

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 18th September, 1951.

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

QUESTIONS.

SUPERPHOSPHATE.

(a) As to Requirements of Land Settlement Schemes.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN (for Hon. A. L. Loton) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What amount of superphosphate was allocated to the War Service Land Settlement Scheme during the years ended the 30th June, 1949, 1950, 1951?

(2) What amount of superphosphate was allocated to other Government institutions or projects during the same period?

(3) What amount of superphosphate has been applied for in respect to the year ending the 30th June, 1952, by—

(a) War Service Land Settlement Board;

(b) other Government institutions?

(4) What will be the approximate quantity of superphosphate required by the War Service Land Settlement Board for the season ending the 30th June, 1952, if the objective of the present plan for development of new land is reached?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Year ended the 30th June, 1949—4,000 tons; year ended the 30th June, 1950—6,200 tons; year ended the 30th June, 1951—7,750 tons.

(2) Year ended the 30th June, 1949—661 tons; year ended the 30th June, 1950—663 tons; year ended the 30th June, 1951—711 tons.

(3) (a) 7,443 tons; (b) the other Government institutions have not lodged all their orders yet, but it is expected that the amount will be similar to previous years.

(4) 7,443 tons.

(b) As to Factors in Cost Increase.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Minister for Agriculture:

In view of the steep increase in the cost of superphosphate, will the Minister advise the House—

(a) What are the main factors responsible for the price increase and what proportion of the increase do they represent?

(b) Does the Minister anticipate a further increase by the end of the year? If so, what does he calculate the cost will be?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The main factors are:—Increased landed cost of rock phosphate representing over £2 a ton on superphosphate; increased cost of imported sulphur 10s. a ton; increased cost of new cornsacks equivalent to £1 10s. 3d. a ton on superphosphate; increased cost of wages, salaries, power, repairs and other costs equivalent to 10s. 6d. a ton.

(2) There is no indication of a further price rise at present, but in view of rising costs generally, it would be reasonable to assume that there will be further increases.

LACTOGEN AND POWDERED MILK.

As to Reason for Shortage of Supplies.

Hon. W. R. HALL asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is the Minister aware of the serious shortage of Lactogen, sweetened, unsweetened and powdered tinned milk throughout the Eastern, Northern and Murchison-Goldfields towns?

(2) Will the Minister ascertain from the distributors of these products (Nestlé's Food Specialities Aust. Ltd.) whether—

(a) the distribution of such products has been frozen and traders have been notified that no more stocks are available until further notice;

(b) the instructions concerning the above products were from the head office, Sydney, to Western Australian branches of the company;

(c) it is the intention of the distributors to deny the general public stocks of these products until the price controls are lifted or the prices increased?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, but some further stocks of infant food, powdered and condensed milk have reached Kalgoorlie, and distribution has already commenced, priority being given to the district most urgently in need of it, the consignment having taken over three weeks by rail from Victoria.

(2) (a) What small stocks were available in Perth were retained and rationed out over other country areas of the State, as Kalgoorlie supplies were anticipated any day by rail direct from Victoria.

(b) The Kalgoorlie rail consignment was actually arranged for Kalgoorlie district only by the head office of the company.

(c) This is answered by (1).

MOTION—URGENCY.

As to Shortage of Baby Foods and Powdered Milk.

The PRESIDENT: I have received a letter from Hon. G. Bennetts as follows:—

I desire to inform you that, at the commencement of the sitting of the Legislative Council today, it is my intention to move, under Standing Order 59, for the adjournment of the House to discuss a matter of urgency, namely, that this House views with grave concern the extreme shortage of baby foods, including sweetened and unsweetened and powdered milk throughout the Eastern Goldfields and other parts of the State.

It will be necessary for four members to rise in their places in support of the proposal.

Four members having risen in their places,

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East)
[4.38]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till the 21st September at 2.30 p.m.

Over a period of many months, the outback parts of my electorate have been extremely short of baby foods and three weeks ago there was not a tin of powdered milk available in the Merredin district. During my speech on the Address-in-reply, I made reference to the general shortage of baby foods and powdered milk in the outback parts of the State. During a visit to Coolgardie last week, I was contacted by one of the grocers who asked me to go to his shop, and I found that he had only three tins of powdered milk and about nine tins of Life Guard milk. I was asked to go to the other shop and found that no powdered milk at all was available there. I was told that people could not get much fresh milk because the quantity available on the Goldfields was limited on

account of its having to be sent from Perth, and thus many people had to depend upon tinned milk.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why is not fresh milk produced there?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It might be produced in good seasons, but recently the seasons have not been good. They told me that people were embarrassing them with requests for more milk for their children. When I arrived at Norseman on the same day, I thought I would look into the conditions there, so I went to two of the leading grocers' shops, and there was not a tin of milk available. Mr. Boylen and Senator Fraser happened to be with me at the time. After visiting the stores, we met the secretary of the road board who informed us that a meeting of the board had been held to deal with the milk shortage in the district. He said the board was going to write to the parliamentary members for the district in connection with the position.

A lady who was travelling on the same diesel as we were told us of a child who was fed on Sunshine milk. This infant could not take Lactogen, because it was unsuitable, and so had to have Sunshine milk. The parents of the child were unable to buy Sunshine, so they had to purchase some Vi-Lactogen. The kiddie came out in a rash and could not keep the food down. The parents were worried because they could not get any Sunshine milk. I am not including Lactogen in my case, because a certain amount of it is available in the chemists' shops; although, I think not a great deal. My main growl concerns the supply of Nestle's milk and Sunshine powdered milk.

When I returned to Kalgoorlie I got out of my car and a man who met me said, when I asked him what the milk position was, that he was going to see the Nestle's milk company to find out what had happened because he had two children dependent on Sunshine milk. I said to him, "It is no good going crook. Just go down in a proper way and you might find out something." He went to see the Nestle's company, and I understand that he got the milk by obtaining a doctor's certificate.

I met several other people, who told me much the same thing concerning milk supplies in Kalgoorlie, so I thought I would go into the stores and see what the position was, and whether the people I had seen were truthful in their statements to me. I went into each one of the stores in Kalgoorlie and asked for the true picture to be given me. The stores all said they did not have a tin of Nestle's, Trufood, or Sunshine milk. I went along the whole of Hannan-st., and found that to be the position. Then I went to Boulder where I found that the same set of conditions obtained.

Before leaving Kalgoorlie yesterday I got in touch with Dr. Young who said that the milk position was in a bad way in Kalgoorlie, and that when doctors were expected to write prescriptions so that people could get a tin of milk, it was a bad look-out. He said that the doctors could not remain at home all day to write out certificates so that people could get milk. He went on to say that something should be done to release milk, if it were available, or to increase the supplies.

Last year, when this matter was raised, I went to the Nestle's company in Perth and had a talk with the manager who told me that the floods in Victoria had caused much of the shortage. He said also that in this State, as in the others, it was hard to get labour on the farms; and that if a farmer had a married couple it was difficult for him to get materials with which to build a house for them. I do not know whether that is correct, but it is what I was told. I was also informed that much of the land under irrigation that could be made available for dairy production was being used for the breeding of race-horses and trotters. I do not know whether or not that is true.

A doctor informs me that not only children, but older people, too, require milk. In my house Sunshine milk or Trufood is used, and I think that obtains in four out of every five homes in Kalgoorlie as you, Mr. President, are aware. In my province there is one family, in which there are five children, and one who is six or seven months' old, has been in hospital for three months in that short period. That child is on Nestle's milk and Sunshine milk. I think that home buys about one and a half dozen tins of milk a week because of the five children.

It has also been said that differences in price might be preventing milk from being delivered. On the Goldfields Trufood is being sold at 2s. 8½d. a tin and Sunshine at 2s. 6½d. which is a difference of 2d. Whether the Sunshine milk firm is withholding supplies pending an increase in price, I do not know; I am only surmising that it may be. Other people think that has something to do with the position. One large firm in Kalgoorlie told me that there has been a big falling off in the supply of Trufood to the Goldfields; that where he would receive 200 cases in a period of nine months, he had received three cases. He is of the opinion that this milk will very likely be exported out of the country. The opinion is also held that more milk could be processed in Western Australia, instead of being distributed to the schools in the metropolitan area and the country districts close to Perth. This is a waste of taxpayers' money to a degree because the children here have greater facilities for getting milk without having it supplied to them free by the Government.

The Minister for Agriculture: You are against the free milk scheme?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: To a certain extent, I am. I say the milk would be better used if it were made into powdered milk and sent to the people in the outback. If we are to have a decent population in Australia, without worry to mothers in trying to rear children, we must do something about milk supplies. I do not know how we are to get over the present position, but we must endeavour to encourage the factories to produce more tinned milk. Possibly the recent trouble in New South Wales in connection with butter has had something to do with the present shortage.

I am of the opinion that certain supplies of milk were in Kalgoorlie at the time I made these inquiries, and I think it is because of the activities of members that the whole matter has been brought to a head and these people have decided to release certain supplies. I do not know whether that is the position but it certainly looks like it. I was in Kalgoorlie yesterday and I made it known that I intended to take some action about the matter because so many old people and young mothers had complained to me about the position.

I think these suppliers decided to release the milk so that we would not bring up the question in Parliament. It is a crying shame that a commodity, upon which young mothers are so dependent, is denied to the public. All members know how upset mothers can be if they are unable to receive milk for their children. Many mothers are unable to feed their own babies and depend on processed milk for their children. That is the outline of my complaint, and I would like to hear it discussed by other members.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South-East) [4.51]: I whole-heartedly support the action of Mr. Bennetts. I knew that the hon. member was very active on this question over the last week-end particularly, and the storm has broken as far as Kalgoorlie is concerned. This has happened rather suddenly but I do not want members to get the idea that it is a local matter only. This is not a local matter but is State-wide in its effect and before very long, if something is not done, it will be Commonwealth-wide. The inquiries we made recently in Kalgoorlie, before the question became as far-reaching as it appears to be now, enabled us to obtain a few statements and hear certain remarks from some quarters that would not have been uttered if it had been thought that the matter would be as serious as it is.

The manager of one of the main distributing centres in Kalgoorlie, when inquiries were made, said, "The Press can do what it likes; the public can do what it likes and members can do what they

like. The milk won't be there." That is an actual statement by one of the large distributors in the district. Three private citizens rang me independently over the week-end to ask me what we were going to do about the milk position. I said, "What have you done yourself?" They told me that they had been round to every shop in the district and they had been unable to get milk. They were told—the same as I was told—when inquiries were made that any person who needed milk as an essential part of a child's diet could obtain a certificate or statement from a clinic sister or a doctor authorising him to get milk.

That is farcical. Any person who visits a doctor to obtain a prescription to enable him to obtain milk for his child, or children, is liable to be charged the ordinary visiting fee—anything from 10s. 6d. to 15s. Is that sum to be placed on top of the price of every tin of milk a man obtains? A person might want one tin today and another tin on Wednesday. Must that person go to a doctor and get another certificate to obtain a further tin of milk? The same thing applies if a person goes to a clinic sister for a certificate.

Another person came to me with the complaint that he could not obtain milk. I said, "Why not go to the chemist? Lactogen is a food and is sold by chemists." The man did as I told him and visited three chemists. He was unable to obtain anything from the first two and the third chemist said, "I have not got one tin. We are not getting milk either." However, that chemist did send his assistant from the shop to the warehouse with a special note and obtained a tin of Lactogen. Does that man have to go along to the chemist three or four times a week and ask that chemist to send his assistant down to the warehouse for a tin of milk on each occasion? It is absolutely ridiculous.

