights and privileges conferred by the Constitution, and are giving way in a manner which, at some future date, will come back on our shoulders with a very heavy blow indeed. I ask members to consider briefly the manner in which the wheat has been handled since the inception of the Pool. I do not intend to weary hon. members, and I shall devote only a very few minutes to this phase of the question. There come back to my mind certain questions asked in this Chamber in Committee, and the replies to those questions. In the first year of the Pool the collecting of wheat was done by the old acquiring agents who existed prior to the war. They were induced to place their services at the disposal of the various Australian Governments by a promise made to them that, upon the expiration of the war, the trade should be allowed to flow back into the channels which then existed, and that the agents would be enabled to carry on their business as previously. The time has arrived for that promise to be fulfilled. It has not been fulfilled. Whether from the point of view of the handling of the wheat by the farmers themselves, the promise was a proper one, I am not concerned with at the moment. The question now is whether a promise given by the Commonwealth Government, and acquiesced in by the State Governments, should be fulfilled. After the pool had been in existence for two years, the absurdity of the old system of acquiring agents, acting in opposition to each other throughout the States, made itself manifest to everybody concerned; and in the Eastern States it was suggested that the system of competition in the various

parts of Australia should be abolished by the establishment, in its place, of the zone system. The idea of the zone system is that the State should be divided into certain portions, and that each of the acquiring agents should be given one of these portions to operate in. Thus each acquiring agent would have his particular sphere of activity, uninterrupted by the other agents. The districts were to be divided up on a basis proportionate to the trade which each of the various acquiring agents had been doing. The question of the zone system was gone into very fully by the then manager of the Wheat Scheme, Mr. Sibbald. Mr. Sibbald was appointed to that position by the present Premier, then Minister in charge of the Wheat Scheme. Mr. Mitchell appointed Mr. Sibbald manager of the Wheat Scheme because he thought him the best man to be got in this State for the position. I venture to say that, even to this date, the Premier has not had any reason to change his mind on that point. We have not heard him say so. I consider, therefore, that in the judgment of the present Premier Mr. Sibbald was the man for the job. Mr. Sibbald went into the zone system, and had begun to negotiate with the various acquiring agents for the handling of the coming harvest on this system. After negotiations had proceeded for a time, and Mr. Sibbald had put up a minute on the subject, the Minister then and now in charge of the Wheat Scheme peremptorily told Mr. Sibbald, in effect, that he did not know what he was talking about, that he was going on lines which he had no authority to go on, and that the zone system was to be dropped. The question arises at this juncture whether Mr. Sibbald was going outside the instructions he had received, and whether the Minister was acting in a manner which some of us might approve. However that may be, Mr. Sibbald took the Minister's communication so keenly to heart that he left the service of the scheme. I venture to say that no member of this Chamber would for a moment think that a gentleman like Mr. Sibbald, appointed by a man of such high repute as the Premier of this State to-day, would have retired from his position simply because an opinion of his was not palatable to the Minister. I am under the impression that other influences were then at work, that other bodies, or another body, to whom the zone system did not appeal, had more influence in the department than was good, and that Mr. Sibbald had to pay the penalty of a change of policy. After Mr. Sibbald's retirement, and the rejection of the zone system proposition, the work of acquiring the wheat was placed in the hands of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., without competition. At this point I will not enter into the question of how the Westralian Farmers managed to acquire that business. But I should like to refer to a question asked by Sir Edward

Wittenoom during the Committee stage, as to why tenders were not called for the handling of the wheat harvest. The reply given was that the work was being done so well at the present time that there was no necessity to change the policy of the Government; that the body then handling the business had shown so much ability and economy in the management of the work that the Government were satisfied and gave them the work to do for the then forthcoming harvest. But I think there was another reason why tenders were not called. As I indicated in my second reading speech, the wheat board last year decided to ask the various acquiring agents in this State to submit tenders for the work; and circular letters were sent out to the various agents for the purpose of obtaining quotations. Immediately a storm arose throughout the agricultural areas of this State, and every little co-operative society in the wheat growing districts sent letters and telegrams to the Minister, or to the officials of the Scheme, protesting against this business being handed over to anybody except the Westralian Farmers, and in some cases refusing to deliver wheat except through the agencies of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. The consequence was that the Government, or the Minister, or whoever was responsible for the proposed change of policy, immediately decided to withdraw the call for tenders and again place the work in the hands of the Westralian Farmers. In this particular case it clearly shows that the change of policy on the part of the Government, or the Minister, or the Wheat Board—I do not know which: they are all combined—was dictated not by the manner in which the work had been done by the Westralian Farmers, but simply by the outside influence which was brought to bear. In the circumstances, I am inclined to think that the abandonment of the zone system and the exit of Mr. Sibbald might well be attributed to the same cause. The question arises, what would have been the position of the Government if they had at that time insisted upon placing the work in the hands of the old acquiring agents, or, alternatively, doing the work themselves, as was suggested by the Royal Commission on the Wheat Marketing Scheme and also by the officials of that Scheme? The Wheat Marketing Advisory Board themselves asked their general manager to submit an estimate for the doing of this work. Commenting on this, the Honorary Minister has said that the estimate prepared by the general manager, Mr. Keys, was only an estimate. The same remark was made last session by the leader of this House. That is hardly a fact. It was more than an estimate. It means this: We have handling the wheat to-day the Wheat Marketing Scheme, the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and the co-operative societies in the country. It would be interesting to see what each of these

bodies is doing. The wheat is taken by the farmer from his farm to the railway siding. It is there received by the local co-operative societies or other agents of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., who weigh, check, sample and estimate the value of the wheat, and then place it in railway trucks. They may have to place it on the ground before putting it into the trucks, but their work ceases after taking the wheat from the farmers' wagons and placing it in the truck. As soon as it is placed in the truck their responsibility ceases, and the scheme takes possession of the wheat. We have the scheme's officials with a staff of clerks, and we have the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., also with a staff of clerks. The Westralian Farmers, Ltd., receive the wheat, issue receipts and so on, copies of which they send to the scheme. The scheme will then see that the documents are all transferred to other books, and copies sent to the farmers. There is here duplication; we have two bodies doing what one body should do. We have an over-lapping of services, and to my mind one of these bodies should not come into the transactions. The £25,000 paid to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., can be reduced to £10,000 if the wheat be handled by the scheme itself. It is a difference in the work which is being done by the two bodies. If the scheme officials were to deal directly with the sub-agents in the country, the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., could disappear from the scene of operations and the two bodies, the Wheat Marketing Scheme and the acquiring agents in the country, could do all that is necessary. The result would be that the £25,000 would automatically drop to £10,000, which Mr. Keys says would be sufficient to do the work. It is not merely an estimate; it has all been carefully worked out. If it is an estimate, it is an estimate made, not only by Mr. Keys, but also by Mr. Sibbald years before. Yet although those two men have estimated a saving of £15,000 on a 10-million bushel harvest, the Government have said "We know more about it than do you. We shall have it delivered to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and pay the higher amount." It may be contended that this is the farmers' money and so does not concern Parliament. That is a fallacy, because if money is expended in unnecessary services, it is an economic waste to the community, and although the farmer may indirectly carry it in the first place, yet indirectly it will fall on the shoulders of the community in the end. And it has a bearing on the guarantee given by the Government. So far, everything in connection with the wheat and in regard to the operations of the pool looks bright, but no human being can say that the pool will ultimately emerge satisfactorily from the complex difficulties which surround it, that is to say, satisfactorily to the Government guaranteeing the payments. Consequently, if there is a loss, as there has been in the other

States on previous occasions, that loss will fall on the taxpayers, and so it is the business of Parliament. It has been stated, too, that no one has a better right to handle the farmers' wheat than the farmers' representatives. I venture to say that nobody, here or anywhere else, could dispute the accuracy of that assumption. No one has a better right to handle the farmers' wheat than the farmers themselves. But are the farmers handling the wheat? Assuming that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., do represent the farmers, what do they do? They simply have their representatives receiving the wheat from the farmers' wagons and placing it in a railway truck. Thence onwards, until it is sent away from our shores or into the mills to be gristed, the wheat is in the hands of the scheme and not of the farmers. The very work which should be undertaken by the scheme is being done by the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., and the work that should be done by the farmers in their own protection is being done by the scheme. The care of the wheat, the handling of the wheat, is in the hands of the scheme, not of the farmers. The very checking of the weight of the wheat and the judgment of its quality are in the hands of the farmers themselves. The farmer brings his wagon into the siding, and he may be the local representative of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd. It is thus possible that he may himself weigh and sample his own wheat, put it on the truck and issue his own receipts.

