

—as to whether they object to pay rates struck by the municipal council, and which will be municipal rates instead of paying rates that would have been struck by the road board.

The PREMIER: This rate ought to have been collected by the municipality while it was still in existence. The road board came into existence on the 1st January, 1919. The rate will be collected under the Municipal Corporations Act, not under the Roads Act. No objection will be offered on the part of the people concerned.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 9.2 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 7th September, 1920.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION.

The PRESIDENT [4.31]: I have to announce to hon. members that I have waited upon His Excellency the Governor and presented to him the Address-in-reply as passed by this House. His Excellency has been pleased to return to me the following answer:

Mr. President and hon. members of the Legislative Council. In the name and on behalf of His Most Gracious Majesty the King, I thank you for your Address. F. A. Newdegate, Governor.

QUESTION—PERTH. PUBLIC HOSPITAL.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW asked the Minister for Education: 1, Since when has the Perth Public Hospital ceased to be the principal

hospital for the State? 2, Are not its patients drawn from as far north as Wyndham and as far south as Esperance? 3, How many of the patients at present lying in the wards come from an area outside that of Perth and its suburbs?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Perth Public Hospital is still the principal hospital for the State. It has never ceased to be such. 2, Yes, patients at any centre, unable to receive treatment (more particularly special treatment, through lack of proper facilities) are, on application, admitted to the Perth Public Hospital. 3, At present there are in hospital, from an area outside Perth and suburbs, 57 patients, out of a total of 196.

QUESTION—BUTTER SUPPLIES.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM (for Hon. A. H. Panton) asked the Minister for Education: In view of the recent contract to supply the British Government with butter at 274s. per cwt., will he take steps to provide a sufficient supply of butter for local consumption at a reasonable price?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: The formation of a local committee to deal with this matter is receiving attention.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Harris, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. J. Cornell (South) on the ground of urgent private business.

MOTION—AUSTRALIAN APPLES, EMBARGO.

Hon. J. EWING (South West) [4.33]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House, the State and Federal Governments should take immediate steps to have the existing embargo on Australian apples removed, and that all Australian fruits should be placed in open competition on the market.

I am moving this motion after having conferred with a considerable number of fruit-growers and because I recognise that, during the period of the war and during last season, our fruitgrowers suffered great disabilities. There is no need for me to emphasise the fact that members of this House and the people of Western Australia generally desire to see the fruitgrowing industry flourish. Those who have been working in the industry have not had a fair deal during the last 18 months or two years but, on the other hand, have had a very bad time. They had to sacrifice their fruit. They sent it to market and, in many cases, the fruit did not realise what it cost to produce. In travelling through my district, I noticed that the verandahs of many houses were filled

with apples, which were used for feeding pigs and not for the purpose for which they were grown. It must be realised that, during the period I have mentioned, owing to the prohibition on apples in the Old Country, there was no market there for the producer. The freights charged were abnormal and, in fact, freights for a time were not procurable at all. London, of course, is the chief centre for the export trade. Although some apples are sent to other parts of the world, it must be recognised that London is the chief outlet for our apples. In 1913-14 we exported 103,684 cases; in 1914-15, 68,945 cases; in 1915-16, 27,702 cases; in 1916-17, 75,618 cases; in 1917-18, only 14,500 cases; in 1918-19, 75,412 cases; and in 1919-20, 199,083 cases. These figures show that during the period of the war, growers were under great disabilities and suffered in the manner I have stated. I must admit before going any further that I have found it difficult to ascertain the exact position with regard to American apples. I hope the Minister has some satisfactory information from the Agent-General. I have endeavoured to ascertain the position from fruitgrowers and the representatives of fruitgrowers, but have been unsuccessful. It is a very serious matter. In the course of my remarks on the Address-in-reply, I stated that I thought America had been permitted to send her fruit to London in open competition, and that her growers received full value for their fruit. I have not been able to establish that as a fact, but I hope the Minister will be able to tell me whether it is so. It is rather a curious thing that in London the maximum price was fixed for fruit. Unlike the arrangement in the case of wool and wheat where anything over the maximum price was distributed amongst the producers, the fruitgrower has found that he was unable to obtain anything over and above the £1 0s. 10d. per case fixed during last season. If a particular shipment reached London, and there happened to be competition at the time, the price of £1 0s. 10d. was not even guaranteed. Our growers had to take what they could get in the open market, but they could never obtain more than £1 0s. 10d. That has proved a very serious position, and it has not given our growers any chance whatever. The price of £1 0s. 10d. was for a 42lb. case of apples. The price for a 37lb. case was 19s. 3d. I think it necessary to place on record a few of the costs to the growers of fruit in this State, showing what it costs them in the orchard, for transport, for cool storage, and for placing their apples on the London market. If those figures are analysed, it will be recognised that there is very little profit left for the grower, and certainly not sufficient for our growers. These figures are not my own. I have not sufficient knowledge of the work in orchards to prepare figures relating to the cost of production. They have come to me from a most reliable source and this, I am sure, will