There is one point about the use of Lactogen and Sunshine milk. Sunshine milk is the only powdered milk that medical practitioners are prepared to recommend to mothers as suitable for infant food. I understand that Lactogen is really only Sunshine milk with added vitamins; there is no other difference. If a child is being fed with Sunshine milk, I believe there is no real reason why the infant cannot be fed on Lactogen. However, the point is that once a child is fed on Sunshine milk, mothers do not like to switch and change from one type to another. Supplies of Lactogen, too, are a problem because people are going round to shops and buying Lactogen to use as powdered milk in their tea. That creates a further shortage, because mothers are unable to obtain it as food for their children.

I believe that only portion of the regular monthly supply had come to hand in Kalgoolie up till the week-end. One of the warehouse managers told me that por-

tion of the allocation had arrived but they had to be careful in allotting it and were not prepared to let it out indiscriminately, otherwise people would use it for everyday purposes. For that reason the suppliers wanted to supervise the distribution of this milk so that those who needed it most would receive the available supplies. I agree with that whole-heartedly, but the point is that in the outlying districts such as Wiluna, Menzies, Norseman and others, where the free milk scheme for children is not available either, the people are unable to obtain any supplies.

Hon. H. Hearn: Is it because of the price that supplies are not coming forward?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I will have a little to say on that, too, but I will have to go carefully here because naturally the people concerned are not prepared to say too much about that aspect. However, the whole theme underlying their remarks was that their product comes from the factory and it is on the market within a week or ten days. There is no holding of stocks. That is all very well, but when these people apply to the Price Fixing Commission for a re-adjustment of price, there is a lag of up to three, four or five months. For that reason, the manufacturers are loath to work at a loss until this lag of up to five months ends. I was told that one of the reasons why the manufacturers of processed milk in this State cannot compete with other buyers is that the other people are prepared to pay a much better price and sell the product as whole milk in the various towns. The manufacturers of processed milk cannot compete in price because the Price Fixing Commission is lagging, as I have said, up to five months in reviewing prices.

If the Government does not do something now, in the very near future this question will develop very seriously. I believe that the distributors and manufacturers of this commodity have just cause for complaint. If this were a more general discussion on prices, I would have a lot more to say because I have much useful material here which I will use on the proper occasion. It is about time that the Price Fixing Commission did something on this question instead of letting business people wait for up to four or five months before they get a justifiable increase.

Hon. A. R. Jones: What about wiping it out altogether?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes. That is something that could be considered, too. However, if we are to have price-fixing, then let us have something reasonable and not put up with the state of affairs that exists today. The whole country is becoming sick and tired of this business. I notice that today, generally speaking, it is the country members who have indicated their intention to speak on this matter. However, I am certain that before

long every member in the House will be concerned about this question because although it has not been discussed in the Press yet, I think it will be in the very near future. I heartily support the hon. member in his motion.

HON. W. R. HALL (North-East) [4.59]: I rise to support the motion. As members are aware, I am not unmindful of the seriousness of this question because I asked the Minister certain questions about it this afternoon. I was approached by some traders in Kalgoorlie regarding the seriousness of the shortage of these commodities, which as members know, are used as food for babies. Powdered milk is in short supply, as well as tinned milk.

A few moments ago I received a letter from some people in Kalgoorlie, which bears out my remarks. When I asked the Minister whether it was the intention of the distributors to deny the general public stocks of these products until price controls were lifted or prices increased, he replied that this question was answered by (1). The Minister's answer to question (1) was—

Yes, but some further stocks of infant food, powdered and condensed milk have reached Kalgoorlie and distribution has already commenced, priority being given to the district most urgently in need of it, the consignment having taken over three weeks by rail from Victoria.

Inevitably, the merchants desire increases in the price, and that has been the cause of the hold-up in distribution to traders. The branch in Kalgoorlie gave me certain information about this matter on the 11th September, before I asked the questions I have referred to. I asked the branch to verify the position so that I would know what I was going to speak about.

It would appear from the information given to me that the Sydney branch of Nestle's Food Specialities (Aust.) Ltd., had really given instructions to various branches throughout the Commonwealth that there was to be no more distribution of these foods until further notice. We find in the answer by the Minister that certain stocks have been released since then, which gives me considerable satisfaction. Like other speakers, I know that this is not an isolated case. It varies quite frequently and very often some shortage crops up. I have been told, and I believe it is true, that, so far as the branches in this State are concerned, they do endeavour to give outlying and country districts a larger quota of the milk they receive than the metropolitan area. It is some satisfaction to know that that is done.

This matter will crop up again and again unless some stand is taken. I had hoped that the House would be told something definite by the Minister to the effect that there would be regular supplies of these

foods and that there would be no hold-up. The traders at Kalgoorlie are as concerned as are the consumers about the supply of these foods to the people who use them. The time has come when we will have to take a serious view of the position. It is not the only commodity that is being held up because of people waiting for the Federal authority to give an increased price.

The shortage of this commodity, however, is due to direct action by the distributors or the people who make the milk. I feel that in supporting the motion I am doing something to back up the questions I asked in the House. I sincerely hope the Minister will take all necessary steps to see that in future there is no delay and that ample stocks are provided for the outlying districts throughout Western Australia. The shortage does not occur in isolated cases but seems to be general on the Eastern, Northern and Murchison Goldfields.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [5.5]: I have listened with much interest to this debate because it shows that in the past we have given insufficient consideration to the dairying industry in Western Australia. It also shows that we are practically entirely dependent on other States for our imports of powdered milk and invalid foods, such as Lactogen and other dried milks that are required. In Western Australia, we do manufacture sufficient sweetened milk to serve the State's needs and a large quantity of that is also exported. But even the quantity exported does not exceed in value the amount we have to pay for the imports of dried milk from the Eastern States.

Until we can develop the dairying industry in this State to a stage where we are entirely self-sufficient, I think that no matter what is done, this trouble is going to recur. Nestle's in Western Australia started almost 20 years ago, in an area which was then shortly to have irrigation; it was irrigation which definitely brought Nestle's factory to Warroona. Since then there has been encroachment of wholemilk supplies and the moving out of the small backyard dairies in the metropolitan area, with the result that Nestle's supplies are gradually dwindling. The Agricultural Department last year gave Nestle's a permit to bring dry milk from further south than Busselton, which meant a transport of over 70 miles.

The Minister for Agriculture: We gave them a permit to establish a factory.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: At the present time, Nestle's are building a factory at Busselton similar to one in the Eastern States. They have had their engineers examining levels, etc., and they will establish a receiving depot in the first place to take in milk next year. I have a letter from the manager of Nestle's

dated the 12th September, 1951, which deals with a remark by Mr. Spencer, the general manager of Nestle's Food Specialities Ltd. It reads as follows:—

Mr. Spencer has again confirmed that in his opinion we cannot do much but to take the facts as they are and make the best of it.

The facts were those dealing with the encroachment of wholemilk—

He now fully realises that the factory is in the wrong place and it is now up to us to get the milk to Warrroona from farther afield.

I understand in dealing with the receiving depot at Busselton there is quite a possibility over the next five years, provided the intake is satisfactory, that they will establish a powdered milk factory as well. This is more or less hearsay at the present time. But even if that happens, and they have to go down there for powdered milk or milk for sweetening, we still have to put up that factory and this would mean that powdered milk would be encroaching upon the production of butterfat.

The Minister for Agriculture: Increased production will get over that.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: That is what I have been driving at all along. I want to see the South-West developed to a greater extent than it is at present. The Minister indicated a £250,000 or £300,000 scheme the other day. I do not know what the result of that is.

The Minister for Agriculture: Ninety applications up to date.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: From 2,000 odd farmers.

The Minister for Agriculture: Give them a chance.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: That is probably quite reasonable, but I would like a bit more information later. I do not know whether the Minister fully realises the fact but it is the small man with no money that we have got to help. I notice from the application forms, etc., that I have seen in connection with this, that cash has to be paid or sufficient security given. There have been cases where a man has received assistance under some other loan and has been refused assistance under this. Western Australia is under a disability contrasted with the Eastern States and receives a disability grant in consequence. I maintain if the State is relatively in that position then the dairying industry similarly suffers a disability in view of the 40-cow system of costing of the J.D.I.A.C.

From His Excellency's speech I gather that the Commonwealth is willing to give money to increase primary production. Should not that money be made available, even free of interest, for an extremely long period to give these small

men—those on an 18-cow basis—a reasonable chance? Unless we look at it from the long-term aspect and develop the South-West as I understand the late Sir James Mitchell had in view 20 or 30 years ago, we are going to have this as a recurrent problem. I thoroughly appreciate the difficulty in that Western Australia cannot produce all the powdered milk it wants. Powdered milk and condensed milk are badly needed on the Eastern Goldfields. I do hope we look at this matter from a long-term point of view and develop our South-West accordingly.

HON. R. J. BOYLEN (South-East) [5.11]: I support the motion. I do not intend to have very much to say regarding the shortage. That has been amply covered. We get different excuses as to why powdered milk is in short supply, some attributing it to shortage of tinplate, some to transport and others to bad seasons. I am not concerned as to what causes the shortages, but that they do occur. I am concerned with the shortages of baby foods and I would suggest to the Government that it insists insofar as the distribution of the milk in Western Australia is concerned, that a certain portion of the ample store room in Kalgoorlie be set aside for reserved stocks of baby foods, powdered and other milk.

People on the Goldfields pay more for these particular commodities than do those residing in the metropolitan area. That is unfortunate and probably cannot be overcome. A 2½ lb. tin of powdered milk costs 10s. 3d. Owing to the seriousness of the shortage of baby food, a considerable amount of ill-health has been caused on the Goldfields as mothers have to switch from the food they have been using to another food which might not suit the child. I feel sure, however, that if storage space were provided for reserved stocks in the warehouse at Kalgoorlie, it would help to solve the problem. I know there have been shortages on the Goldfields when there has been no shortage in the metropolitan area, but the problem would be eased if storage were provided.

HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North) [5.13]: I also desire to support the motion. As far back as April, after I had made a trip to the Kimberleys, I wrote to the Minister for Health pointing out the extreme shortage of powdered milk and baby foods in the North-West. Many of the young mothers, and even the matron of the hospital at Derby, were very concerned about the shortage. One might say they were living from meal to meal while I was there. However, I approached the Minister for Health concerning this matter, and after making some inquiries she managed to get some supplies for the

people in the North. These supplies were forwarded to them by air in some instances.

But now the shortage has spread from those remote places in the North-West to centres such as Kalgoorlie, which is connected with the Eastern States by rail, it is time for concern, especially for mothers in the North. There is not one dairy north of Geraldton, which is a surprising fact. There used to be two dairies at Carnarvon, which then had about one-third of the population it now carries. I would like to see the Government assist the dairying industry in every possible manner to produce more and consider whether it is possible to provide land for people who will be prepared to attempt to establish local dairies in remote places. Admittedly, it is a problem in the low rainfall areas, but dairies did exist there at one time and the owners made money.

Hon. L. Craig: They were the days before controls.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I would not be so sure about that. So far as the North-West is concerned, I think the changeover has been due to the establishment of other more profitable avenues of employment.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That's it!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: People have changed from the milking of cows morning and night to an easier way of making a living. I am pleased that Mr. Bennetts has introduced this motion, stressing the dire necessity for these essential food-stuffs to be increased in quantity. It has been said that supplies have been withheld. I am not competent to speak on that matter, but I think that general under-production and a drift from dairying have caused the shortage. It is time the Government took some really active steps to overcome the difficulty.