Hon. H. Carson: But the Government check it.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: How can they check it? They have not a representative there to look to it. The very thing the scheme should do is being done by the farmers and the thing the farmers claim they have the best right to do is being done by the scheme, and the farmer has no say in it. Another thing that struck me is this: I assume that hon. members realise the magnitude of the figures involved in the scheme. Take this coming harvest, which it is hoped will reach 12 million bushels. It means an advance to the farmers of three million pounds. The cost of that I can only assume. The expenditure of the scheme I can only assume will be in the vicinity of £140,000 for the year, including the money paid to the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., to sub-agents in the country, and for various expenses involved in the operations of the scheme, such as office costs and interest on materials used. The whole of this work is in the hands of an Honorary Minister of the Government. The biggest spending department in the State to-day, a department in a most responsible position in regard to the finances of the country, is in the hands of an Honorary Minister.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: Suppose private firms had the handling of it, what would be the difference?

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: I am not in a position to say. But if private firms are prepared to handle it for less than it is costing

to-day through the scheme and through the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., they should be employed to do the work. It is all a question of economy. It is not a question of sentiment. In the days of the war we had to look at things from that point of view, but to-day we have to look at them from a point of view of business, the business, not of the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., but of the people of the State, of the consumers generally and of those who have to carry the burden if any loss occurs. The farmers themselves are only one section of the community, and Parliament is failing in its duty if it does not realise that its duty is to the people as a whole and not to any one section thereof. I do not care whether the business is handled by the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., or by the scheme or by the old acquiring agents; all that I say is that it should be done in the most economical way, and with a view to extending justice to those who have been led to place at the disposal of the Governments of Australia, a life-long experience on the understanding that the business would be handed back to them after the war. Lastly, I should like to touch on the question of the cost of handling in this State as compared with South Australia. The Minister said the wheat was being handled more cheaply in this State than in any other State of the Commonwealth. It is impossible to make any set comparison, because of the different methods employed in different States. But in this State all that the Westralian Farmers, Ltd., do is to check the weight and quality of the wheat as it goes into the railway truck. In South Australia the acquiring agent has to accept responsibility for 12 months, and has to provide curtains and roofing and dunnage.

The Honorary Minister: That system, if employed here, would result in a loss of five million pounds in one year.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: In South Australia the loss is not the responsibility of the acquiring agents.

The Honorary Minister: They are paid for what they do.

Hon. V. Hamersley: They were paid here, but did not take it.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: The losses sustained in South Australia have been from causes beyond the control of the acquiring agents. Here we have no mice plague; it is almost impossible to have one in this State. If the Minister will attempt to compare the conditions in other States with those in this State he will see that they are not comparable. Here we have isolated wheat areas separated by huge stretches of virgin bush and by various natural barriers to the passage of vermin, whereas in the other States the settlements are one long chain, and if a plague breaks out in one part of the State, it travels swiftly over the whole; indeed, as we know, it has travelled from one State to another State. But no acquiring agent can be charged with culpability in those disasters.

It was admitted that those agents have not been responsible for any losses in that direction. In respect of weevil, I have seen just as much here as in any of the other States; but, again, climatic conditions helped us, and the pest did not become so serious here as in the other States. Moreover, the acquiring agents have done their work equally well there as here. In South Australia the work is done by the old acquiring agents in competition, and done just as well as it is done here without competition. Consequently, I can give no credit to the agents here for work done better than has been done elsewhere. Again, in South Australia the agents are doing the work, carrying out the whole of the handling at 2d. per bushel. When we compare that with the prices paid to the Western Farmers Ltd. in this State, we find that the work in South Australia is being done for ½d. per bushel less than it is costing in this State. That is my opinion, based on information which I have been able to acquire as a member of the Royal Commission in this State, and from information placed at my disposal by the Premier of South Australia, who gave me every opportunity for going through the papers and for seeing all that they are doing. I was thus placed in a favourable position to judge of the work. The work is being done in South Australia as cheaply, if not more cheaply than in this State, with the whole of the agents in competition and relieving the Government of a large share of responsibility. To my mind they have not had any losses to the scheme through the actions of the acquiring agents. Also it must be remembered that in this State we have the largest milling capacity in proportion to our wheat harvest, as against any other State in Australia. That is to say, although we have not a greater milling capacity than they, yet in proportion to the wheat produced our milling capacity is greater than that of any other State, and in consequence when wheat is found to be deteriorating through weevil or other causes it can be rapidly passed through our mills in the form of flour, and thus the loss is very much reduced, if not obviated. This, of course, they were not able to do to anything like the same degree in the other States. I do not know that at this stage it is possible for us to do anything in regard to this year's harvest and the arrangements for its handling. The Bill has passed another place. But the position which presents itself to my mind is, how long is Parliament going to allow its authority to be over-riden by the Government, how long is it going to sit back and see that which it has been elected by the people to carry into effect being carried out without its authority? We shall have the same thing coming before us next year. I might not be here to voice my views, as before then I have to face the electors of my province. But I hope the members who are here will see that the action of the Government in this connection is not repeated, and that the authority of Parliament is secured over every phase of

this wheat scheme. I hope the Government will afford an opportunity for discussing the arrangements for the handling of next year's crop. We should have a say as to whether this guarantee should be entered into, because once it is made our hands are tied, and we have to swallow willy-nilly whatever the Government bring forward, as on this occasion.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. G. F. Baxter—East—in reply) [5.2]: I do not intend to deal with the matter at any length, in reply to the hon. member. For three years we have had the same arguments brought forward. Referring to the guarantee of 5s. for the 1920-21 harvest, the Prime Minister has not approached this Government in regard to the guarantee, nor has any arrangement been considered. The hon. gentleman referred to the promise given by the Prime Minister that the wheat agents' business would be returned after the war. I understand it is on record that the Prime Minister gave that promise. The State did not enter into it and the Prime Minister did not think that the scheme would be in operation for more than a year or so. The Government of any State would not be justified in increasing the costs of handling the wheat by allowing the agents to re-enter and re-establish competitive handling at the cost of the wheat grower. The hon. gentleman referred to the zone system. While it operates successfully in the Eastern States, it cannot do so here. The zone system suggested by Mr. Sibbald would be expensive in a State like this, where the wheat farms are scattered. That is the reason why it was turned down. Mr. Allen said that was the crux of the situation, and why Mr. Sibbald resigned, but there were probably other reasons as well. It is impossible to consider South Australia and Western Australia on the same lines. South Australia handles at sidings double and sometimes treble the amount handled in this State. It is always recognised that in the Eastern States the handling should be done at a half-penny a bushel cheaper than in Western Australia. Yet we find that handling in Western Australia is cheaper than in the other States.

Hon. J. F. Allen: Question.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. gentleman referred to the losses on wheat, and said that in the Eastern States they were caused by mice plague, but there are other causes. In this State we had an inquiry by a Royal Commission extending over five months. Never was there a more competent commission nor one which worked harder, and their report was not derogatory but satisfactory.

Hon. J. F. Allen: It suggested a board.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. gentleman referred to the ravages of weevil, and said that this State was saved by the grace of God. He stressed the point of the milling capacity of this State as compared with the Eastern States. I quite agree with him regarding the milling capacity of

Western Australia, but I want to say that the milling capacity of the Eastern States was never availed of to keep the weevil in check. As a result, the mills in the Eastern States have been milling f.a.q. wheat, but would not handle wheat affected with weevil. In this State, thanks to the milling agreement which was in force for 18 months, directly there was a sign of weevil the wheat was cleaned and put through the mill. This State has been turning out as good a quality of flour as any other State. There has been no wheat put through the mills which has been of inferior quality. A leading Perth baker told me to-day that any person who states inferior wheat has been used for bread-making either does not know what he is talking about, or is deliberately misleading the public. The principal bakers of Perth are quite satisfied with the quality of flour they are being supplied with now, and have been supplied with in the past. I have heard no complaint. During the whole history of the scheme nothing but the very best flour has been supplied for consumption by the people.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

As to Committee Stage.