be recognised when I have read them. The cost of production working on a three-case average per tree is as follows:—spraying 2d., pruning 2d., manure 2d., ploughing 1d., picking and carting 3d., packing 4d., paper and strawboards or woodwool 8d., case 1s., branding and making 2d., supervision and sundries 4d.; total 3s. 4d. per case. That might be considered to be the orchard cost. Then we have cartage ex orchard to rail 4d., railage to cool store 5d., cool storage average of four weeks 9d., haulage ex store to boat and handling charges to wharf shed 2½d., freight at 7s. 3d. plus 5 per cent. plus 5 per cent. 8s., insurance and incidental shipping charges 4¼d., agency 6d.; total 10s. 6½d. To this must be added London charges, namely, commission and landing charges 2s. 1½d., which brings the total cost per case to 16s. If growers received only £1 0s. 10d. per case for their fruit, it is quite apparent that the profit to the grower would be 4s. 10d. Going a little further the charges on 100 cases, as above, work out in this way: Cost of production £16 13s. 4d., cartage ex orchard £1 13s. 4d., railage to cool store £2 1s. 8d., cool storage £3 15s., haulage ex store to boat and handling charges to wharf shed 48s. 9d., freight £39 19s. 4d., insurance, marine and incidental shipping charges £1 15s. 5d., agency £2 10s., London charges £10 12s. 6d.; total £79 19s. 4d. It will be seen that, if in a normal export season 200,000 cases were exported at the above rates ruling, the sum involved would amount to £160,000. That is the actual cost and it would mean to the producer something like £48,000 profit which, on 200,000 cases, would average something like 4s. 2d. per case. The profit is certainly under 5s. a case, and the maximum price only has been fixed. If the London market was a good one and if apples were selling at £2 or £3 a case, which would not be unusual, the grower here would not benefit in any way. During the currency of the war, the importation of apples into England was prohibited, but later on through the agency no doubt of the different Governments, the Food Controller decided that apples should be admitted as food. The object of the Food Controller was to protect the London consumer. I understand that the London consumer is supposed to get these apples from the retailer at about 3s. a case advance on the £1 0s. 10d. If that had been the case, it would have been very satisfactory—

The Minister for Education: From the retailer?

Hon. J. EWING: The merchants purchased the apples at £1 0s. 10d. That was the maximum price. If there was a glut of apples on the market, they might get them for 15s. a case or whatever price was ruling. That is the iniquitous part of the whole business: There is no guarantee that our growers will receive £1 0s. 10d. as a

minimum price for their fruit. The price of £1 0s. 10d. is the maximum they can get. If there is a glut of apples, growers have to take a reduced price. From information I have gained, it seems that these apples are sold to the retailers at £1 0s. 10d. per case and the retailers put them up in boxes or baskets containing just a few apples, and in this way get up to £4 a case for them. Therefore the object which the controller of food in Britain had in view is not attained. The people are not securing the apples at a reduced price. The retailer and the merchant every time are making profits which should certainly go to the orchardist. This morning's newspaper states something that might make people doubt the necessity for this motion—the fact that a Mt. Barker fruit grower secured up to five guineas per case in London for his apples. But the explanation of that is that the list is not on at the present time, and therefore the few apples that may get to the old country just at present have this wonderful market of up to five guineas per case. Being myself astonished at the statement, I made inquiries and found that apples are not listed yet. It is well known to the Minister that on the 14th November of this year the embargo goes on again. That embargo is one which places the maximum selling price of a 37lb. case of apples at £1 1s. 6d., and of a 42lb. case at £1 3s. 6d. One would think there is an advantage to the fruit grower in this, but if one analyses the position and realises the extra freight and handling charges, together with the increased price of cases, one must acknowledge that the grower is probably not going to get even 20s. 10d. this year. The middleman and the shipper will scoop the pool, as usual. The position is very serious, and my object in moving this motion is to induce the State Government to put pressure, through the Commonwealth authorities, on the Imperial authorities, so that the injustice under which our orchardists are to-day labouring may be removed. The cost of landing the fruit in the old country is considerably more than two-thirds of what it realises on the market, and thus considerably less than one-third is returned to the producer here. During the currency of the war all these things were looked upon with equanimity by the people generally and also by the orchardist, who was satisfied to take his loss and to make the sacrifices demanded of him. But I do not think any hon. member can point to any other industry now labouring under such disabilities as the fruit-growing industry. Enormous profits have been made during the war by the wool grower, and considerable profits made by the producers of wheat, all of whom have been getting an increase of price over and above the guaranteed price; and let me point out that the guaranteed prices for wool and wheat were very unlike that incidental to the embargo on apples. It has been stated