The Minister for Agriculture: Would you suggest what those steps should be? What should the Government do that it has not done?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I do not pretend to know what the Government should do; but I would be very pleased if the Minister would tell us what has been done, and perhaps we could then evolve some plan to improve conditions, or he might be able to do so himself. There is not the slightest doubt that a drift is taking place. People are leaving the industry almost every day, and dairies are going out of production.

Hon. L. Craig: Because something else pays them better.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Raise the price. That is what is needed.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The restrictions by the Milk Board are the cause of the shortage.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I support the motion and trust that something will be done.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [5.19]: The Minister asked us what could be done. Perhaps one or two suggestions could be made. They may be idealistic; they may not be practicable; but the Minister can discuss them. I wonder whether it would be possible, as a short-term plan, to endeavour to arrange for dried milk to be brought to Western Australia in bulk and canned in this State. Discussing this matter whilst in the Eastern States recently, I was given to understand that a number of industries have been started in South Australia not by those industries having been established as a whole, but by their commencing with the packing of products within that State. I do not know whether any approach of this sort to the problem of the distribution of dried milk has been made in this State, but I offer that suggestion to the Minister. It may be possible to persuade manufacturers of dried milk products in the Eastern States to begin canning those products here, after having had the dried milk sent to the State in bulk.

Secondly, as a long-term plan, let me repeat what I said previously about the subject of milk, because milk appeals to me probably from a different aspect from that to which it appeals to dairymen. I would repeat something which I said last year, and concerning which the Minister replied that I had made out no case. The view I hold is that the wholemilk portion of the dairying business has become the prime factor, whereas that factor was previously the production of butter. I believe that if we are to control this business in the interests of the public generally, there must be some degree of priority of need in the use of wholemilk. My intention, therefore, is to repeat the suggestion I made last year, that the Milk Board and the Dairy Products Board be amalgamated, so that the products of the dairies would be under one control. The milk would be taken as a wholemilk product and gathered by the collecting depots, and there should be a priority basis for its distribution to supply certain needs.

It has become quite clear from the debate this afternoon that dried milk is a necessity, over a large area of our State, for the feeding of babies, and that purpose must be given a high priority on the list of uses of wholemilk. Whilst wholemilk may get a No. 1 priority, surely the No. 2 priority must be dried milk products. Then there are a number of other uses for milk, extending down to its use in the manufacture of plastics, which must come under the heading of our future needs. I suggest to the Minister that rather than say to me, as he did last year, that I had made out no case, he should give serious consideration to the taking over of wholemilk by a joint board

drawn from the Milk Board and the Dairy Products Board with the idea of making this product one to be handled on a priority basis in regard to the needs of the general public.

I understand that, while I was absent in the Eastern States recently, a suggestion of this sort was made. It was proposed that milk should be bought on a wholemilk basis at the receiving depot. I think Dr. Snook was one whose name was associated with the matter. All I saw was a short reply to Dr. Snook from some dairyman asking for further particulars. If this idea is permeating the minds of other people, there must be something in it as a long-term plan. I believe that the order of priority should be the distribution of wholemilk as wholemilk; then as dried milk for children; then for the feeding of other stock; and, after that, distribution into various other channels for use in industries requiring it, down to the manufacture of plastics.

I think that the extension of the industry on that basis would, as a long-term plan, eventually rid us of our problems. I repeat also my earlier short-term plan that the shortage might be overcome by asking those who produce dried milk products to begin the industry in this State by first canning and packing here. If that approach has been made and failed, I would be interested to hear the particulars.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [5.21]: This is one of the most interesting discussions I have heard in this House. It brings back to my mind the statement I made the other day on how we are becoming unbalanced in our economy in this State. The difficulty today is in trying to get people to appreciate what is required of them. I remember the time when there was a dairy at Southern Cross and when there were two dairies at Kalgoorlie.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Ten!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I knew there were two very big ones. There must be some reason why people are going out of the industry. I do not know what other members think, including Dr. Hislop; but I believe that the best food we can give to children is the natural milk of their mothers, and the next best is cow's milk. I have seen plenty of children reared on cow's milk and I know that they did exceedingly well. There are isolated places in this State where it would not be possible to run dairy farms, but there are very few of them. I was horrified not so long ago when it was suggested by Mr. Baxter that we should send milk from the city to Cunderdin.

I happen to be a farmer, and on no day are we without cow's milk on our farm. I know it would be a bit more costly to maintain cows in other places, but they have been kept at Cunderdin; and in

nearly all such districts, if encouragement is given to farmers, they will cut hay to provide feed for the cattle in the dry periods. There is plenty of water along the Eastern Goldfields line; at least there is sufficient to ensure that the stock would be well watered. I am convinced that if we can only encourage people to return to essential industries in this State, our artificial feeding problem will be largely solved.

The Minister for Agriculture: How will you encourage them? That is our problem.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I know that while people are attracted to the metropolitan area and provided with amenities and good social conditions, they will not be induced to return to the country districts. I am disturbed, as I think other members must be, at the building up of the population in the metropolitan area to the disadvantage of the country, where the food and clothing of the people are produced. I do not know whether we are not discouraging people from living in the country rather than encouraging them to do so. I admit it is a difficult task to persuade folk to go to the country and establish dairies, even in places like Cunderdin, where there was one not so long ago. I recently travelled along the Goldfields line to as far as Merredin, and at every hotel outside of Northam there was dried milk in the tea. That, of course, prevents people in isolated places like Leonora and Menzies from obtaining it. The establishment of a dairy at Kalgoorlie should not be an impossibility. People there can arrange to keep cows in milk during the year; it only requires chaff and bran.

The Minister for Agriculture: And lucerne, which they can grow. The best lucerne in Western Australia is grown there.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: But not enough of it. I have seen those plots. The point is that irrigation water is pretty expensive; and if it were not for the sewerage system, they would not be producing the quantity they are. Broken Hill supplies its residents with pure milk.

The Minister for Agriculture: So does Whyalla.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: We have to educate our people and make it worth while for them to produce these things in the country. I am disturbed about our bringing people from the country to the city. Goldfields residents have a genuine complaint. The point is: Is there a remedy? Can dairying be made attractive to young people? It requires a bit of outlay, as milking cows are expensive today, but the district concerned is reasonably healthy for cattle.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: They cannot get cement to concrete the dairy floors.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: That is a mere bagatelle, because the provision of a concrete floor does not matter under the circumstances. How many of the early settlers in this State had concrete floors in their dairies? It is only a new-fangled idea that has come into vogue. I do not think there was one dairy in this State with a concrete floor when I was a boy, and I can recall having seen women and children up to their knees in slush in cow-yards in northern New South Wales.

The Minister for Agriculture: Were you not once Minister for Health?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: In those days the health of the people was no worse than it is today.

The Minister for Agriculture: We have advanced a lot since then.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Infant mortality may have been slightly higher at that stage, but that was due to lack of medical knowledge rather than anything else.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The Milk Board lays down certain requirements for dairies.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: That is the trouble. We can hardly turn round now without some authority endeavouring to interfere or look after us in some direction. Let us get back to natural conditions.

The Minister for Agriculture: I sincerely hope not.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I would like to see it. There are too many men and women employed today on boards that give us no help in producing necessities for our people. I think it is dreadful that, while we are building up our population, we are finding it more difficult every year to feed the people properly.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We will have to get back to keeping goats at Kalgoorlie.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: That would not do any harm. They served a useful purpose in the early pioneering days on the Goldfields and I noted when in New South Wales recently that the Department of Agriculture there is breeding goats.

The Minister for Agriculture: It has two farms for that purpose.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: At one of those farms they produce two gallons of milk per day per goat, but, of course, they feed the animals properly instead of expecting them to eat the paper off empty jam tins, as we do in some areas. Those goats will prove of great benefit to people in the districts to which they will be sent. It is no use our saying that we must do this or that for the people. We should rather ask the people of the State to do something for themselves. We must encourage them to go to centres such as Kalgoorlie, Southern Cross and Merredin and establish dairies there.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not desire to waste the time of the House, but I have strong feelings about this matter, being anxious to see our people go into the country areas. When they do go to such places, it is necessary that they should have the best possible food. I did not wish this debate to close without putting forward my views on the matter. Let us return to the days when goats provided the fresh milk supply in outback areas. In the South-West and the central wheat belt we can now provide more stock food-stuffs than ever before.

A lot of chaff can be produced in this State, though it is no longer used to feed farm horses to any great extent. The quantity of chaff once sent to Kalgoorlie has been halved, but I think it could be increased again if chaff were used to feed dairy cattle in that area. If the chaff is steamed and mixed with bran, it keeps cattle in good condition, even in summertime. It is necessary to build up the white population of the world, particularly in a State such as this and, in order to achieve that object, I think it is necessary in some respects to return to natural conditions and avoid artificial measures.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—Central) [5.35]: I am sorry that I had no notice of this motion, as otherwise I might have been able to provide some information with regard to what Sir Charles Latham has called "unnatural milk." I have considerable knowledge of natural milk in this State and the supply of wholemilk in Australia generally. This debate has centred round the supply of wholemilk and powdered milk, and I would point out that the Government has absolutely nothing to do with the supply of powdered milk. It could, of course, make representations to the Eastern States for supplies of powdered milk, as has been done by the Minister for Health, as none of that commodity is produced in this State. Of course, Nestle's milk is produced here, but we cannot tell that firm that it must send its product to Kalgoorlie.

In the course of his remarks, Dr. Hislop spoke of directing milk, but it is no use amalgamating two boards in respect of milk unless the Government has a factory in which to produce powdered milk or can force some firm to produce it. Private enterprise could set up a factory at Busselton or anywhere else for the production of powdered milk if supplies of wholemilk were available and the proposition was considered worth while. During the Address-in-reply debate I told the House something about milk.

Although there is a shortage of that commodity in other parts of Australia, it does not exist in this State except so far

as transport is responsible for the situation. Some member asked what the Government had done in the matter. I say that the Milk Board has done a lot and has tried to spread the supply of whole-milk as far as possible. Another member mentioned the position at Cunderdin and I say that the Milk Board made a great effort in regard to that centre when no milk was available there.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Minister will agree that there should be a dairy at Cunderdin.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, but that was not under the control of the Government. However, the Milk Board was able to rectify the position by sending milk to Cunderdin, and did so. I visited Cunderdin a few months ago, accompanied by Mr. Baxter and it was brought to my notice that only a certain amount of milk was being despatched to that centre.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: There was none available there.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I took the matter up with the people concerned and was asked if I could find someone at Cunderdin to distribute more milk. Had it been possible to find someone to distribute more than 60 gallons, more would have been sent there. Since then the Milk Board has been sending milk to Cunderdin for the children four or five times a week by the Kalgoorlie express. It is distributed to the children of that centre as free milk. That shows that the Milk Board has made some effort to see that fresh milk is provided in the country areas. After Sir Harold Seddon made representations to me about milk supplies for Leonora I took the matter up with the board and was told that the position would be investigated to see what could be done.