Order of the Day read for the consideration of the Land Tax and Income Tax Bill in Committee.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) 5.10; It has been intimated to me since the House commenced sitting that certain doubts have been expressed by those interested as to whether the new clause regarding pastoralists' leases really does what it intends to do, and I have been asked to postpone the Committee stage until Tuesday next. I have consented to the Committee stage standing over until then, but it is very urgent to get it over as quickly as possible, and I intend to put on the Notice Paper for Tuesday next a motion to the effect that so much of the Standing Orders as may be necessary shall be suspended to enable the Bill to be passed through its remaining stages on Tuesday.

MOTION—TAXATION ON UNIMPROVED LAND VALUES.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. J. E. Dodd:—

“That in the opinion of this House a tax should be levied on the unimproved value of land to meet the interest charges, or part of the interest charges, on the railways, and a corresponding reduction made in freight charges.”

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (North) [5.12]: I intend to support the motion. I am in favour of an unimproved land tax, and I would like to see railway freights and fares reduced to the people in the back country. I do not know whether the motion, if carried, will have the desired effect, but these are my reasons for supporting it. With reference to Sir Edward Wittenoom's statement about lands along the railways being worthless, this tax will prove whether that contention is true. If the land is of value to the State the owner should be compelled to work it, or the State should resume it. My idea is that the State should resume at the price fixed by the owners for taxing purposes plus ten per cent. If they are not satisfied it shows that they are placing a value on their land for taxation purposes lower than it should be. I do not object to men holding big areas if they work them, but they should not be allowed to hold up land which is not being used but which could be used, and force people into the back country. I think the tax is a Federal matter, and that free trade should go with it. The two should go hand in hand.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: You have no hope of free trade.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES: If people do not advocate their views as to the right way of developing this country we will not get any revenue. As regards the pastoral properties away from the railway system, referred to by Mr. Mills, there ought to be some means of arriving at a graduated tax. Where the railway goes through a pastoral area the land should be re-appraised, the owners having got a certain benefit. I refer particularly to the North-West railway. Some squatters there are carting their wool half a mile or a mile to sidings, whereas in the old days they had to cart 50 or 60 miles. The Land Act will get over that difficulty and that matter will be taken into consideration. If we had an unimproved land values tax we would be getting a fair revenue from land as the railways were extended. As regards freights, I think the man in the far back country should get his goods carried, and obtain his fares, at the same rate as those in the closely settled districts, and I think some sort of zone system should be established whereby people outback could be placed on a more equal footing with those in closely settled districts. I intend to support the motion.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South—in reply) [5.15]: I am sorry in many ways that we have not had a better debate on this motion, because I do not think one valid reason has been advanced against the principle. I do not think I ever heard a weaker case advanced against any motion or any Bill in this Chamber than that put forward by Sir Edward Wittenoom yesterday. The hon. member never touched on the principle of the motion at all. I do not mean to say that he would wilfully seek to misquote or mis-

represent me, but he undoubtedly did right through his speech misquote what I had to say in moving the motion. I am sorry to have to say that because I always listen to the hon. member with a great deal of pleasure, and I have a great regard for his Parliamentary experience and the views he expresses. Mr. Sanderson asked what was the purpose of the motion, and what it would be likely to accomplish. The motion of itself will not accomplish anything. If it is carried it will be an indication to the Government of the feeling of the members in this House. Apart from that I think it would be a good idea if at the beginning of the session hon. members in this Chamber devoted some time to discussing motions dealing with questions such as this. We have plenty of time, and the debates which would take place would be an education to ourselves and to the public as well. In effect we could with advantage appoint select committees to go into the various questions and see what light could be thrown upon them. In that way I am sure we would have a better form of government. With regard to what may be done by this Chamber by way of land values taxation, may I point out that we have no power to bring forward any measure which will enable us to impose taxation, but we can do something by way of a motion such as the one I have submitted. There is another point to which I wish to draw attention and it is that this is a substitutory form of taxation. I do not believe in imposing a tax on land values to get revenue only. If we are to do that we will crush every primary producer in the State. We impose a tax on land values because we think it will relieve burdens in other directions. That is why I believe there should be some provision with regard to railway freights. As pointed out by Mr. Miles we cannot deal with the question of the tariff. That is a matter for the Federal authorities, and the only relief I can see we can get is through railway freights, and it is absolutely just that that should be so because the railways to a large extent have made the land values in this State. Therefore the proposal to apply the principle to the railways is equitable and just. Mr. Sanderson has asked how are we going to collect this tax if it is imposed. We have a Federal land tax, a State land tax, and there is a tax for municipal purposes, or there is likely to be. He wanted to know how we are going to collect the lot. I may ask the same question in regard to the income tax. We have a Federal and State income tax and as far as rates in municipalities are concerned they are really a form of income tax also. His question therefore applies to almost every form of taxation. Sir Edward Wittenoom drew a sorry picture of the man when he starts on the land. He has to work hard and he has to get his land ready to produce something in order that he may live. I would ask how it is that he makes

his produce marketable. Of what use is his land to him without the railway? That is, in a majority of instances. It is of no use at all. We believe that to expend public money on railways makes the land valuable, and it is only a just proposition to say that we will tax the land according to the value which the community and the expenditure of public money has given to it. That appears to me to be a sound proposition. The community should get back some of the value it creates. It must be borne in mind also that the tax is not going to fall so heavily upon those people whom Sir Edward Wittenoom mentioned. Sir Edward Wittenoom was careful to refrain from having anything to say about the people who own the big land values in the cities. Of the land values of the State, 47 per cent. are held in the city and the suburban areas. The hon. member did not refer to these owners at all; he simply referred to the farming community. For many years past dust has been thrown in the eyes of the farmers in this direction. The farmer however now sees the fallacy of what he was told in the past, and he knows that he should not be made to pay the biggest share. He knows that the biggest share should be paid by the people in the metropolitan area.

Hon. V. Hamersley: According to Knibbs, the greatest value is in the country lands.

Hon. J. E. DODD: I never heard a single member refer to a property such as that of Perry's at Loederville, on which property not a solitary tap of work was done except perhaps to put a fence around the land. Mr. Perry we know recently disposed of that property for a considerable sum of money to the municipal authorities. The value given to that land has been given by the railways and by the community. Not one hon. member has attempted to justify a position such as that. Does any hon. member honestly assert that Mr. Perry was justified in getting the amount of money he received for that land? Mr. Perry, I understand, acquired it for 10s. an acre. He put a fence around it and kept it until the expenditure of public money enhanced its value, and now he is able to draw from it £1,000 a year in interest. I say good luck to him if we are foolish enough to allow him to acquire land in that way, do nothing with it and then dispose of it again to the community. All the same we are foolish to allow that state of affairs to continue. Reference was also made to the wages of miners and to the sum of money advanced by the Industries Assistance Board and by the Agricultural Bank, and the hon. member said I painted a gloomy picture of the position as it is at the present time. I ask, however, whether or not that picture is true. A statement has been made repeatedly with regard to the number of abandoned farms in the State. I thought it was 600 but I heard Mr. Greig say the other day that it was more like 900. The

position of the miners on the goldfields is very much worse to-day than it was 20 years ago. The miner has to work shorter hours it is true—numbering 44 a week—but even with that small advantage his position is nothing in comparison to that of other sections of the community. With regard to the farm lands of the State it is our duty to try and get them all occupied. Even the Premier stated on the occasion of the recent visit to the wheat belt that the farmers were holding too much land, and it is ridiculous for anyone to assert that we can bring out from England 30,000 men and settle them on the land unless we occupy more of the land that is adjacent to the existing railways, land which could be cut up into farms of small areas. I have never asserted, as has been said, that the increase in the railway freights during the past few years has been responsible for the abandoned farms which exist in the State to-day. I said, however, that this was a contributing factor, and that if we can reduce the railway freights we can do a great deal of good for the farmer. I was glad to hear Sir Edward Wittenoom remark that it was the bad seasons and other things which had been responsible to a large extent for the position in which the farming industry finds itself to-day. The Government of which I was a member has been blamed consistently for all the ills which have existed of late years, but I am pleased to know now that the bad seasons did have something to do with the condition of the farming industry. Mr. Mills drew attention to the position of the pioneer farmer who may be a soldier and who will be faced with this taxation. I would point out that the payment he will have to make under taxation of this description will be very small indeed. If he takes up 1,000 acres at 10s. an acre he will only pay 4d. in the £, and that will come to £3 6s. 8d. per annum. The reduction which will follow from the railway freights will more than make up that amount. Then again the hon. member seemed to think that the old established farmer would receive the full benefit. He forgets, however, that the unimproved value of the land of the old-established farmer is very much more than that of the pioneer farmer. Then, again, the hon. member stated that the city man would simply pass on the tax, but advocates of this form of tax are out to try and get what they consider to be a more just form of taxation and as far as passing it on is concerned the landlord gets as much as he can at all times. I have never known a landlord who has not received the full rental value of his property at all times. There is another point in regard to passing on the tax, and it is that the man who holds vacant land will have to pay this tax also, and if it is made sufficiently high he will have to do something with it and consequently there will be more land thrown on the market and there

will be more competition. Many properties in Perth are not being used to the fullest extent, and if a land values tax like this were imposed land would be forced into use and, by it being forced into use, competition would be established which would effectually prevent any such passing on as so many members seem to fear. The hon. member also referred to the soldiers. The soldiers themselves are in favour of this principle of taxation. Mr. Nicholson referred to the effect on values on the Goldfields.