in the Press that something like 13 millions of money have been returned to the wool growers of Australia over and above the guaranteed price of 1s. 3d. per pound. The growers had the advantage of sending their produce to the best market during the war. The fruit grower had no such advantage. Even now that the war is over and things are settling down, advantages are going to the grower of wheat and to the grower of wool. Therefore we should endeavour to do something for the fruit grower. I maintain that the producers are entitled to the full result of their labour now, and we should make every endeavour, through this Parliament, to secure it to them. I know the Minister and the Government are in sympathy with me in this matter. It may be said, as was said to me to-day in the city, "What is the use of bothering? You cannot do anything in the State Parliament. It is a question for the Imperial Government." But the Imperial Government will continue just as they are doing to-day, unless the matter is brought to their notice by all the producers of apples in Australia. If we make a move in this direction, possibly other Parliaments will move, with the result that the necessity for rectifying the position before the 14th November will be impressed upon the Imperial Government. I hope the Minister will be able to give us some information regarding American fruit. I do not suppose apples go from America to England at the same season of the year as ours do. But from information I have gathered, and from what I have learned in the course of conversation, I understand that the American fruit has been obtaining its full price in London. The reason given to me for this position of affairs is that when the people of the United Kingdom wanted fruit as a food they desired to obtain it from America, and the embargo applied to the United States and to Canada as well as to Australia. However, the United States refused to send their fruit to Britain unless the embargo was lifted. Thereupon the embargo was promptly lifted, and American fruit brought big prices in London. I hope hon. members will give this motion hearty and generous support. Indeed, I feel sure they will, because it has always been their desire to advance all Western Australian industries. Let us see if it is possible by moving in this direction to do something to relieve the plight of the Western Australian orchardist.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.53]: I second the motion so ably moved by Mr. Ewing. I realise that the time has arrived when we as a State should exert ourselves more especially for the benefit of the producers of Western Australia. The motion makes mention of the Federal Government, and I fully understand the necessity for obtaining the aid of the Commonwealth Parliament in this matter. The mover has pointed out that the embargo on apples fixes a price that on analysis proves to be one that leaves very little for the grower.

The position of the matter is made plain by a reference to the fact that a considerable quantity of fruit does not arrive in a saleable condition owing to depreciation resulting from the long period occupied in transit from the orchard to the place of sale. In the circumstances I do not think it is possible for any member of the Chamber to refuse his support to the motion. But I would like to point out that apples are not the only fruit we produce in Western Australia. I may remind hon. members that during the last session of Parliament I moved a motion having for its object the opening up of trade with the Malay States and Java, countries practically next door to us, countries hungering for the fruit which we are able to produce. Twenty-six members of this Chamber spoke in favour of the motion, and eventually it was carried unanimously. The resolution was sent to another Chamber for its concurrence, and that was the end of it. Since that time I have been approached by many visitors to Perth from the Malay States and from Java, each and all of them being desirous of inducing our people to ship fruit to those countries. What is the position to-day? We are encouraging our people, and more especially returned soldiers, to embark in the fruit-growing industry. They have been told that the industry is one which will return them a comfortable living. Unfortunately, however, such has not proved to be the case. As a small fruitgrower myself, I speak from experience, and I say without fear of contradiction that even men who have bought improved orchards have failed to make a fair percentage on the money they have invested, let alone make a comfortable living. This is a shocking state of affairs. We can produce oranges in Western Australia second to none in the world for quality. I do not say that we can produce oranges all over the State. Each portion of the State is specially suitable for some particular variety of fruit. A little time ago an embargo was lifted from certain lands in the Darling Ranges, adjacent to Piesse's Brook, ostensibly in order that they might be available to returned soldiers for fruit growing purposes. In view of the remarks made by the mover this afternoon it seems that we are doing absolutely wrong in advising returned soldiers to adopt fruit growing as a means of livelihood. I quite realise that fruit must deteriorate to some extent on the long journey between here and Britain, but I cannot for a moment believe that there would be so much waste if the fruit were sent from Western Australia to the countries which I have mentioned as being at our very doors, namely, the Malay States and Java. In conjunction with passing this motion, I think that we should endeavour to see that the resolution carried unanimously by this House should be revived, and that the question of trade with the Malay States and Java be again taken up. Fruit is one of our products which in itself is of sufficient importance to justify the revival of the question. I realise that the motion must commend itself