It will interest Mr. Strickland to know that the board is considering sending milk by air to Carnarvon. The whole of this question of milk supplies for centres such as we have been discussing is wrapped up in the matter of transport. We have the milk available and it is only a few months since the dairymen were told that all the milk was not wanted and they were to cut down production by about 5 per cent. Milk will be sent wherever it is required, providing it can be transported, though there are tremendous difficulties involved in some instances.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Will it be possible to send milk to the Goldfields in the summertime?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not know if it will be possible to send it to some centres as the question of transport is again involved. There is a limit to what people will pay for milk and if we had to charge perhaps an extra 6d. per pint to cover transport costs, the

users might not wish to pay that much. One member said that dairies could not be established because no cement was available, but that is not correct.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is only an excuse.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Only four or five months ago I was instrumental in getting those who control the supply of cement to devote 30 tons per week to the Department of Agriculture for the butterfat industry generally and 20 tons per week to the wholemilk section of the dairying industry. A total of 50 tons of cement is now going to the industry each week and if that does not remedy the position, I do not know what will. I was sorry to hear the remarks of Sir Charles Latham about getting back to natural conditions. I agree that we should get back to natural milk, but not to natural conditions. We do not want the dairying industry to return to conditions of squalor and filth.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They were unnatural conditions.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That was the state of affairs prevailing before the Milk Board took over. I take considerable pride in what the board has done in the last few years.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I said "natural conditions" and not "the old conditions." There is a distinction.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member criticised the dairies having to conform to certain regulations, but I believe that milk should be produced under the best conditions.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The best possible conditions.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We are making it possible for that to be done. We can be proud of the fact that the dairies in this State are of a higher standard than exists in New South Wales. As I have said, we have overcome the shortage of cement required in the industry. I commend Mr. Bennetts for having brought this matter forward. The Government realises that there is a shortage of milk in some areas, but I do not know what can be done about it. The Minister for Transport, in answer to a question this afternoon by Mr. Hall, with regard to the shortage of Lactogen and powdered milk in the Eastern, Northern and Murchison Goldfields, replied—

(1) Yes, but some further stocks of infant food, powdered and condensed milk, have reached Kalgoorlie, and distribution has already commenced, priority being given to the district most urgently in need of it, the consignment having taken over three weeks by rail from Victoria.

(2) (a) What small stocks were available in Perth were retained and rationed out over other country areas

of the State, as Kalgoorlie supplies were anticipated any day by rail direct from Victoria.

(b) The Kalgoorlie rail consignment was actually arranged for Kalgoorlie district only by the head office of the company.

I think that answers a great many of the matters raised by Mr. Bennetts. The Government cannot produce powdered milk or tinned milk out of a tank or anything else. That is not the Government's job. I was subjected to criticism because I granted a license to the Nestle's Coy. to operate at Busselton. There is no doubt that Nestle's, when it commenced its operations 20 or 30 years ago, established its works too close to Perth, apparently because it did not anticipate that the city would grow so large and that it would use nearly all the milk produced between Brunswick and Perth. It has been gradually squeezed out so we have granted it a permit to establish its works elsewhere.

However, whether Nestle's, when it erects the other factory further south, will process powdered milk I do not know, but I promise the Goldfields and other country members that I will take the matter up with the manager of the firm to see if anything can be done in that respect. I have a great deal of faith in the dairying industry in this State. It has a great future provided the price incentive is sufficient and the development of the country can be continued. Surely the dairying industry of Western Australia can supply enough milk to provide for the requirements of not only Perth and its suburbs, but also of the country centres.

Some criticism has been voiced by members because there are no dairies in the various country towns. The Government cannot force people to establish dairies at Cunderdin, Kalgoorlie or anywhere else. That is not the Government's job. It can only encourage people to do that. The Milk Board has always taken the price factor into consideration when reviewing the possibility of supplying milk to people in all remote districts. We must think of the producer. We cannot make the sky the limit when considering the price of foodstuffs. There has to be some limit. I believe the Milk Board, in its wisdom, has done an excellent job in that respect and has encouraged people, as far as possible, to establish dairies in some of these remote districts; but if the people will not do that it is just too bad and the Government will, as far as it is possible, get milk to Kalgoorlie from elsewhere.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Will the Government inquire as to whether the cause of the complaint is due to the fact that the manufacturers will not give the people on the Goldfields a reasonable supply because the price is not sufficient?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I will give that consideration. If that is the reason and the people on the Goldfields are prepared to pay a higher price, I will take the matter up with the Price Fixing Commissioner to see if anything can be done along those lines. The Government has nothing to do with the supply of powdered milk, and I claim it has done a great deal as to the production and distribution of whole milk. I want to make one final answer in reply to remarks made by Sir Charles Latham. He was not present in the Chamber the other day when I made some comments. He wants to go back to conditions that were applicable in the old days.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Why do you use the word "old"? I said, "natural."

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is what the hon. member said. I would remind him to read my remarks in regard to bovine T.B. The admission of T.B. cases to the Princess Margaret Hospital has dropped, over the last four years, from 63 to 13. So I think that answers the hon. member's argument. The standard of hygiene in the dairying industry will be kept at the highest possible level in Western Australia. I believe we can produce just as much milk under those conditions as we would if we reverted to those that existed in the dark ages and in the early 20's when Sir Charles Latham was farming.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Long before that!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I ask Mr. Bennetts, after hearing this subject ventilated, to withdraw his motion.

Personal Explanation.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Mr. President, may I be permitted to make an explanation? At no time have I suggested that we should not test our cattle for T.B.

The Minister for Agriculture: You were referring to the old conditions.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That has nothing to do with the testing of tubercular cattle.

The Minister for Agriculture: You do not like the new-fangled ideas.

Debate Resumed.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.50]: I did not intend to enter this debate and I certainly would not have done so if the Minister had given a decent reply.

The Minister for Agriculture: Surely it was not indecent.

Hon. G. FRASER: I heard the Minister compliment the hon. member for raising the matter, but I do not compliment him on the answer he has given.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is not in my power to give an answer.

Hon. G. FRASER: The Government should have an answer. It is the responsibility of the Government to see that the people are decently fed and housed.

Hon. L. Craig: That is rubbish!

Hon. G. FRASER: Of course it is the Government's responsibility.

The Minister for Agriculture: Let the hon. member tell the House where there is a source of powdered milk supplies, and we will see what we can do.

Hon. G. FRASER: The Minister, in the course of his remarks, said that the Milk Board had produced a surplus of whole-milk in this State.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is not powdered milk.

Hon. G. FRASER: Of course it is not; no one suggests it is; but where does the powdered milk come from?

The Minister for Agriculture: From the Eastern States.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is what I am getting at. The Minister's reply is so hopeless that he says the Government has a surplus of wholemilk in this State, and yet nothing can be done about it.

The Minister for Agriculture: Who is going to make the powdered milk?

Hon. G. FRASER: I know that perhaps some members will not agree with my version, but that does not prevent me from holding that opinion and telling the Minister about it. If private enterprise falls down on the job of supplying an essential commodity to the community, it is the duty of the Government to step in and fill the breach and make anything that is necessary.

Hon. H. Hearn: Increase the price, too?

Hon. G. FRASER: Notwithstanding Sir Charles Latham's exhortation to get back to natural foods and so forth, we have to realise that the tendency all over the world today has been, more and more, to rely on tinned goods and get away from the natural product.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: That is the easiest way out.

Hon. G. FRASER: Whether it is or not, I am merely saying that the tendency today is to rely on tinned foodstuffs. If the natural product is not available and private enterprise will not meet the demand of the public for the tinned product, then it is the Government's responsibility to step into the breach.

The Minister for Agriculture: We are distributing fresh milk to the people.

Hon. G. FRASER: The Government is not. We would not be getting these complaints if the Government was doing its job.

Hon. A. R. Jones: If the price was all right, the product would be available.

Hon. G. FRASER: Our friend is on price control again. The hon. member wants price control abolished and then, in the next breath he wants to control what people will buy. That is inconsistency, undoubtedly. The Minister gave us no information whatsoever in his reply. What can Mr. Bennetts tell the people in Kalgoorlie? He can only say, "I have brought this matter up before Parliament but the Minister has no answer in reply." If the Minister had made some promise as to what the Government would be prepared to do, I would be quite satisfied.

The Minister for Agriculture: I could not give a reply as to the production of powdered milk and I am not going to satisfy the hon. member or anyone else as to that.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am not satisfied with the production of powdered milk. The people have been let down because they cannot obtain this product.

The Minister for Transport: They have got their milk.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have endeavoured to get powdered milk from the Eastern States.

Hon. G. FRASER: Is that so? The Minister mentioned something about supplies arriving in Kalgoorlie, but said nothing as to the quantity. This position has been existing on the Goldfields for two or three years. I was in Kalgoorlie about two or three years ago and everybody was running around trying to obtain a tin of powdered milk. It is something that has been going on for many years.

The Minister for Agriculture: We have only been in office four years. Why did not your Government do something about it?

Hon. G. FRASER: I said, "two or three years ago."

The Minister for Agriculture: You said, "many years ago."

Hon. G. FRASER: Since that time similar circumstances have obtained on the Goldfields on numerous occasions. I certainly think the Minister should give the Goldfields' members a more definite reply as to what is to be done to overcome the shortage. If private enterprise will not supply this product, then it is the duty of the Government to step into the breach.

The Minister for Agriculture: And set up a factory?

Hon. G. FRASER: It is of no use the Government saying it would be a socialistic step, because I do not know how many socialistic projects the Government has entered into in the last four years.

The Minister for Agriculture: You have taught us.

Hon. G. FRASER: Because the Minister has stated that he has seen the manager of Nestle's and he says he can do nothing about it, that is where the matter ends.

The Minister for Agriculture: No, I said that every effort would be made to supply the Goldfields people with wholemilk.

Hon. G. FRASER: If that is all the Government can do then I think that further serious complaints will be heard from the people on the Goldfields. In view of the indignation that has been shown by them, it is time the problem was solved.

The Minister for Agriculture: Ask the Goldfields people what we did about meat? We did something in that regard because we were able to do so.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East—in reply) [5.56]: I am pleased with the support given my motion by members. I did not think the debate would have lasted as long as it has done. I am particularly pleased with Mr. Henning's remarks because he is a man who has had vast experience in the dairying industry and his information has enlightened me a great deal. I hope that he will be able to assist us in those areas where the milk is produced.

I was also pleased with the remarks made by Dr. Hislop in regard to the supply of milk to other than children. I noted the Minister's remarks that he intended sending milk to the country areas for children. However, I am concerned not only with schoolchildren, but also with those of pre-school age. One bottle of milk distributed to each child is not sufficient. The distribution of milk should have been made in Kalgoorlie on the 27th August. Today is the 18th September so we are about 28 days behind schedule, which means the next distribution will also be belated. The issue is made monthly about the 20th or the 27th.

The people on the Goldfields in the past, during the summer months, have been unable to get full supplies of fresh milk. That is the reason why they have turned to powdered and tinned milk. I have been a member of the Kalgoorlie council for 22 years and annually the burning question is the way milk is transported to Kalgoorlie. Many complaints have been made that the milk has been set alongside uncovered meat and that the lids of the cans have often been loose.

On many occasions the milk arrives at Kalgoorlie in a condition unfit for people to drink, and because of the way the cans are handled when they arrive at the Kalgoorlie station the people do not consider the milk suitable for human consumption. Years ago, we had several dairies in Kalgoorlie, but because of the increase in rail freights and the high cost of chaff, which is, I think, about £18 a ton on the Goldfields, they have gone out

of existence. With those extremely high costs one can easily imagine the impossibility of keeping cattle in those centres.

In view of the scarcity of feed the dairymen had to get rid of their cattle by disposing of them to the abattoirs or elsewhere. With the price of wool exceedingly high, many of the stock owners were induced to get rid of their cattle in order to go in for sheep. That is the reason why some of the herds on the Goldfields have been lost to the community. I hope the discussion that has taken place this afternoon on this motion will have some beneficial effect and that in future we shall not have a repetition of the shortage in milk supply that we have experienced. The situation last week was so dangerous that I regarded it as my responsibility as a member representing a Goldfields province to bring this matter before the House. I now ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Marketing of Eggs Act Amendment.
- 2, Vermin Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture.