Hon. J. Nicholson: In depopulated areas.

Hon. J. E. DODD: Although the actual land values on the Goldfields might not be very high, there are many ways of assessing land values in the different Acts throughout the world. The value of a mine is very often assessed on the same basis as pastoral leases are assessed in this country.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I was referring principally to lands outside of mines.

Hon. J. E. DODD: The mine itself is the factor which gives value to the land in a mining township, but there are several ways in which any difficulty arising could be overcome. I do not say that taxation on the unimproved value of land will be a panacea for all ills. For a long time to come, we shall have to utilise different kinds of taxation. Two years ago, I moved in the direction of appointing a committee to consider this question. If that had been done, we might have had some valuable data upon which to discuss this matter. However, the motion was merely moved and seconded and not discussed further; consequently this year I tabled this motion. I stated that the pastoral industry is one which has not suffered much as a result of increased railway freights or in consequence of the war. Sir Edward Wittenoom questioned the statement. I think he said that pastoralists have not had a fair deal during the war, and that they were getting more for their wool prior to the war.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I did not say that.

Hon. J. E. DODD: The Commonwealth Year Book, page 310, shows that from 1908 to 1914 wool never reached a higher value than 9.7d. per lb., but in 1915 it was 11.86d. per lb., an increase of over 2d. In 1916-17 it rose to 15.5d. per lb, and I understand that is the price to-day. I think the pastoralists have done particularly well. I follow the Federal "Hansard" fairly closely and I find many pastoralists admit that they have done particularly well during the war. Of all the activities engaged in by the Federal Government, none has been managed so well as the wool pool. I wish to read again an extract I quoted on the 26th September, 1916, which appears in "Hansard" of that year, page 199—

Mr. Conley, manager of the "Sydney Morning Herald," says "One of the results of the war shown in Australia, is

that it has made a crop of newly rich men, the same as war orders have added scores of millionaires to the list in America. Many wool growers have made fortunes on account of the war. When the war began, they thought they would be ruined, instead of which they have been made wealthy.

I believe that is a very true picture of the pastoralists and the pastoral industry of this State. I thank the leader of the House for giving me an opportunity to discuss this motion. Unfortunately, my limited physical capacity prevents me from being present in the House at all times, and the leader of the House has certainly met my convenience. The community have a right to a certain part of the values they create. There is no arm of the service which does more to create those values than the railways, and it is due to us, who are seeking to bring about a just form of Government, to encourage all sections of producers and see whether we cannot relieve them of some of the burdens falling upon them. I believe this can best be done in this State by adopting the principle of which I have asked the House to approve.

Question put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes	..	..	..	11
Noes	..	..	..	8

Majority for 3

AYES.

Hon. J. F. Allen	Hon. J. W. Hickey
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. H. Millington
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. A. Greig	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. V. Hammersley	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. C. McKenzie	(Teller.)
Hon. J. Nicholson	

Question thus passed.

BILL—TRAFFIC.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day; Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 34—Maximum weight of vehicles:

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after an amendment, moved by the Hon. Mr. Nicholson, to strike out the word "six" had been agreed to.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 the word "eight" be inserted.

Hon. J. CORNELL: From inquiries I have made, the schedule put forward by the Works Department will be anything but satisfactory because the load allowed for the small tire is too great. I have conferred with the Perth City Engineer, and have worked out a scale which should meet with the approval of country members. It is a lower schedule than that prepared by the Works Department, and provides for a difference of 2cwt. per bearing inch of tire. I suggest that the clause be postponed so that a suitable scale may be worked out.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I consulted with the Public Works authorities this morning, and just before the House met a schedule was placed in my hands. I have not had an opportunity of considering it, and of course hon. members cannot have either. Mr. Cornell has also drawn up a schedule. This is a question of importance and we want to arrive at a right decision. It is highly desirable that the amendments should be on the Notice Paper, so that we can see what is proposed. I therefore move—

That consideration of Clause 34 be postponed until after the consideration of postponed Clause 4.

Motion put and passed.

Clauses 35 to 37—agreed to.

Clause 38—Vehicles and load to be weighed if required:

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I move an amendment—

That in line 6 the words "two miles" be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

I contend that a distance of two miles is too far to ask any driver to go back to a weighing machine when he has a heavy load in his vehicle. If the distance were made half a mile it would be a fair thing so far as the metropolitan area is concerned.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The proposed alteration will have the effect of making it difficult to detect offenders against the clause. A distance of two miles does seem fairly long, but half a mile would be too short. It would be impossible to have weighing machines situated at a distance of every half-mile.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Or two miles either.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The distance might be reduced to one mile for the metropolitan area.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Under Clause 35 they are obliged to have the weight properly painted on the vehicle and therefore this would only apply to a loaded vehicle, and if there was any question of a person taking on a load which was too heavy for the tire. It would only apply to municipalities or the metropolitan area.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I support the amendment and I have the agricultural districts in view. A distance of two miles is too far. If a driver has got further away than half a mile, he should be able to go on.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result—

Ayes	..	..	11
Noes	..	..	5
			—
Majority for	..	..	6
			—

AYES.

Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. J. A. Greig	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. Millington	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. V. Hamersley	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I move a further amendment—

That in line 6 the words "one mile" be inserted.

It appears to be the view of the Committee that the distance should be one mile and not half a mile.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Assuming that the distance to the nearest weighing machine is greater than a mile, the question may arise as to whether the clause applies. To obviate any difficulty, I move an amendment—

That the following proviso be added:—"Provided that this section shall not apply if the distance to the nearest weighing machine erected or recognised by the local authority is greater than one mile."

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I fail to see the necessity for this.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Why was the proviso added as in Clause 39?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The clause is clear. It is only when it is within one mile that the driver can be called upon to go to a weighing machine.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I am of opinion that this is painting the lily.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 39—Vehicle to be weighed if required:

Hon. A. H. PANTON: This clause provides for the weighing of the vehicle without the load. I am concerned with the question of the total load.

The Minister for Education: It is reasonable to have a vehicle weighed as provided by this clause.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 40—Regulations:

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause (1) paragraph (j) be struck out.

The paragraph proposes to regulate how the owner or driver of a team shall drive, yoke, or harness his horses or other animals—a matter on which the owner or driver of the horses or other animals would be the best judge.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not think this power to regulate would be found to work any harm, and I can easily conceive of circumstances in which persons might harness their teams improperly. Probably the regulation would specify not the exact methods of yoking to be adopted, but the wrong methods which must not be adopted.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: Some of the South-Western road boards found it necessary to enforce a regulation of this kind. In the old days it was the custom to yoke teams of horses all in single file, owing to the wagons being very narrow in the tread. Working the horses in that way means cutting a deep trench in the road; and the water rushes through the trench, and ruins the road. Hence the need for regulation in this matter. If it were provided that wagons should be wide in the tread, there would be no necessity for such regulation.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I hope Mr. Panton will not insist upon his amendment. The regulation of this matter is highly important. I support the views expressed by Mr. Greig. Two or three horses walking in the ruts in front of the wheels consolidate the road.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Having heard a reasonable argument in favour of this paragraph, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause (1) the words "prohibit or" be inserted at the beginning of paragraph (n).