to all members. It is the duty of the State Government and of the Federal Government to exert themselves to see that our fruit gets a free market, and that the growers are thus assisted to recoup the losses they sustain by deterioration of their fruit in transit. I have much pleasure in seconding the motion.

Hon. H. STEWART (South-East) [5.0]: I support the motion. There is not much to add to what Mr. Ewing has said. Undoubtedly, as he has pointed out, the position of the orchardists since the war broke out has been worse than that of any other section of the producing community, certainly in this State. With regard to the fixed price in London during last season, there was no need to fix the price for pears, and it was arranged with the overseas shipping committee in this State that permission would be given to ship pears. On the overseas shipping committee, besides Mr. Shallard who was chairman, there were representatives of the producers, and they endeavoured to arrange for the shipment of both apples and pears. I have in mind now the Mount Barker people, represented by their freezing works company. After those people made their application for space for pears, they sent along consignments from Mt. Barker to Fremantle and to Albany, and they told the ship's officers that they had so many cases of both apples and pears. The ship's people replied that they were not taking pears and they would not be responsible for them. In some instances the pears went from Mount Barker to Fremantle and were there put in cold store until the arrival of the boat. Then they were taken from the store to the ship, where they were refused by the ship's officers. Then they were put back in the store and, later on, were carried back to the ship, and after considerable trouble, and communications having been made with Sir Owen Cox, who had the finalising of the shipping arrangements, instructions were given by that gentleman to the ship's officers that the pears had to be taken. In one instance a Mount Barker man, who probably through the tact of the secretary of the Mount Barker Cold Storage Company, got a shipment of pears direct on to a steamer. That consignment of pears reached London where they were sold without restriction of price. They fetched as much as 75s. a case. In the other instances, where the pears had been moved about from place to place and had been subjected to exposure and changes of temperature—pears which had come from the same district and were handled by the same association—the sale of those pears resulted in the shippers being out of pocket, inasmuch as they had to make up a certain amount in order to meet the various charges. On the other hand, as I have pointed out, where the shipment was put on without any unreasonable delay on the part of the shipping people, the pears, when they were sold without any limitation of price, brought two to three times as much

as the maximum fixed for apples. With regard to the Eastern trade to which Mr. Duffell has referred, I am afraid we can hardly expect to develop it to any extent until the shipping arrangements are better than those which exist at the present time. I may quote a notable example—the case of a shipment in June last by the “Gorgon.” Prior to that time, in the open markets of those countries, shipments of apples realised a net return to the growers of 15s. per case. Hon. members will agree that this is a fine result compared with the net result of the shipments to England, which is only 5s. a case. The “Gorgon” shipment of fruit arrived at its destination at a time of financial stress, and the result was that the grower received a net average return of about 1s. 7d. That is a very poor result for the grower, who has all the risk and the bulk of the labour.

Hon. J. Duffell: That is a better price than we got in the local market for oranges at the same period.

Hon. H. STEWART: That only shows the great necessity that exists to relieve us here of our surplus and in that way enable the grower to get a reasonable price on the local market, because so far as this State is concerned more fruit goes to waste here through not being marketed than would supply the people in the metropolitan-suburban area. If we can relieve the local market by getting a good price for fruit sent overseas, the grower should be able to supply the local market at more reasonable rates. Representing as I do a big fruit-growing centre, I urge the Government to do all they can to see that there is an open market established in England, and that further consideration be given to the fruit growers of Western Australia this year, so that they shall not be unfairly penalised, as was the case last season. In Western Australia the growers are compelled to make a statutory declaration, when shipping fruit, that they have so many trees of different varieties, that the produce of the orchard will be of a certain kind, etc. All that information has to be given before space is allotted. But, so far as I understand, nothing of the kind was done in any other State of the Commonwealth. That, too, shows that the time is more than ripe for this Chamber and another place to do all they can to safeguard the position of the fruit grower.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.10]: The position is as it has been stated by the mover of the motion, and there can be no question that the growers, not only in Australia, but also in Canada and probably America, are unfortunately placed. By comparison with other primary producers they are not receiving equitable treatment. As Mr. Ewing has stated, for some time the importation of apples into England was prohibited. Then it was represented that fruit was a necessary commodity and apples were admitted as such. There we have the foundation of the fixing of the maximum price.