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Minister for Transport, resolved:

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment Bill to reach the second reading stage on the day of the receipt of the message from the Legislative Assembly.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [6.5] in moving the second reading said: This Bill seeks to amend the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act in several important ways, and to continue its operation until the 31st December, 1952. It will be remembered that the most important of the amendments that were approved by Parliament last year provided for statutory increases in rents and for evictions in certain circumstances. Anomalies then existing were dealt with, one of which related to the rent inspector's authority to determine a fair rent on "shared accommodation." There were other amendments of a rather less important nature.

Following these amendments, there has been much discussion and comment in regard to evictions. It will be recalled that prior to last session's amendments, evictions could not take place unless by order of the court, with discretionary powers. The position today is that the owner of premises, who has resided in the Commonwealth for not less than two years, and requires such premises for his own occupation or for a married son or married daughter, who has resided in the Commonwealth for not less than two years, after making a statutory declaration to that effect and with certain other qualifications, can give a tenant notice to quit, and the court has to make an order. The court has no discretion in the matter whatever.

This Bill now provides that the owner must reasonably need the premises, and so that the court may deal with any case in question, it sets out those matters which the court shall take into consideration when making a determination. The limitation in the Act that the owner must require premises for his own or married children's occupation is extended by the Bill to cover both the mother and father of the owner. At present the Act merely requires the owner to make a declaration that he requires the premises, etc. It is now proposed that he shall serve a copy of the declaration on the rent inspector. This suggestion is made with the idea that the rent inspector shall keep the State Housing Commission advised of probable requirements in regard to evicted persons. Service on the tenant and filing in the court are also provided for.

In respect of "business premises," it is proposed that in addition to the considerations which the court shall take into account with regard to dwellings, it shall have discretion to postpone the making of an order for the recovery of possession. The idea behind this is that while the State Housing Commission may be able to find residential accommodation for evicted persons, it cannot provide for business premises. At present, under Section 15A of the principal Act, after an owner requiring premises for his own use or that of a married child, has served on the lessee a notice to quit, and such notice has expired, the owner may apply to the court for an order for recovery of the premises, and for the ejectment of the lessee. If the magistrate is satisfied that the owner has complied with the provisions of the Act relating to residence in the Commonwealth, etc., he is required to make the order at once. It is proposed in the Bill to give the magistrate the discretion to make the order forthwith or to delay it for a period not exceeding one month.

I am informed that on occasions when making such an order the magistrate has asked the legal representatives of the

owner to delay applying for a warrant to consummate the order, so that the tenant might have the opportunity of further time to find accommodation or of completing the building of his own home, etc. In a minority of cases the lawyers would not agree, and it is felt that it would not jeopardise the interests of owners to allow the magistrate a discretionary period of not more than one month. If he thinks the circumstances warrant it, he can delay the issue of the order for any suitable period up to one month.

It will be noticed on reference to the Bill that the court may take into consideration the question of "hardship" where the court action is concerned with "business premises." This does not apply in respect of a "dwelling-house." Summarised, therefore, it is proposed that where an owner with the qualifications mentioned establishes to the satisfaction of the court that he reasonably needs his dwelling-house, the court will make the necessary order. Where the owner reasonably needs "business premises," he must likewise establish his case, but the court may take "hardship" into consideration and may suspend the order for such time not exceeding 12 months, as the court considers is reasonable.

Another important proposal is that dealing with the question of "shared accommodation." Last session an attempt was made to rectify a defect in this connection. As a result of a decision by the Full Court, the rent inspector's right to determine rent in respect of shared accommodation was challengeable in many instances. The Chief Justice had expressed the opinion that there could be no sharing of accommodation between a landlord and a tenant even though the tenant shared with the landlord the use of rooms such as kitchen or living room, as the landlord in all such cases retained many rights over rooms not shared with the tenant. In effect, this meant that notwithstanding that a flat formed part of other premises and that the occupants of the flat used part of these premises in conjunction with occupants of other flats, it was still a residence complete in itself and so the rent inspector was unable to determine the rent of flats.

This affected the rent inspector's jurisdiction to a serious degree, so much so that Parliament agreed to rectify the position by an amendment to the definition of "shared accommodation" and to validate his previous decisions. It now seems that these provisions did not go far enough, and that the doubts existing last year still remain. As a consequence, it is proposed by this Bill to re-amend the definition of "shared accommodation." It makes it clear that "shared accommodation" includes a room or suite of rooms whether described as a flat or otherwise,

leased or intended to be leased, with or without goods, for the purpose of residence, and forming part of other premises, but does not include either a semi-detached dwelling-house or any dwelling in a terrace or group of dwelling-houses, joined together by parting walls, where each of the dwelling-houses has a curtilage and where the tenant has exclusive possession of the dwelling-house and the curtilage. The word "curtilage" means such portion of the piece or parcel of land upon which the premises are built as forms the yard or garden of the premises. If this is agreed to, there should then be no doubt as to what is "shared accommodation" and what is not. Whilst dealing with this particular subject, I would refer to another clause in the Bill.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The Act deals with the relationship of lessor and lessee under a lease, and the term "lease" as defined in the Act has a very wide application. One of the essential characteristics of a lease is that the tenant has exclusive right to the occupancy of the premises. In normal times, premises are occupied by an agreement in the form of a lease, but there are other ways by which an occupancy can be given, namely, by an agreement of leave or license. As the Act deals with "leases," it follows that an agreement in other forms such as by leave or license is outside its provisions. This was made very clear in the Full Court's decision last year, despite the provisions of Section 18D prohibiting contracts to evade the operations of the Act.

The court's decision left the way wide open for wholesale evasions of the Act. Not only was this so in respect of "shared accommodation," but the whole protection given by the Act against increase of rents and evictions has also been affected. Remedial measures are therefore being taken by the Bill to bring these forms of agreement within the scope of the Act and, for this purpose, the definition clause is adequately amended. A glance at Clause 7 of the Bill will reveal that it is proposed that the eviction provisions of the Act shall not apply to a lessee who has given leave or licence to some person for the temporary, occasional or casual use of the premises. This is to cover leave given for the delivery of goods or other things to premises, for medical treatment and other matters. Provision is also made that the Governor, by Order-in-Council, may exclude other transactions which may come under notice from time to time.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Has the Government any leave or license in mind which might be affected by Order-in-Council as not coming under the Act?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Not at the moment, but we are proposing this power in case circumstances of that nature

should arise. Turning now to the next proposal, the Act provides that the lessor of "shared accommodation," who personally occupies portion of such accommodation, may give to the lessee thereof—

- (i) where the lessee is unmarried—two months' notice; or
- (ii) where the lessee is married—six months' notice

to terminate the lease. When this provision was placed in the Act last year, the intention was to provide for the lessor who had permitted the sharing of his house by one tenant. It has, however, had a far-reaching effect. It has been found that owners of premises who, as a business, let out parts of the premises, such as those conducting apartment houses and the like, have given notice under this provision to all tenants to quit. When the tenancies are terminated, the premises have not been let by way of lease, but occupancy has been permitted by leave or license. The threat of eviction is also used as a means to obtain a higher rent.

Hon. H. K. Watson: In what way, if the rent was fixed?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Cases have arisen where the tenant of an apartment house was paying a certain amount and was given the option of paying a higher rent or getting out.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Contrary to the provisions of the Act?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I think that was permissible under the existing Act.

Hon. H. K. Watson: The rent had to be fixed by a rent inspector or by the court.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: But the lodger was often afraid to appeal to the court because he could remain in occupation by paying the rent and the owner still had power to evict him. There was a case where the person who let the premises was fined because she demanded a higher rent than the fair rent inspector would have submitted. I believe that the amendments have been included to cover cases such as that one. It is, therefore, proposed by the Bill that this section shall apply only in cases where a portion of the shared accommodation is occupied by the lessor and all or part of the remaining portion of that accommodation is let to not more than one tenant. There is a consequential provision staying all notices given of the nature to which I have referred and which have not been pursued to the extent of terminating the tenancy.

An amendment submitted in another place and agreed to by the Minister in charge of the Bill is designed to permit a rent inspector, with the approval of the Minister, to determine the fair rent of any shared accommodation, even though the inspector has not received

any request to do so from either lessee or lessor. I understand that the Rents Office is aware of cases where landlords are charging excessive rents, but where tenants are loth to enlist the services of the rent inspector through fear of retaliatory action by landlords. It is thought that this amendment will have the effect of making this type of landlord hesitant to charge exorbitant rents, and that it will have no effect on the reasonable landlord, as there will be no necessity for the inspector to seek the Minister's permission to take action, if there were no grounds to do so.

By last year's amendment, provision was made in the Act that premises let after the 31st December, 1950, are not subject to eviction proceedings. I understand that this relates to cases that have actually occurred. In any event, it is intended to make the provisions of the Act clearer and less liable to be misunderstood. It was intended that this should relate to premises first let after that date, but it has been found that advantage is being taken of the section to remove old tenancies for re-letting to the same tenants on different terms. Provision is made in the Bill to ensure that the section relates only to premises first let after the 31st December, 1950.

There is also provision for higher penalties. Cases have come under notice which indicate that the penalties are not substantial enough to preclude certain persons from committing breaches of the Act. The Bill, therefore, sets out that penalties shall be increased to a maximum of £500, a minimum, irreducible in litigation, of £100 and, for secondary offences, pecuniary penalties plus imprisonment for a maximum of six months. It further states that the penalties, as well as being punitive, shall be such as to ensure that the offender derives no benefit from the offence. Subsection (4) of Section 15A. of the Act provides for a penalty of £500 where an owner, on recovery of his premises for his own use or that of his family, leases or sells the property within 12 months, without the consent of the court.

The Bill proposes that, notwithstanding anything contained in the Justices Act, action may, with the approval of the Attorney General, be taken at any time against any person contravening this provision. The sponsor of this amendment quoted in another place the case of an owner who obtained an order of eviction and then sold the premises. For various reasons, action against the offender was not taken within the statutory period of six months, and he escaped any penalty. The amendment will provide that action may be taken at any time subsequent to an offence of this nature, provided the approval of the Attorney General is obtained.

The only other important proposal in the Bill is that which seeks to continue the operation of the Act for a further period of 12 months to the 31st December, 1952. In the main, this is a Committee Bill, and as such I anticipate considerable discussion at that stage. I should like to point out that the principal Act has not been consolidated since the reprint of 1949, and that therefore it may take members some little time to read the amendments into the Act. I therefore propose to allow members as much time as is reasonable for them to peruse the Bill and fully understand its implications. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham, debate adjourned.

BILL—FEEDING STUFFS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 12th September of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—AGRICULTURE PROTECTION BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 12th September.

HON. J. McI. THOMSON (South) [7.46]: I listened with much interest to the Minister for Agriculture introduce the Bill last Wednesday evening, particularly when he spoke on the part dealing with the destruction of rabbits. We must all realise the serious menace confronting our primary producing industries because of rabbits. One has only to traverse the agricultural areas to appreciate fully the loss incurred each year by their depredations. It was only last week that I travelled approximately 1,000 miles in my electorate, and during that time I saw the destruction caused to crops and feed by rabbits, and was able to realise the damage they do.

I am convinced that the spreading of myxomatosis will effectively control the pest and, in time, completely exterminate it. The disease can be spread by various methods, and the one that is generally known is by means of the mosquito. Another, which is known to some of us, if not all, is by inoculation of the myxomatosis virus. This can be carried out with the aid of an ordinary hypodermic syringe.