The paragraph would then read, "prohibit or regulate processions on roads." There is real necessity for this amendment. Someone should have power to regulate processions, and at times it may be necessary to prohibit a procession altogether. For example, the proprietor of a wild beast show might want to advertise his entertainment by a procession through the streets of Perth; and under the clause as it stands such a procession would be lawful, and could only be regulated.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I oppose the amendment. If the Government have power to regulate processions, they will also have power to prohibit them.

Hon. J. Nicholson: No.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The power to regulate would be equivalent to a power to prohibit. I think we all know what the mover of the amendment is trying to get at. What will happen to the amendment in another place is plain.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: For the information of hon. members, I may mention that in the Bill as drafted this paragraph read "regulate and restrict processions on roads." The words "and restrict" were struck out in another place. It seems to me personally that the authority which has power to regulate, should have the power to prohibit in certain circumstances.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The mere power to regulate does not give power to prohibit.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: The amendment seems really necessary. As the clause stands a procession could pass along the streets in defiance of the authorities.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move an amendment—

That the following paragraph be added to Subclause (1): "(xiii.) Prescribe the fee and regulate other matters for any vehicle not otherwise provided for in this Act."

On the second reading I explained that since this Bill was drafted one new type of vehicle had already been imported into the State, and is in use here. Now that the war is over, we may expect that other types of vehicles will be introduced. Without a paragraph of this kind it will be impossible to regulate such vehicles.

Amendment put and passed.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move a further amendment—

That the following be added to stand as paragraph xiii.—"Regulate the use and driving of camels and for that purpose may (a) limit the number of camels to be driven by one driver; (b) require the annual registration of camels and the payment of an annual registration for pack camels."

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

Clauses 41 to 46—agreed to.

Clause 47—Liability for damage:

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: On the second reading I took exception to this, because I thought the authorities should keep these places in order. I have since learned that this is all controlled by the word "extraordinary" and therefore I think the provision will be all right.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 48—Powers of road authority to recover expenses of heavy or extraordinary traffic:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The clause states "where by the certificate of an inspector it appears to a local authority." I do not think there is any reason why a certificate should be given on such a matter as here provided. I think it is sufficient to provide that "where

it appears to the local authority, etc." The certificate of the inspector is not going to do anything.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The inspector is an expert. You must have that.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: This again is a matter of extraordinary expense. I think there should be a certificate by some competent person. I do not see that any hardship will be imposed on the local authority. Under this measure very local authority will have an inspector.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 49 to 51—agreed to.

Clause 52—Roads may be closed:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of Subclause 1 the word "Minister" be struck out and "local authority" inserted in lieu, and that in lines 1 and 3 of the subclause the word "he" be struck out and "it" inserted in lieu.

The object of the clause is to limit the power of local authorities. I do not see that it is part of the Minister's duty to take upon himself this extra power. This clause gives the Minister power to close a road for such period as he considers necessary. It is an unnecessary interference with the powers of local authorities.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I have no objection to the amendment, but in accepting it I wish to intimate that the granting of it will mean that in those portions of the State where the Minister is the local authority he will have power to close the roads, whereas in those other portions where he is not the local authority he will not have that power. The Minister does not wish to interfere.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: The word "Minister" is simply put in on account of the alteration in the metropolitan area. I see that in Subclause 2 provision is made for the local authority to exercise similar power in regard to any road under its control. As the Minister is to be the local authority it does seem an unnecessary interpolation.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Mr. Nicholson proposes by a further amendment to strike out Subclause 2. The definition of "local authority" will include the Minister in those areas where he is the local authority, and therefore in those areas he will have the power.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: Does the amendment mean that Subclause 2 is to come out?

Hon. J. Nicholson: Yes.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: The Minister is the authority right through, and although this is given as "local authority" they will be acting under authority delegated by the Minister. After all, only such powers are given as are delegated by the Minister. I think the clause as it stands is in keeping with the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The only difference between the clause as it stands and as Mr. Nicholson proposes to amend it is this: as it stands the Minister can close a road anywhere; as it is proposed to amend it, the Minister will only be able to close roads in those districts in which he acts as local authority. In all other districts the local authority will close the roads. I have no objection to the amendment, because the Minister does not wish to interfere where there is a local authority doing the work.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I think the leader of the House is overlooking the fact that in Clause 12 the powers of the Minister are restricted to certain things as, for instance, licensing. The definition of "local authority" is to be enlarged to include "Minister," who is the licensing authority within the metropolitan area. Nothing in Clause 12 gives the Minister power to do anything other than those things enumerated. This particular clause is dealing, not with licensing but with the closing of roads, which is the prerogative of local authorities.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The consideration of the interpretation clause was deliberately postponed in order that the interpretation might be made to fit the Bill. It is my intention when we go back to the interpretation clause to make it clear that "local authority" includes the Minister in those areas where he is the local authority.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: In that case I will ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 53 to 59—agreed to.

Clause 60—Protection of Minister, local authorities and officers:

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I want to ask the Minister if that clause has been fully considered. It seems a good deal to give to any local authority or any member of the police force, that freedom from liability if they have acted with good faith.

The Minister for Education: It is an entirely usual clause in any measure of the kind.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 61—Repeal of Section 237 of Act No. 32 of 1906, and Section 147 of Act No. 29 of 1911:

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: There is a slight omission in this clause. It repeals Sub-section (a) of Section 237 of the Municipal Corporations Act, 1906, and Section 147 of the Roads Act, 1911. Section 237 of the Municipal Corporation Act and Section 147 of the Roads Act are in identically the same words, as follows:—

"The council may use locomotives propelled by steam upon any street or way for the purpose of making and rolling

the same, subject to the following conditions:—

(a) At least two persons shall be employed with each locomotive, one of whom shall, on foot, precede the locomotive when in motion, and who shall, in case of need, assist riders and drivers of horses and carriages passing the same.

(b) Barriers shall be provided and fixed, when practicable and not inconvenient, at the ends and in sections of streets or ways to prevent ingress or egress during the time a street or way is undergoing rolling with a steam roller."

As I remarked in moving the second reading, I understand that there has been only one accident in the use of steam rollers, and that was when the man carrying the flag was run over. By the wording of the clause, Subsection (a), relating to the flag, of the Municipal Corporations Act has been struck out, while the whole of the clause in the Roads Act empowering the road board to use a steam roller has also been struck out. I propose to amend the clause by inserting after the word "and," in the second line, the words "Sub-section (a) of" so that we shall be repealing the identical subclause in each case. I move an amendment—

That after the word "and," in line 2, the words "Paragraph (a) of" be inserted.

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

Clause 62—Regulations:

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Will the leader of the House state whether the usual conditions apply regarding regulations being laid on the Table?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: In order to obviate those conditions being inserted in every Act of Parliament, the provision is made in the Interpretation Act passed last year.

Clause put and passed.

Postponed Clause 4—Interpretation:

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to the interpretation of "local authority," "and as the licensing authority within the metropolitan area as defined by regulation."

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move a further amendment—

That the following paragraph be inserted after the interpretation of "road"—"Sub-district means that portion of a municipal district or road district which is within the boundaries of the metropolitan area, as defined by regulation, where a portion only of any such district is comprised within that area."

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

New clause—Apportionment of fees between districts:

Hon. J. MILLS: When this Bill was presented in another place a provision was made for the apportionment of fees between districts. I move an amendment—

That the following new clause be added to stand as Clause 12—(1) The local authority of any district which has, after the commencement of this Act, received any vehicle or other license fee for a vehicle used for the carriage of passengers for hire, or the carriage of goods for reward shall, if the license has been wholly or mainly exercised in another district, pay such fee on demand to the local authority of such other district. (2) If any dispute shall arise between local authorities touching the question as to which district a license has been wholly or mainly exercised in, the question shall be tried and determined by a police or resident magistrate in accordance with the prescribed procedure."

In another place adequate provision was made in this respect by the pooling of licenses and their apportionment to those particular districts which are most deserving. All I ask is that the districts outside the metropolitan area should have some such protection. I have been approached by road boards to have this clause reinstated.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I am quite agreeable to this new clause being inserted. I think it is a proper provision. A case was heard in the Leonora court a little while ago in which the Leonora-Malcolm road board sought to recover license fees from a company which was running motors in the district and also in other districts. The magistrate found that, as a matter of fact, the motors were used about equally between the three districts and that the headquarters of the firm were in the Leonora district, but because they had registered these motor cars in the outlying district nothing could be done, and the road board which undoubtedly had to maintain at least one-third if not more of the roads over which these motors travelled was unable to recover anything.