Other fruits were not admitted at all. Pears could not be sent to England, consequently, when the embargo was removed, pears went in as a luxury—a free commodity. Apples, however, were still treated as a necessary commodity and were subject to a fixed price. In May of last year, in response to a request made by representatives of the executive of the Orchardists' Association, a cable was sent to the Agent General requesting that, in view of the heavy increase in freights and charges, the maximum price should be removed and a free market established. Alternatively, a request was made that the wholesale price be increased by at least 2s. 6d. a case to cover the extra cost of freight. The annual conference of fruit growers was held in Bunbury in May, 1919, and at their instance a further cable was sent to the Agent General. Practically the same representations as had already been made by the Government were made by the conference. On the 27th of the same month the Agent General replied stating that the Food Minister had refused to alter the apple order. The cable containing that announcement was followed by a letter setting out that the Agent General had made representations to the Minister for Food, as requested in the cable from the Government, and also from the fruit growers, and was informed that the Food Controller could not agree to any advance being made in the maximum wholesale price of apples as that would necessitate a corresponding increase in the retail price, a step which the controller was not prepared to agree to. Subsequently the Agent General forwarded to the Government a copy of a letter on this subject which he wrote to the “Daily Mail.” This was dated the 18th June and was as follows:—

In contrast to the cases of excessive profiteering referred to in your leading article on the control of the profiteer today, may I mention the hard case of the Western Australian apple growers, whose exports to this country are subject to a controlled price (wholesale) of 19s. 3d. per case of 40lbs. During the war the Australian exporters gladly surrendered their shipping so that all possible refrigerating space might be supplied and only to bring American troops, but also American beef (thereby conceding a preference over Australian beef) to this country. The loss of this refrigerating transport meant that for two seasons the apple crop was allowed to rot in Australia. Now that the growers have at last access to the British market (although still only to a limited extent), they are further penalised by the imposition of a controlled wholesale price, which, after deducting charges, allows the Western Australian growers a return on their apples of less than 2d. per lb. This practically amounts to a discrimination against the Australian producer by denying him a moderate and legitimate profit, while American and other producers are permitted to exact excessive profits.

Apparently at that time it was in the mind of the Agent General that the American fruitgrower was in a better position than the Australian. Mr. Ewing has suggested that the consumer of the fruit did not get the benefit of this fixed price, and the Agent General sets out in a more recent letter instances which do not suggest that the fixed price is evaded to some extent by retailers of the fruit. In commenting on the position the Agent General states—

The general public does not seem to get the benefit of the controlled price of 9d. per lb., as some retailers were selling apples, mixed with other kinds of fruit, put up in ornamental baskets, for which fancy prices were asked, much in excess of the real value. Furthermore, in some instances, retailers are more or less being forced to purchase other uncontrolled varieties of fruit in order to obtain a small supply of apples.

Apparently the fruit seller would not give the customer any apples unless he bought other fruits which were not controlled. If, however, he did buy other fruits which were not controlled the seller would let him have a certain quantity of apples at the controlled price of 9d. per lb. The Agent General continues—

Owing to the ramifications in the course of distribution it is difficult to judge with which branch of the trade this unsatisfactory state of affairs commences, but it is only fair to point out that the importers should be absolved from blame. Recent experience has shown beyond doubt that the withdrawal of food orders has generally resulted in the immediate soaring of prices; so much so, that in some cases these Statutory orders have had to be reinstated. In view of this condition of affairs it would be appreciated that the chance of getting the apple order amended or revoked was extremely remote. As previously intimated, every effort was made in this connection, but success was not attained; although this season's consignments have practically finished, the interests of the growers will be kept in view and such action taken as may be possible.

A further communication was received from the Agent General on the 8th December of last year as follows:—

With regard to the possibility of the fixed price of apples being revoked, the situation is very promising. This is a subject I am not likely to lose sight of.