From what has appeared in the Press from time to time, and reports of various conferences, it appears that much valuable time has been lost because we have not yet grappled with the problem.

This matter is in its initial or experimental stages, but I do feel that because of the tremendous number of rabbits, particularly young ones, in our country areas, a lot of time has already been lost. It would be beneficial to the primary producers if the virus were distributed to every farmer in the rabbit-infested areas.

The Minister for Agriculture: We hope that will be done in due course, but we still have a lot to learn.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I am pleased to hear the Minister say that will be done, and, I hope, in the not too distant future. The injecting of the myxomatosis virus is a simple matter. The ampoules containing the virus are, I understand, manufactured by the Commonwealth Serum Laboratory.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is so.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I would like the virus to be manufactured in this State. I understand that in South Australia, the Government veterinary science laboratory has installed a plant to produce myxomatosis virus, which is easily transportable by any method after it is frozen. Because it is dry-frozen, it does not lose its value during transport. I hope that every effort will be made to see that the virus is sent to the farmers so that they can deal with the pest on the spot. I am satisfied that our primary producers would use the virus, in co-operation with the Vermin Board, whose officers, no doubt, would gain experience from the areas dealt with by that method. When we realise the loss to the primary industries, I do not think we need consider the benefits derived by those who sell rabbit skins, and rabbit meat for human consumption. I would sooner see the total extermination of rabbits, for the benefit of the wool and wheat industries, than see the other people gain at their expense.

The Minister for Agriculture: Some people do not want to see the rabbit exterminated.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I know there are many. We will be proceeding with the infection of the disease by means of mosquitoes, and I venture to say that very few people will be buying rabbits then, because even though the areas affected will be wide apart, I am satisfied that the people, generally, would become dubious about any rabbits they purchased. Even though no harm could come to a human being from an infected rabbit, the doubt to which I have referred would prevail, and, I am sure, would seriously affect the industry. However, I consider that every means should be taken to assist the farmer in this direction. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [7.55]: Unfortunately I was not present when the Minister moved the second reading of the Bill, but from a perusal of the newspaper report of what he said, I would say the intention is to alter the Act in two parts, the first being, not to amend the constitution of the board, but to make some alteration with regard to its chairmanship. The board consists of nine members, and by the amendment at least three of them, and possibly a fourth, will be able to act as chairman. If the three who are designated are absent, one of the others can be appointed to the position. So, out of a committee of nine, there are four who can step into the breach. If it ever came about that the three gentlemen—the Government Entomologist, the Vermin Control Officer, and the fauna control man—happened to be away at the one time, it would be better to cancel the meeting until at least one was present, rather than just select one of the remaining members to act as chairman.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Why?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Because these three men are probably the ones to give the expert advice.

Hon. E. M. Davies: I admit that, but surely the other members of the board would know something.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Probably, but these three men are elected for a purpose.

The Minister for Agriculture: The farmers would have a good time then.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Yes, they would. The other amendment, which seeks to alter paragraph (d) of Section 8 has rather a double meaning. It will give more control over the trapping or catching of rabbits by other means. I presume the Minister has in mind that the people who make a living from trapping rabbits will be controlled and, too, that the intention is to prevent farmers from taking rabbits affected by the disease into other areas.

The Minister for Agriculture: So long as they do not interfere with the operations of the officers, it would be all right. I was rather badly reported on that.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I hope that is so, because it appears to me from certain statements made that either the Minister or the department is being half-hearted in the attempt to get this thing going. For the Minister's information I shall read what was reported in the "Daily News" of Thursday, the 13th September—

Rabbit carcass wholesalers and exporters today expressed alarm at a proposed ban on rabbit catching in myxomatosis areas, but Agricultural Minister G. B. Wood gave a reporter an assurance that the disease area would not be widespread.

The Minister for Agriculture: It would not be, for a start.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If we are going to attempt to get rid of rabbits in this State, we must not try in a half-hearted way. If we want the myxomatosis virus to function we must do the job correctly and spread it as far and as wide as possible with every means at our disposal. If we pass the amendment, and it is intended to stop the moving of rabbits from an affected area to one not affected, we will be putting something on the statute book that we cannot control or police.

Hon. H. L. Roche: We would possibly put the departmental officers on to that job instead of spreading the disease.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It is of no use putting something on the statute book that we cannot control. The trapper is to be prevented from taking rabbits from a particular area. That will have to be made much clearer before it can go through. It seems, and naturally so, that a certain amount of pressure has been brought to bear by the rabbit trappers who are today making a living out of rabbits. The report in the newspaper also has this to say—

A leading rabbit exporter said that the myxomatosis method of rabbit extermination was a "foolish" move by the Government. "Though the virus will be introduced to selected areas, it will spread fast all over the State," he said.

I hope he is right, and that it will spread fast all over the State.

The Minister for Agriculture: You do not think that these people influenced either me or the Agriculture Protection Board, do you?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: No. I said it seems to me that there is a certain amount of pressure being brought to bear. This is not new. The very fact that we have myxomatosis in Australia today is due to Dr. McNamara. We have to thank her for her persistent efforts to introduce the disease. It is through her battling that the C.S.I.R.O. is producing the virus today. The primary producers of Western Australia and Australia as a whole should give her much of the credit that is due for the fact that we are using myxomatosis virus today. It might be as well to remind those gentleman who today earn their living by catching rabbits and putting them on the market, that although that industry was worth something like £7,000,000 to Australia last year, the primary producers lost approximately £20,000,000 because of the existence of rabbits.

The Minister for Agriculture: More than that.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Probably it would be more than that, but I am giving a conservative estimate. We could very well pay the men engaged in the rabbit-catching industry £15 a week for life and pension them off. We would be better off doing that than being pestered with rabbits.

Hon. E. M. Davies: How would you get into that industry?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The hon. member is apparently thinking of joining the rabbit trappers.

Hon. H. L. Roche: He does not look the part.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The point I want to make is that if we can get rid of the rabbits and put sheep and cattle in their places, we will then have stock that we can certainly handle. At a conservative estimate, we could handle at least another 3,000,000 sheep in this State and a large number of cattle as well. Those sheep and cattle would be easy to keep under control by way of fences and we would not be losing anything because of the rabbit pest. Rabbits also seriously affect our fodder crops such as wheat, oats, barley, lupins and sub. clover. The rabbits particularly like those crops. From one end of the State to the other rabbits are affecting crops, and something must be done to prevent them. I believe somebody interjected the other evening and mentioned the cruelty angle of the use of virus.

Hon. G. Fraser: Would the virus be more cruel than the trap?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: But I want to ask the hon. member, has he taken into account the mental anguish of the producers? Ever since the rabbits have been in this country farmers have had to watch their crops being eaten away; watching their hard-earned profits diminishing. Just how much the producers have lost, because of rabbits, over the last 20 years cannot be assessed. I know because I am one who has gone through the experience, and I can tell members that it is most heartbreaking. Just how much it costs each producer in this State in his endeavours to get rid of rabbits, I do not know. But it must be a colossal sum, and each year he finds that he still has as many rabbits as he had before.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Generally more.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: So I hope that the 14 odd depots, which the Department of Agriculture is setting up throughout the State, will function almost immediately and in the words of the trapper, the disease "will spread throughout the State." I hope the Minister will give more consideration to the fact that it is not much good altering the Act to try to stop farmers from taking rabbits from one area to the other. It will not work. If the Act is so amended it will mean that these farmers will be breaking the law, and it will be a law

that will be impossible to control. I will not be a party to putting something on the statute book that we cannot police. Apart from that there is nothing wrong with the Bill, and if the Minister will give me an assurance that he will not try to stop farmers from taking rabbits from one area to another, I will support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Henning, debate adjourned.

BILL—PETROLEUM ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [8.5] in moving the second reading said: The activities that would commence as a result of the approval of this Bill by Parliament may be a milestone in the economic and industrial progress of Western Australia. The measure is introduced following discussions that have taken place between the Government and representatives of Ampol Petroleum Ltd., of Sydney, and the California Texas Corporation of New York. I have no doubt members are aware that the Ampol Coy. has for several years held titles to explore for petroleum in the north and north-west areas of this State. During this time the company has conducted exhaustive aerial and geological surveys employing in the work some of the most prominent oil geologists of the United States.

In its operations the Ampol concern has received the utmost collaboration of both the State and Federal Governments. The expense incurred by the company in this work has been very high, but it has been revealed that the sinking is warranted of a deep bore-hole to test the stratas. The Ampol organisation has submitted all information it has gained to the California Texas Corporation. This information has been checked by the corporation's experts who, towards the end of last year, made an examination of the areas. In April last, several directors flew from the United States to inspect the areas and to meet Government and departmental representatives. As a result of these discussions, California Texas has indicated that it is prepared to co-operate with Ampol in the sinking of a bore-hole, at an estimated cost of £1,500,000, to test the country at depth, on condition that certain amendments are made to the State Petroleum Act.

The California Texas Corporation is one of the very influential American oil organisations with world-wide ramifications and a highly trained technical staff. Its petrol distributing organisation in Australia is Caltex. In the main these amendments are of a minor nature. They are the result of long experience gained from the search for oil in other countries, and they are intended to give the operators the pro-

tection warranted by the huge expenditure involved. The company's representatives explained that while their principals were entirely satisfied that the administration of mining laws in Western Australia was sympathetic and reasonable they had, in view of the large amount of capital to be risked and the valuable technical assistance they were able to provide, thought their shareholders would require assurance that they were protected against any possibility of fiascos such as had occurred in Mexico and Persia.

For a long time, expert opinion has been that certain areas in Queensland and Western Australia offer the best oil prospects in Australia. However, the Shell Company, which for years has been carrying out investigations in Queensland, recently decided finally to cease operations in view of unsatisfactory drilling results. Because of the promising nature of the results of the geological, aerial and other work undertaken in the North-West basin to date, the Government is most anxious to have an experienced organisation now test the area by deep drilling. It is considered fortunate that such a prominent oil company as California Texas is prepared to join with Ampol in undertaking this work. The promising geological reports do not, of course, mean that oil does exist and in view of the Queensland drilling results, we cannot be unduly optimistic. The entry of California Texas will, however, ensure the use by experienced operators of the most modern plant and methods to ascertain if oil is there and this is what we want.

Unless the Bill is passed in its present form, which I have indicated is the desire of the companies concerned, these concerns will hesitate to venture the large sums of money at stake, particularly in view of the Queensland experience. If the Bill is passed as drafted, it is expected that the companies will commence operations with the minimum delay. The Government has given the utmost consideration to the proposed amendments and considers that they are warranted. It therefore asks for the early and sympathetic passage of the Bill through Parliament, so that the intensive search for oil in Western Australia can proceed. It is hardly necessary for me to remind members of the great advantages that would accrue to this State, and to Australia, both from the economic and defence angle, should oil in quantity be discovered. By agreeing to the amendments asked for by the operators, we will ensure the complete and efficient investigation of this possible oil-bearing area.

A few words on the genesis of oil may be of interest to members. Oil is considered to be the result of the absorption, several millions of years ago, of the energy of the sun by plant and animal life. As

this vegetation and life die the course of centuries covered the remains with mud, silt and sand until finally they became part of the deposits far below the surface of the earth. Seas which washed over these lands dried up or were drained into valleys or rivers as the surface of the earth shifted and settled. During this process the buried organic material was gradually converted by heat, pressure and bacterial agency to a liquid state. The primary requirements for the accumulation of oil may be summarised as a thick series of marine sedimentary rocks, including rocks rich in organic material in which the oil has originated, porous rocks such as sandstones to store the oil and impervious rocks such as shales covering the porous rocks to prevent the escape of oil. Finally, the rocks must contain suitable structures such as anticlines—earth folds uplifted in the form of an arch—in which the oil may be concentrated. The most encouraging areas in Western Australia are the North-West basin, which includes the Ampol holdings, and the desert basin in which are situated the Freney holdings.