Amendment put and passed.

Schedules 1 to 3—agreed to.

(The President resumed the Chair.)

Progress reported.

BILL—PRICES REGULATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 4th November.

Hon. A. H. PANTON (West) [7.57]: I welcome the Bill, although I cannot say that I have very much faith in any good it

is likely to do. I am inclined to believe that the Government realise that, and that is the reason it has been introduced. I listened with a considerable amount of interest to the leader of the House in his second reading speech, more especially in view of the fact that I have gone to the trouble of looking up the debate that took place in 1915 on the Price of Goods Bill and the Control of Trade in War Time Bill. The leader of the House evidently anticipated some criticism of his attitude at that time, but as far as I am personally concerned I am one of those who believe that a man has a right to alter his opinion at all times, and I always admire any hon. member who is prepared to admit an alteration of his opinion. The explanation of the hon. leader was very hard to follow. He argued that the laws of supply and demand were now interfered with. It is rather hard to follow the logic of that argument. If the laws of supply and demand are now being interfered with, I fail to see how they were not interfered with in 1915. In my opinion they were being interfered with more in 1915 than they were to-day. The leader of the House made reference to the profiteering Act in existence in Great Britain. He mentioned what had happened since that Act had come into force. I want to point out that when the Act was brought down, they had in England—and it existed right through the war—complete machinery for the purpose of fixing prices. If we in this country had similar machinery at work since 1914, when by the way price fixing was first introduced into Western Australia, we would have been able to do some good in the direction of controlling prices. But the Government of this State allowed the machinery which they established in 1914 to lapse, and permitted prices to go to the height which rules to-day. The Bill before the House now, I am afraid, will have little or no effect. The leader of the House argued that the conditions to-day were abnormal. They are certainly abnormal, but they are no more abnormal than in 1915, when he opposed the measure which was before the House at that time. However, I am pleased the leader of the House has seen the error of his ways. My chief reason for asserting that this Bill will not have the desired effect is that I notice in the last clause it is provided that it shall remain in force until the 31st December, 1920, and no longer. If a commission is going to get its machinery into working order and only continues until the end of next year it will have little or no time in which to control prices. I hope when we get into Committee we shall be able to delete that clause. But the principal reason why this Bill will not be effective is that Western Australia is so dependent on outside sources for its commodities. The measure therefore will have no power to control prices. I have been going through the Interstate Commission's reports, and also the report of the Royal Commission which was appointed in

Western Australia to deal with the cost of living, about three years ago, and I have been able to get some interesting reading from both those documents. Let me deal first with the Royal Commission on the cost of the necessities of life in Western Australia, which sat in Perth. This is what they say on page 11 of their report—

We find that the boot and shoe trade in Western Australia is almost entirely dependent upon the Eastern States for medium, light, and fancy grades, the Australian manufactures having almost entirely taken the place of such goods as were previously imported from overseas.

In another place the Commission state—

The advance in labour costs has been a relatively small item, and the increase factory cost of boots and shoes.

The most peculiar part of this report is that they point out that Pearse Bros., of Fremantle, although manufacturing boots in Western Australia, have a fairly large retail shop in Fremantle, in which shop 60 per cent. of the stock consists of imported articles. Consequently, so far as boots are concerned, the report proves that the Bill before us now will have little or no chance of controlling prices. I want to point out some of the disadvantages under which the commissioners to be appointed will be labouring so far as outside organisations are concerned. The Interstate Commission, who were called upon to report on groceries in 1918, dealing with the biscuit manufacturers in Victoria, have this to say—

The price of biscuits has not varied to any extent since the 1st July, 1916, but the manufacture of biscuits is in the hands of a comparatively few firms, and when prices are raised or are lowered it is by mutual consent; that is, any firm that thinks it should raise the price advises the firms of its decision to raise the price, and asks if they will agree, or if flour or other materials have a big drop, prices are lowered on a mutual understanding. It is very difficult at all times to know that the prices which may be thus arranged are fair and reasonable, or whether an unfair profit is being made.

Biscuits, I take it, are a commodity that the commission will be called upon to deal with. Although we have one or two manufacturers in Western Australia, I believe a large percentage of biscuits are imported from the Eastern States, so that the commission will be called upon to control the price of the biscuits which are imported from the Eastern States. I take it that the commission will be supplied with prices by the retailers, and they will have to show what profit they are going to get. Consequently, so far as retailers who are selling biscuits are concerned, it will simply be a question of the commission harassing the retailer whilst they will have no chance of getting at the manufacturers in the Eastern States. On the other hand, if they attempt to control the manufacture of

the local article it will simply mean that the local manufacturer will have his wholesale price controlled whilst the manufacturer outside will be able to export to this State as much as he likes and charge his own price. We find in connection with the rice manufacturers of New South Wales and Victoria, firms are banded together, and this is the obligation of membership, according to Rule 12—

Each member on joining the association shall inform the secretary in writing his selling prices for rice of the various grades, and thereafter in a similar manner any alteration or variation in same, and the secretary shall forthwith communicate the information to the other members by the most expeditious means. The secretary shall keep a record of members' prices and alterations, which record shall be open for inspection at any meeting of the association. Members giving notice of an alteration in price shall do so in such a way that the notice will reach the secretary by the first mail on Friday morning, or if a notice comes from a Sydney member, by a telegram despatched from Sydney on Thursday evening unless special circumstances demand other action.

I quote that to show the fallacy of the commission here trying to control people who are outside the State. I hope to be able to prove to hon. members before the second reading discussion is finished the fallacy of the old arguments of the law of supply and demand. These are the people who are controlling that law. Rule 13 says—

During the first week in every month, commencing with the month of November, 1914, every member shall forward to the secretary a certificate signed by him or by his responsible manager, setting forth that from personal knowledge, after due and diligent inquiry, all sales made during the preceding month (other than between members) were in strict conformity with the association's rules and regulations, and the prices charged for same are strictly in accord with prices notified by him to the secretary.

It will be seen that these people take very few chances of firms cutting in under their prices. The manufacturers of pickles also have a strong association. It was stated that the members of that association meet for their mutual benefit, having no printed constitution or rules. The association distributes its products through the firm of Frank A. Waller & Co., with which firm each of the manufacturers of the association has concluded an agreement in identical terms. The principal provision in the agreement binds the agents to sell at the rates determined by the members, who, while instructing the agents separately, act together as an association in determining the prices. This particular association meet together for mutual benefit, having no printed constitution or rules. This is one of the organisations worked by what is known as an honourable

understanding. The Victorian Merchants' Association has rules which used to be printed. No. 1 is to promote cordial relations between members; No. 2 is to protect the general interests of members, and No. 3 to prevent and remove abuses in the various trades carried on by members. The entrance fee for membership is 10 guineas and the annual subscription 10 guineas. Although any person or firm or company can be proposed and seconded as a member of the association, yet all new members must be elected by a majority of the members present at the meeting at which such new member is proposed for election. It will be seen that the association is very careful to see who is added to the membership. The Interstate Commission's report goes on to say—

The present association has been established about four years and during that time has refused to admit to its membership two firms who had applied, and who had carried on business practically in the same goods, and under similar conditions as the existing members of the association. The reasons given for such actions were that one of the applicants was "a small firm doing an insignificant business," and the other was "a syndication of storekeepers which persistently broke through the ordinary price lists, and undercut on many lines."

The object of this particular organisation was to see that the association or any member of it would be able to get any of the lines after the prices had been fixed, and if any individual business man or syndicate of business men attempted to cut prices they would not be allowed into the association. Once they were debarred from the association, the wholesale business people and manufacturers had enough influence to prevent them getting sufficient stock, and consequently those firms would have to go out of business.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: Almost like a trades union.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The officers of a trades union should be compelled to read this Interstate Commission's report, and from the information they would obtain they would be able to conduct one big union which would be fit to control anything.

The president, vice-president, and the ex-president of the association, in evidence, were all emphatic that no bona fide wholesale grocery merchants of approximately equal standing with the present members had been or would be refused admission. The Commission probed this matter because it was of the opinion that any such association, which was exclusive and refused to admit new members, might exercise an undue monopoly in the trade. I like that word "might." The report continues—

There is no doubt that many of the present members would not willingly admit any wholesale distributing company

founded on co-operative principles, as they view such an institution as antagonistic to their interests. Such opposition is a material hindrance to retail grocers co-operating to buy cheaply and save intermediate profits. This attitude is apparently supported by the Colonial Sugar Company, the Vacuum Oil Company, and several other manufacturing companies to the advantage of the wholesale merchants.