Incidentally, the dependence of the British Commonwealth on foreign sources of oil today is painfully evident, when it is realised that oil production from Empire countries last year was 11,605,000 metric tons—less by 5,000,000 tons than the oil needs of the United Kingdom alone. The main Empire producers were British Borneo, 4,000,000 tons, Canada 3,600,000 tons and Trinidad 3,100,000 tons. Australian production amounted to a few hundred tons from the Lake Entrance field, about 200 miles east of Melbourne.

In order to facilitate the understanding by members of the Bill, I would mention that the parent Act provides for three stages in the search for petroleum, these being—

1. The preliminary title of "a permit to explore" which provides for large areas to be examined by qualified geologists. When the geological work shows that any part or parts of the area granted under the permit warrant more detailed observation and test drilling, then—

2. "Licenses to prospect" of such smaller areas are granted to the permit holder. In the event of these more detailed operations proving the existence of petroleum, then—

3. Petroleum leases for the production of oil can be obtained.

Turning to the Bill itself, the first amendment relates to Section 14 of the Act, which states that all helium discovered on a petroleum lease by a lessee shall be the property of the Crown and shall be reported at once to the Minister. Helium is a lighter-than-air gas, once highly strategic because it was used very considerably for the inflation of balloons and

dirigibles. It has today other uses in medicine and metallurgy. It is still strategic and very rare, and it is desirable therefore that its discovery should be immediately reported and that it should remain the property of the Crown. This is provided in the Bill. In addition the amendment proposes that in the event of the Crown deciding to develop any deposit of helium the licensee or lessee shall be suitably reimbursed for any expenditure he has incurred in discovering the deposit; also that the licensee or lessee shall be given the opportunity of undertaking the development and recovery of the helium.

It is provided, too, that any dispute in regard to the amount of reimbursement, or manner of development or recovery shall be determined under the provisions of the Arbitration Act. These provisions are considered advisable in the event of helium being discovered during drilling operations and before oil is located. If it is decided to develop the discovery of helium this might delay the search for oil, and the licensee or lessee should be given the option of continuing with his oil search or of developing the helium discovery.

I might add that expert opinion states that the prospects of discovering helium are most remote. It is therefore very doubtful whether the amendment will ever be necessary, but it is wise to be prepared. The second amendment deals with Section 38, which details the duties required of a person holding a permit to explore for oil. The amendment alters the method of furnishing quarterly reports of the permit holder's activities to the Minister. At present the holder is required to submit these reports not later than 10 days after the end of the quarter, together with full geological maps showing his activities during the quarter.

For a number of reasons it is difficult to submit the reports and particularly the maps within the period specified, and so the Bill proposes to extend the period for the reports to 30 days, and to allow the maps to be forwarded within a reasonable time. The permit holder is also required, under the Act, to carry out satisfactory survey operations continuously during the currency of his permit. At the request of the operators the word "continuously" has been eliminated, it not being possible always to operate continuously, particularly in isolated areas where replacements in men and gear may be difficult. The amendment also provides for an alteration to Subsection (2) of Section 38 by providing for the lodging of more specific information in regard to proposed drilling operations, and by deleting the requirements to preserve intact a specific percentage of bore core.

Modern oil drilling practice does not now provide for a high percentage of all bores being obtained, as some stratas are reasonably well known and valueless, and the taking of cores would be an un-

necessary expense. The experienced oil drillers of this day take only such cores as they know are essential. The amendments in Clause 5 refer to Section 39 of the Act which specifies that the Minister may, by notice in writing, direct a permit holder to conduct further operations.

This is considered by the operators to be too harsh, and it is thought that their objection is well sustained. The amendment provides, therefore, that any notice by the Minister to conduct these operations shall be such as may be reasonably required of the holder, having regard to the circumstances and to recognised oil-field practice. The next amendment, that in Clause 6, removes the provision in Section 41 that enables the Minister to summarily cancel any permit to explore by reason of any breach of the Act or regulations by the permit holder.

The Bill proposes that such action shall not be taken unless the offence continues for 90 days after the permit holder has been warned to correct his breach. Clause 7 contains four small amendments to Section 49 of the principal Act, the first two of these being clarifications of wording. The third requires the submission by the holder of a license to prospect of a monthly written report of his activities, and the fourth provides that instead of the Minister instructing the license holder what drilling technique and what material shall be used, the equipment, materials and technique shall be in conformity with recognised oilfield practice. These are all considered reasonable requirements by both the Government and the operators.

The next amendment, that in Clause 8, provides for the repeal of Section 50 of the parent Act. This section arms the Minister with power to summarily stop or suspend the operations of any licensee to prospect, or to direct the licensee to carry out his operations in a certain manner. The search for oil today is of so complex and arduous a nature that it can be carried out only by an efficient and experienced organisation with very large capital. Such organisations will not venture their capital, particularly in countries like Western Australia, where oil prospects are uncertain, unless they can be assured of considerable freedom of action.

It must be realised, too, that the men who will be carrying out the operations are experts, whose sole work is that of oil search, and that their experience and knowledge of this work is naturally greater than that of the Government's officers. Clause 9 deletes the provision in Section 54 enabling the Minister to summarily cancel a license to prospect because of a breach of the license. The amendment proposes that the holder shall be given 90 days' notice that if the

breach continues his license will be cancelled. This amendment is similar to an earlier one which referred to permits to explore.

Only minor improvements are included in the next amendment to alter the wording of Section 55 which deals with the granting of petroleum leases. Clause 11 contains a series of more important amendments, these affecting Section 63, which sets out the conditions under which petroleum leases are granted, and the covenants to be entered into by the lessee. This section provides that all petroleum leases shall include a reservation that other types of mining may be authorised on the lease. The Bill proposes to protect the petroleum operators by specifying that these other operations shall not interfere, encroach upon or endanger the petroleum work. The provision is deleted that the lessee shall enter into a covenant to work his lease in accordance with the regulations and to the satisfaction of the Minister.

The Bill proposes that leases shall be worked in accordance with recognised oil-field practice and in compliance with the regulations. As I explained earlier, this is a wise provision as the experience and knowledge of specialist oil operators is greater than that of the Government's officers. It is proposed also to delete the present provision requiring the lessee to refine in the State or in some other part of Australia approved by the Minister such of the petroleum produced as is required for consumption in Australia and to substitute another which will provide the lessee with the option of refining, causing to be refined, or offering for sale for refining in this State or elsewhere in Australia, such of the petroleum as is required for consumption in Australia.

This matter was discussed exhaustively with the Ampol and California Texas representatives who submitted that while they were prepared to give full consideration to the claims of Western Australia to have refinery facilities established here, any refining considerations had to rest first of all upon the discovery of oil, its volume and quality. They pointed out that some oils do not need refining being quite suitable in their crude state as diesel oils or under boiler fuels. Others presented such difficulties in the refining process that the economic consideration rendered refining impracticable. Such oils were generally used for road work. These, however, are exceptions.

The main point, it was pointed out, was that a refinery had of necessity to be adapted to the product it was called upon to handle which could not be determined until oil was actually located. The establishment of refining facilities was a very large undertaking and would require considerable time before it could be brought into operation and in the meantime it was of first importance that the oil should be

refined at some existing refinery, preferably conveniently situated to meet the exigencies of transport and consumption requirements. A memorandum, under date the 3rd May and signed by Mr. E. M. Butterworth, was given to the Government by the representative of the California Texas Corporation who conducted the final negotiations in Perth, setting out clearly the considerations governing establishment of a refining plant will be of interest to members, and is as follows:—

The proper selection of refinery sites and the decision to provide for erection of a refinery is and should be based on the weighing of a great variety of factors, most of which cannot be evaluated at the time exploratory drilling is initiated in an area remote from existing refining facilities. These factors include, among others, the following:—

1. The quantity and quality of the oil reserves that may be established.

(a) In the extreme case, the character of the oil may not be such as to require or justify refining. Two examples may be cited—

(i) the oil from the Tarakan field in the East Indies is suitable for under-boiler use without refining and its use for such purpose has been found for many years to be its most economic application;

(ii) the recently discovered Boscan field of Western Venezuela has a substantial yield of very heavy tarry oil which could not under existing conditions be sold for normal refining, but has proved of considerable value for road oil and related applications.

(b) Quantities and qualities may be such as to be of commercial value only if no new refinery construction is required—that is, if the yield can be processed without further capital investment.

There are, of course, numerous variations of the situations as above described but it is believed those cited will serve to indicate the character of the problem.

2. The availability of existing refining facilities.—When and as discovery is made existing refineries may already be accessible for the refining of Western Australian crude oil and any new construction might be redundant. Plans for expansion of such facilities in Australia have recently been an-

nounced by one company and further construction may have taken place or commitments for such construction may have been made before the results of exploratory drilling in Western Australia have been determined.

3. Pros and cons of refining at the source of production versus area of maximum consumption.—Many cogent reasons can be advanced in the case of new discoveries (and presuming unavailability of existing refineries) for the location of such facilities at or near the oil fields, or alternatively for the construction of such facilities in or adjacent to areas of maximum consumption. Decisions are normally reached by the balancing of the various economic factors, including several of those referred to herein, and which, as stated, are for the most part determinable only after a discovery has been made. But it is a fact that during recent years there has been a marked tendency for such construction to take place in or adjacent to the points where the refined products are mainly consumed.

4. Tanker availability and costs.—Conditions in the world petroleum trade are and have been subject to wide fluctuations with resultant fluctuation in the available supply of tankers, both overall and in respect to tankers suitable for movements of crude oil as compared with refined products. Costs of shipment by tanker have likewise fluctuated widely. Developments related to the Korean war have occasioned one such recent extreme change. Possible eventualities resultant on current troubles in the Persian Gulf area also may bring material changes in the direction of the flow of the world petroleum trade and the availability of tankers. Assessment of such trends at the time a new oilfield may be discovered, could well be critical in determining the optimum refinery site, or, alternatively, as to shipping crude oil to an existing refinery.

The circumstances as set forth above are not offered as arguments against refinery construction in Western Australia—if and as oil is found here. They do indicate, we believe, the nature of the difficulty that exists in accepting a commitment for any particular site in advance of the discovery of oil, the determination of the quantities and qualities of that oil, and the assessment of the particular position that may exist at the time in world oil trade generally.

The risks inherent in any exploratory venture such as is presently contemplated are great. Should, in addition, the added risk be imposed of assuming a potential commitment calling for new refinery construction with-

in a limited area, it would be necessary to consider whether the venture falls within the range of prudent business judgment.

Members will have noticed recently a Press announcement that the Caltex Company plans to erect a £25,000,000 oil refinery in Australia, with a minimum daily capacity of 750,000 gallons. This project would ensure the refining in Australia of oil found in Western Australia. I might add that the Premier has written to the California Texas Corporation pressing the claims of this State to have the refinery erected here.

Subsequent to the discussions in Perth, a letter, under date the 15th June, 1951, was received from the Australian representative of the California Texas Corporation located in Sydney, giving an assurance that this State's claim for refining facilities would be closely considered in the event of oil being discovered in Western Australia. It reads:

We refer to the discussions which took place between the Deputy Premier, yourself and Messrs. E. M. Butterworth and C. E. Knife, representing the California Texas Corporation and Ampol Petroleum Limited respectively on 1st May, and the subsequent discussions with other Ministers on 4th May.

In the course of those discussions reference was made to the intention of our two companies to come to an agreement for the drilling, in our joint interest, of a test well on the areas now held under permits to explore by Ampol Petroleum Limited and in particular to the prerequisite desirability of certain amendments to the Petroleum Act of Western Australia.

One of the proposed amendments is considered of vital importance, and that is the amendment of Section 63 (1) (f) which deals with the refining of the petroleum produced.

The reasons for desiring amendment to the present law were explained by Messrs. Butterworth and Knife, and were further set out in Mr. Butterworth's memorandum to you dated 3rd May, 1951.

It has been suggested that this section of the Act should be amended to read—

"Section 63 (1) (f)

(f) A covenant by the lessee that, if so required by the Minister, he shall at his option refine or cause to be refined or offer for sale for refining

(i) in the State within a time to be mutually agreed between the Minister and the lessee; or

(ii) elsewhere in Australia

such of the petroleum produced from the land held by him under the petroleum lease as is required for consump-

tion in Australia provided that such requirement shall not extend to any production of petroleum of a nature which would not normally be refined."

Such revision of the Act would relieve the operating company of the present possible severely restrictive obligation regarding refining in Western Australia and would, therefore, be satisfactory to us.

In consideration of such change in the law, we are prepared to give this assurance—that not only do we not seek entirely to eliminate a Western Australian location for a refinery site, but that when and if the question arises of the construction of new refinery facilities to handle output from Western Australian production, we shall give first consideration to a location within Western Australia when weighing the economic and other factors as existing at that time.

There are three other small amendments to Section 63 which are of a protective and reasonable nature. The penultimate amendment is to Section 69 which gives the Minister or officers authorised by him the power to have access at all times to any lease or buildings or workings on the lease, and to all books and records of the lessee relating to the lease. The Bill provides that such access shall be at all "reasonable" times, and not, for instance, in the middle of the night.

The last amendment affects Section 73 in a similar manner to the previous one by ensuring that any officer appointed for that purpose by the Minister shall inspect the books and accounts of a lessee at a "reasonable" time. That concludes my explanation of the Bill. I have made it a thorough one, as, although the amendments are mostly of a minor nature, the passing of the Bill, by enabling the early commencements of operations by the companies, could have a profound effect on the economy of the State. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. C. Strickland, debate adjourned.

BILL—POULTRY INDUSTRY (TRUST FUND) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 12th September.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [8.36]: Looking at this Bill, one would say that it was quite all right. All it sets out to do is to double the amount of contribution paid into the trust fund now. I believe the trust fund was started following a suggestion I made at a deputation to the Premier four years ago, at a time when the disease laryngotracheitis caused extensive losses in poultry flocks, particularly

in the Melville district. When I made the suggestion, there were no complaints from the poultry breeders. The Act has been in operation for three years, and I have received no complaints from poultrymen about it. One can assume, therefore, that their attitude is the same as it was before the Act was passed; that is to say, they welcome it.

There is one feature, however, that exercises my mind. The Agricultural Department having had experience of the operation of the Act for three years, I suppose we can assume that in asking for only 2d. per 30 dozen eggs, the department is satisfied that amount will cover all that is necessary. When one takes a quick glance at the Act, it seems that the 1d. which has been paid up to now has been doing a very good job. I am wondering, however, whether in view of the high costs involved today, the raising of the amount to 2d. will suffice to provide for all that is needed.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am a bit with you.

Hon. G. FRASER: I wanted to know what the Minister's view was in connection with that aspect. Let me draw attention to what the fund has to cover. I shall not read the relevant section word for word but will give an idea of what it covers. Section 18 provides that the moneys in the fund shall in the first instance be charged with the payment of the costs of administration and the fees and allowances of members of the committee. They are to be the first charges on the fund. After the payment of those expenses, the section sets out that the fund may be used for the following purposes:—

(a) The payment of the whole or portion of the costs and expenses of measures taken to prevent or eradicate pests and diseases affecting poultry and the eggs thereof.

(b) The payment of compensation to producers in respect of the whole or portion of losses suffered by them as a result of measures taken to prevent or eradicate the pests and diseases aforesaid.

(c) The payment of the costs of the promotion of scientific research for the improvement of poultry and egg production and of the transport of such eggs and poultry.

(d) The provision of financial help for the association and its branches in the carrying out of its activities for the benefit of producers.

(e) Any other purposes which in the opinion of the Minister will promote and encourage the poultry industry.

That is quite a lot to be covered by the proposed 2d. per 30 dozen eggs. I would like the Minister, when replying to the debate, to give us some idea how the fund

stands at the moment. From memory, I believe that since the introduction of the Act in 1948 there have not been any diseases amongst poultry which would have necessitated calls upon the fund. Up to now, the only call made on the fund has been for the payment of the expenses of the board.

The Minister for Agriculture: And £130 for the association. That is all. They have been very modest indeed in their demands on the fund.

Hon. G. FRASER: Most of my constituents are in that category! Taking into account the fact that the only call on the fund has been in respect of the payment of fees, plus £130 paid to the association, I would like to know what is the state of the fund today. I would also be glad if the Minister would give some information as to what would be the cost if a similar disease to that which occurred in 1947 again made itself felt.

The Minister for Agriculture: I could only guess that.

Hon. G. FRASER: I would expect the Minister to base his assumption upon what it cost at that time.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The disease might be much more virulent next time.

Hon. G. FRASER: It could not be in the areas affected last time. Not a great number of poultry survived, whole flocks being wiped out.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Deliberately so.

Hon. G. FRASER: In some instances. But a number were destroyed through the disease prior to any action being taken by the department. I am concerned about the fact that anyone entering the industry and reading the Act would naturally assume that if a disease broke out, such as occurred previously, there would be some fund from which he could obtain assistance; and what assistance was obtainable would depend on the state of the fund. I am anxious to know whether the 2d. proposed would be sufficient to provide that assistance. It may be that, apart from a few odd pounds, the levy of 1d. has been sufficient to cover little more than the expenses of the operation of the fund. If that is so, the Act is useless in so far as the safeguarding sections are concerned. I would like the Minister to give us some information on that score.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Could they not draw on the Treasury, subject to a recoup?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not want the experience of drawing on the Treasury that we had during the last outbreak of disease. When we approached the Government for assistance, the Treasury was not too full. A further outbreak might occur during a similar period. When the industry is fairly prosperous, as it the case

today, a little extra contribution from the producers might safeguard them in the future. I would like the Minister, when replying, to give as much information as possible about the fund and also to give members his own personal opinion of the amount now asked for in the Bill. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. A. R. Jones, debate adjourned.

BILL—POTATO GROWING INDUSTRY TRUST FUND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 12th September of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—Central) [8.47] in moving the second reading said: This Bill contains three amendments, two of which are for the purpose of placing the loaning powers of the Rural Bank on a par with those of private trading banks while the other deletes a provision that has caused unnecessary and cumbersome procedure. Since its constitution as a trading bank under the principal Act of 1944, considerable progress has been made by the bank. The total sum that it has out on loan amounts to £9,300,000, this being made up as follows:—

	£
Agriculture	6,500,000
Manufacturing	1,300,000
Housing	550,000
Commercial	200,000
Miscellaneous ...	750,000
	<hr/>
	£9,300,000

This sum is greater than that on loan by any other bank, one reason being that it includes the loans taken over from the Agricultural Bank, and now conducted by the Government agency of the Rural Bank. These include assistance rendered under Section 24 of the Industries Assistance Act.

The activities of the bank are divided into two departments, the rural department, which conducts ordinary trading bank activities, and the Government agency department. The trading bank section has £6,072,000 out on loan and has £6,230,000 in deposits. For the period of its existence this compares quite favour-

ably with, for instance, the Bank of New South Wales, which has £8,886,000 on loan and £28,223,000 in deposits.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Does that refer to Western Australia only?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. The Rural Bank is very careful and particular in its activities and its terms are no more liberal than those of other banks. The first and second amendments in the Bill are for the purpose of enabling the bank to make loans of any nature or amount to persons who are not depositors at the bank. It is considered that the bank should have power to assist applicants who can furnish the necessary security. Many of these are worthy persons in regular employment who require loans to tide them over periods of financial difficulty, caused by sickness, etc.

In cases such as those, I understand that the bank proposes to discuss the loan with both husband and wife, a policy that has borne fruit in similar business conducted by other banks. I believe, for instance, that this type of business has proved most remunerative to the Rural Bank of New South Wales. I think it is desirable that the bank should have that power so that persons in need of the service may obtain loans at a flat interest rate of about 4½ per cent., instead of having to go to money-lenders who, I believe, are allowed to charge up to 15 per cent. for loans of that kind.

Hon. H. Hearn: Has the Rural Bank of New South Wales a special department for that kind of loan?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. Other persons, who do not possess cheque accounts, have approached the bank for loans to build homes. At present the bank has housing loans out for £500,000 and could increase this without difficulty, if it were empowered to accommodate non-depositors. That is the principal amendment and will make it possible for persons to obtain these small loans on orders against their salaries or other small security. The third and last amendment is for the purpose of repealing Section 67 of the principal Act. This section set out certain procedure that must be adopted where land, which is subject to any encumbrance in favour of the bank, is forfeited under the provisions of the Land Act or the Mining Act. Experience has shown that this procedure serves no useful purpose and requires unnecessary work of the Lands and Mines Departments, the Titles Office and the bank, all of which agree that the amendment is advisable.

I hope members have followed my explanation of the measure, the principal provision of which is, as I have said, that which will enable persons who are not depositors with the bank to obtain small loans.

Hon. H. Hearn: Even without security?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is better that people should obtain loans in this way than that they should be forced to go to "Mr. Moses". That is the first provision of the Bill, in order to give the Rural Bank the same loaning powers as private trading banks possess, while the second provision seeks to remove an unnecessary and cumbersome procedure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham, debate adjourned.

House adjourned 8.53 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 18th September, 1951.

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

CONDOLENCE—LETTER IN REPLY.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received a letter from Mr. R. B. Mitchell as follows:—

I thank you very much for the resolution you conveyed to me from the Legislative Assembly in regard to my father, the late Sir James Mitchell and for your personal expression of sympathy.

(Sgd.) R. B. Mitchell.

QUESTIONS.

BRICKS.

(a) *As to Closed Yard and Clients' Priorities.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Is he aware that a number of people who had been on the waiting list for bricks for considerable periods at Orange Grove brickyards did not have their orders filled when these yards ceased operations?

(2) Does he know that these people, upon subsequently transferring to the waiting lists of other brick manufacturers, have now to commence another entirely new waiting period?

(3) Does he not consider it reasonable that persons in the category mentioned should be placed on the lists of these other brick manufacturing concerns in accordance with date of their original applications when lodged with the now defunct company?

(4) If not, what are his intentions in the matter?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) No.

(3) The company is not defunct and at the present time is in production.

(4) See (1), (2) and (3).

(b) *As to State Works, Releases and Delivery.*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Was it the State Brick Works, the cartage contractor or the builder who made the error in delivering four loads of bricks to the site in Parker-st., East Fremantle, where Ellis and Cresswell propose building a house for F. Howard?

(2) Did Ellis and Cresswell erect their sign on the site in error?

(3) On what dates respectively, were the four loads of bricks which were delivered to the site in Parker-st., made available by the State Brick Works?

(4) Against what release were the bricks issued and what was the date of the release?

(5) Where should the bricks in question have been delivered?