These gentlemen evidently see the writing on the wall so far as co-operation is concerned. It should be a good indication to the Farmers' and Settlers' Association of what they might expect in the near future in respect to the big businesses they will have to fight for their co-operation. The report goes on to say—

While there was no specific evidence to show that the Victorian Merchants' Association has, as an association, endeavoured unduly to raise prices, there was evidence of the existence of intercourse with similar associations in other States, having in view the adoption of common methods of doing business. It was admitted also that reciprocal arrangements exist between all the associations as to a favourite line of imports, and it is obvious that in combination these associations could wield a powerful influence upon price all over Australia.

I wish to impress on members in regard to this Bill the influence these particular organisations can wield in regard to prices all over Australia, and we, as part of Australia, are already feeling the pinch. In Queensland there is an association known as the Brisbane Merchants' Association. Under this heading the report states—

The association of retailers exerts no undue influence over prices, but the operations of the Brisbane Merchants' Association evince a decided mastery over both transactions and prices. According to the secretary, the wholesale list issued from time to time is compiled in the following manner: There was no regular time for issuing these lists, but it was generally found necessary to take some action in that direction when an increase took place in the import prices. Even then a new list would not be really drawn up. There would be a discussion of one or two particular lines. A small slip would then be issued conveying the decision to wholesalers only, and when there was an accumulation of such slips a fresh list would be issued. It appears to be taken for granted that prices so fixed would be observed throughout the trade. The retailers, of course, were never consulted, and their first news of a rise would be when they came to buy.

I quote this to show that the Bill now before the House will deal, in this State, chiefly with retailers, and I am of opinion that the retailers have very little opportunity to do any profiteering. The people responsible for the profiteering are those outside of Australia, and this is the sort

of association with which they are controlling the prices of the commodities of life.

Member: You are not in favour of the Bill.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Yes, because it will show a desire to control prices at this stage after the matter has been allowed to lapse for four or five years.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: If you cannot do it now, you could not have done it then.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I would point out to the hon. member that these associations invariably started in one to three months after the war broke out. The Bill was introduced into the Western Australian Parliament in 1914 and was rejected in 1915. There is another organisation known as the Salt Refiners and Manufacturers' Association. Regarding this organisation the Commission state—

The association has an agreement binding the above-mentioned refiners and manufacturers to certain methods of distribution, territory to be supplied, and to such prices as may be arranged by them at duly authorised meetings from time to time. Each firm has one vote and all questions are determined by the unanimous vote of delegates present, personally or by proxy. A fidelity and guarantee fund has been created, by which each member of the association has to contribute the sum of £250, which is held upon trust to secure the fulfilment and observance by each party of any agreement that is come to, and to enforce the discharge of each member's obligations. . . . Salt companies generally have made increased profits for the last three years. During the late strike, the price of salt in New South Wales was fixed by the Necessary Commodities Commission at £10 a ton, on account of its great scarcity and it being necessary to provide requirements at the cost of rail carriage. The selling price in Sydney is now said to be £7, but even this price leaves an excessive margin of profit.

In regard to the Australian Dried Fruits Association, the Commission state—

No evidence has been taken in connection with dried fruits, and it is unnecessary here to discuss at any length the operations of this association. These were fully investigated and reported on in the Commission's report on dried fruits in connection with the tariff investigation. The association absolutely controls the disposition of dried fruits for local consumption and export, and is one of the most complete combinations for the upholding of prices in the Commonwealth.

Yet we are told there is no such thing as a combine in Australia. There is a minority report in regard to this association which is rather interesting. It reads—

We are of opinion that, up to a certain point, the association has done very good work for the growers generally in encouraging co-operation and in improving the grade of fruit produced, but that it has now introduced principles of control of

trade which, if allowed to proceed unchecked or without supervision, may seriously interfere with the liberty of private trading and the charging of fair prices for foodstuffs. In order to secure the Australian market to the local producer without perpetuating the present injury to the public and the present clog on future development, it is suggested that the duty on currants and other dried fruits should be reduced to 1½d. per lb. It will be seen, therefore, that the Commission view the power and the control which the association has been able to assume with considerable apprehension for the public interest. Not only does the association fix the price of about 90 to 95 per cent. of the Australian production of currants and raisins, but, by its power and domination, it practically controls imports by refusing to supply purchasers with Australian production unless they undertake not to import without its consent.

We understand what that means. The unfortunate retailer, who is not prepared to obtain local produce through the wholesaler, has no opportunity to obtain the imported article through the same source. It practically controls imports by refusing to supply purchasers with Australian production unless they undertake not to import without its consent. I do not know how that strikes the Hon. Mr. Sanderson. I understand he is engaged in production of this kind.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Open the ports and you will get rid of that trouble.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The subject of kerosene, petrol, and spirits is one with which everybody is well acquainted. I shall not read what the Commission have to say with regard to the Vacuum Oil Company. There are many pages which make exceedingly interesting reading, but so much has been published in the Press lately that I shall not weary members by quoting it now. The Interstate Commission are quite satisfied that the people have been held up by this firm in their control of prices. I wish now to quote one or two extracts from the Commission's finding regarding boots—

The present wholesale prices of footwear are not, in the opinion of the Commission, justified by the increases in the cost of producing or distributing boots, and the profits of both manufacturers and retailers are unduly high if pre-war returns are taken as a standard. An important contributing factor in this result has been that the public mind has been tutored by experience to expect high prices. The sudden advances of hides and leather in January, 1917, resulted in higher prices of boots, and, as a leading tanner said, "When the market gets up it is very hard to get it down."

This is what the Government propose to try to do under this Bill. Prices have gone up to an extortionate level and the Government intend to try to bring them down. Yet a

leading tanner expressed the opinion that, when the market gets up, it is very hard to get it down, and we can understand why it is hard when we read about the control exercised by these gentlemen. The report continues—

Yet it is admitted that the reduction in Australian leathers, when prices were fixed was not followed by a reduction in the factory selling prices of boots, nor has the occasional receding of prices in imported leathers been so reflected.

They practically admit that when prices were fixed, and there was a reduction in the price of leathers, the price of boots did not come down. The report continues—

One tanner with a large output admitted that, in spite of the very great increase in turnover, he had continued to apply the same percentage of profit, with the result that the profits of his firm are double what they were in 1914.

With regard to boot manufacturers, the Commission state—

With hardly any exception the manufacturers' accounts examined show considerable increases of business and of profits. In some instances the variations between one year and another are strikingly large, the explanation given generally turning upon the extent to which favourable purchases of materials had affected returns.

The profits made by firms engaged in the wholesale distribution of boots have shown the same features of increase as are found with manufacturers and retailers. Indeed, the rate of profit is so high in some instances as to occasion surprise that the middleman can charge such lucrative prices when manufacturers might, in many instances, be dealt with direct. It would appear that country retailers, being disunited, have not been able to escape a certain degree of dependence upon the wholesale merchants.

In my opinion the Commission have overlooked the fact that there is an honourable understanding between the wholesale merchants and the manufacturers. Consequently the retailer who tries to buy direct from the manufacturer finds the wholesale people coming between and exerting such a strong influence that he is not able to buy direct from the manufacturer.

A few cases came under notice in which traders who are not content with the increased profits resulting from the maintenance of the same added percentage to higher values have increased those percentages, thus further adding to profits already considerably higher than those of the pre-war period. These cases, however, are infrequent. The almost universal practice has been to maintain the percentage added to the cost irrespective of the rise in prices. The universality of this practice appears to be regarded in the business world as its sufficient justification. In the leather and boot industries there has been a comparative frankness of avowal of higher profit, and the

balance sheets examined have not disclosed those changes of form which have been observed elsewhere, which are obviously intended to veil inflated profits, which otherwise would have been manifest on the face of the documents. In many instances the profits in the boot industry have exceeded 20 per cent. net on the capital employed; in some instances have exceeded 25 per cent., and in rare instances have exceeded 50 per cent. The profits in this industry were already high in 1914, but the war partly by checking imports, partly by requisitioning local manufacturing power for defence purposes (with the result of reducing local competition in civilian supplies), and partly by the circulation of large sums in various directions for military production, provided the opportunity for unreasonably high profits.

I could go on quoting as far as boots are concerned all night if necessary, but it is not my object to go on quoting those cases. Hon. members, if they are sufficiently interested can read the report of the Interstate Commission themselves. There is one feature I would like to deal with in regard to the present prices and that is the cost of distribution. It is interesting to read what the Commission have to say as to the waste at present going on through the remarkable method of distribution operating throughout Australia. This is what they say in regard to distribution as far as the grocery line is concerned—

The Commission could not shut its eyes to this further immense waste of effort in the distribution of all the food requirements of the people. Without doubt, if larger shops, well equipped and with an ample staff could be kept continuously and well employed and serve a large range of customers in one neighbourhood, the public would be very much better provided for at less cost. This saving might also be considerably increased if there was more co-operative buying of both imports and local manufactures by which commissions now absorbed by middlemen could be saved. There is, further, a very great waste, especially of perishable goods, when they are bought and distributed by a great number of shops—a very much greater waste than if such goods were concentrated under fewer distributors. This all adds to the expense of conducting business.

This is what they found in Melbourne—

It was stated in evidence that there are nearly 4,000 grocers, dairy produce dealers, and confectioners' shops in the metropolitan area of Melbourne. According to the annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Shops there are 1,500 grocers' shops in the metropolitan area. Taking the population at 600,000 this shows one grocer's shop (without taking into consideration the large num-

ber of dairy produce shops) to each 400 men, women, and children, or allowing an average of five to the family, one grocer's shop to every eighty families in Melbourne and suburbs. The secretary of the Grocers' Association stated that "half of the dairy produce shops and cooked meat shops are largely stocked with groceries." It is a matter of common observation that in very many parts of the city of Melbourne and suburbs a number of grocers' and dairy produce shops exist within a small radius. Most of these shops are on a small scale. Most of them are endeavouring to cut into each other's business with a limited number of clients. It is stated that a considerable number—not less than 200 to 300 grocers—go in and out of business every year, as they cannot make the business pay.

What applies to groceries in the cost of distribution equally applies to bread, and this is what they say—

The outstanding feature of the business now carried on under such keen competition is the system of delivery to the general public, which raises to an important extent the price of the loaf. Evidence brought before the Commission shows that of the 7d. paid by the consumer for four pounds of bread, about one penny, on the average, consists of the mere cost of delivering it to him. In some cases the delivery cost exceeded 1½d. As it is estimated that the consumption of Australia is in the neighbourhood of 300,000,000 four-pound loaves per annum, this would mean that the delivery of bread to the consumer costs in Australia about £1,250,000 per annum, even after allowing for the circumstances that a great deal of the bread is not delivered to individual householders but in large single deliveries to hotels, restaurants, grocers, and to institutions under contract. The reason for the high cost of delivery in this trade is that distribution is, as a consequence of keen competition, without rational organisation.

In my opinion the last sentence is the crux to a large extent of our present troubles in regard to the cost of living. I have already pointed out, and I think hon. members will agree, that, with the combinations and organisations controlling prices in the Eastern States, both by manufacturing and wholesale importing houses, we in Western Australia have very little chance now of controlling those prices. In my opinion there is only one method by which we are going to do any good in bringing down prices. As long as these combinations are in existence, it is obvious that any State Bill is not going to do much good, and the only way in which good is going to be done is for the Government to become an importer and distributor of the necessaries of life. It is essential for co-operation between the producer and con-

sumer. I know that this will not appeal to many hon. members, but the fact remains the time is coming very fast when both the producer and consumer will be fully alive to the position and the disabilities they are working under at present. Until very lately farmers were in the same position but they are now in the happy position of having a Government guarantee of a reasonable price for their wheat, for which I do not blame them, but as soon as that Government guarantee is dropped they are going to find, if they are not very careful, that the big firms will again be in operation and act as middlemen between producer and consumer and receive the profits which the Farmers and Settlers' Association are now endeavouring to obtain. But if the Government became the distributor it should be able by proper organisation to eliminate the waste of distribution. On any morning and in any street of the metropolitan area will be found three to five or six milk carts, half a dozen bakers' carts or half a dozen butchers' carts. It must be obvious that this sort of distribution must increase the cost of commodities, and the question ought to be asked why there is not some system of combination between the retailers, but the difference between the retailer and the wholesaler is that the retailer is not sufficiently educated to the idea of forming an association or combination in order to bring about the elimination of the waste of distribution. It is not that I have reason to believe that the waste which will be eliminated will be for the benefit of the consumer because, from what I have read, where any waste has been eliminated it has not been for the benefit of the consumer but for that of the members of the particular organisations, and that would probably happen if the retailers formed a combination. It would not happen, however, if the Government supervised or regulated the whole of the distribution of the necessaries of life. In my opinion the Bill has been brought down four years too late. I am satisfied that if members of this House in 1915 had seen fit to allow the operation of the Prices Control Bill to continue during the war, it would have had a great deal more effect than any Bill is likely to have now. I do not know what the attitude of members on this occasion is going to be, but I am very interested in seeing what attitude they are going to adopt. I have carefully read in "Hansard" the debate on the Bill in 1915 and have carefully noted the names of gentlemen who opposed, and opposed bitterly, the Bill on that occasion. I have heard on many occasions that this is not a party House, but it will be a good test to see what attitude members will adopt towards this Bill which has been brought down by another Government. I hope the Bill will be passed, for the simple reason that it will prove to the people the fallacy of thinking

that any good will be done by price fixing as long as big associations of middlemen are tolerated. The sooner this is brought home the sooner will we have co-operation, and that or Government supervision is the only means whereby cheaper living can be obtained. I am satisfied, if the Bill is passed, that after it has been in operation 12 months the people will be so disgusted that the co-operative societies that are struggling to-day will be organised on the lines of the Farmers and Settlers' Association, and we shall then have two co-operative organisations, that of the Farmers and Settlers' Association for the producers and the other for the consumers.

On motion by Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.45 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 6th November, 1919.

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

QUESTION—MINES FLOODED, WESTONIA.

Mr. HARRISON asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Has his attention been called to the following paragraph, which appeared in the "West Australian" of the 5th inst.:—"Water Trouble at Westonia.—Westonia is beset with another serious water trouble owing to the inability of the Central company to cope with the heavy inflow from the adjoining Edna May mine, which closed down a week ago. Reports from the field state that a total cessation of both mining and treatment operations at the Central is threatened, and that the Consolidated and Deep Levels mines may also be affected by the flooding. The position is viewed with much alarm locally and the Government has

been appealed to for help?" 2, If so, what action does he contemplate?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, Yes. 2, An officer of the Mines Department proceeded to Westonia last night to investigate and report fully on the matter.

QUESTION—FLOGGING OF PRISONERS.

Mr. ROCKE asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Has he received a report relating to the flogging of an inmate in the Fremantle prison, alleged to have been administered illegally? 2, If so, is it his intention to place the report upon the Table of the House?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, Yes. 2, No; but hon. members may see the report.

QUESTION—MINERS' DISPUTE, RELIEF FOR WOODCUTTERS.

Mr. ANGELO asked the Premier: As the Government supplied rations to the Kalgoorlie miners whilst the woodcutters were on strike, is it the intention of the Government to be consistent and now supply rations to the woodcutters whilst the miners are on strike?

The PREMIER replied: There has so far been no need to consider the matter.

QUESTION—ELECTORAL, COUNCIL ENROLMENTS.

Mr. SMITH asked the Attorney General: 1, What method does the Electoral Department adopt to ensure enrolment of electors for the Legislative Council? 2, What is the cost of same?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1, Prior to every biennial election for the Legislative Council, the records in the Lands Titles, Taxation and Mines Departments, relating to owners and occupiers of land, and also municipal and road boards electoral lists, are availed of. Comparisons are made with existing Legislative Council enrolments, and claim forms posted to persons who are apparently qualified, but not already enrolled. Claim forms are also delivered through the post to all occupied dwelling-houses within letter carrier delivery for the purpose of enabling householders to claim enrolment if qualified but not already enrolled. 2, The cost varies from time to time. During the financial year 1917-18 the cost in wages, postages, and material was approximately £360.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Stubbs leave of absence granted to Mr. Thomson (Katanning) on the ground of ill-health.