On the 28th January, 1920, the Agent General again wrote stating that in the matter of the fixed price for apples, the Minister for Food advised that in the interests of the public he felt himself bound to maintain the control of prices. The Agent General advised that in any further attempt to have the controlled price eliminated it would be necessary that this should be supported by the Governments of the other Australian States, because he remem-

bered that unfortunately last year Tasmanian growers sold their fruit to the buyers f.o.b. Tasmania; consequently the growers there were not very interested in the controlled price. Since then what has taken place is that the apple growers of Australia have combined.

Hon. J. Duffell: Does that include Tasmania?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think it includes the whole lot. At the Australian Fruitgrowers' Conference held in Brisbane last month, at which Mr. Wickens, of our State Agricultural Department, was present, the following resolution was carried—

That this conference take steps to bring about the de-control of fruit prices on the English markets next season.

It was also decided that the resolution should be forwarded from the conference to the Prime Minister's Department, urging that every endeavour should be made to have the fixed market price for apples removed. It means now that this agitation is proceeding, but instead of being made entirely by the Western Australian Agent General, in the interests of Western Australian growers of apples, it is being carried on by the Commonwealth in the interests of the whole of the apple growers of Australia. The Agent General for Western Australia is also doing what he can in the matter. That being the case, I think there is far more hope of success than before. A cablegram was published in the "West Australian" on the 2nd August last in which it was stated that the Minister for Food had suspended the order concerning apple prices between 15th August and 1st October next, making a free market, with a maximum retail price of 10d. a lb. after November. It goes on to say—

It is understood that the maximum price for importers after the 14th November for American, Canadian, and Australian apples will be 21s. 6d. for a case of 37lbs. and 23s. 6d. for a case of 40lbs.

It is doubtless on account of the free market that the price for Mt. Barker apples was obtained to which Mr. Ewing has referred. I understand that the American apples get on the London market just before ours. They finish about March or April.

Hon. J. Ewing: They would get the advantage.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No, they would not. This free market only lasts from the 15th August to the 1st October. I do not think it is likely that the American apples would be on the market then. They would probably come along at the end of the year or the beginning of the year, and be finished up by March.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Unless they are cold stored, as they are in America.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That may be so. The Mt. Barker apples must have been stored for longer than the

usual period. Our apples generally reach the London market some time in March—that is for the first lot—and then they go on during April, May and June, these being the months in which our apples are generally sold. It must be exceptional for Australian apples to be sold in London as late as September.

Hon. J. Duffell: They would not get the free market then.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No, only in exceptional cases. The cable to which I have referred as having been published in the "West Australian" is a little vague, because it does not suggest what is going to be the practice from the 1st October, when apparently the free market ends, to the 14th of November, when these prices are to come into force. It will be noticed that the cable specifically states American, Canadian, and Australian apples. The increase in the retail price from 9d. to 10d. is about on a par with what has been allowed on the wholesale price, namely 20s. 10d. to 23s. 6d. In view of the uncertainty that exists as to prices to the American grower, it having been represented to me, as it has been to Mr. Ewing, that the American growers were allowed to sell their apples on a free market, a cablegram has been sent to the Agent General mentioning this report, and asking him to cable out the full details of the position and also to continue in co-operation with the Commonwealth Government an agitation for the removal of the fixed price. When any information comes to hand as a result of this cable I will make it available to the mover of this motion, and other hon. members who are interested. In the meantime, the carrying of the motion cannot have any other than a good result, and it has my support.

Question put and passed.

BILL—BROOME RATES VALIDATION.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Time of Registration Extension.
- 2, High School Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Assembly.

MOTION—RETURNED SOLDIERS AND RAILWAY PASSES.

Debate resumed from 2nd September on motion by Hon. A. H. Panton as follows:—

That in the opinion of this House, returned soldiers, who are attending the Base Hospital, Fremantle, or the Vocational Training Schools in Perth, should be carried over the railways free of charge."

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.25]: I propose to discuss this motion without any reference whatever to the question of what returned soldiers are entitled to. I frankly admit that it would be difficult to ask for anything that the returned soldier, on the merits of what he has done for the country, would not be entitled to. I am going to discuss this question from two standpoints, namely, the necessity for maintaining uniformity in the treatment meted out to returned soldiers, and also the necessity for the proper authority shouldering the obligation in regard to returned soldiers. Up to quite recently, concessions, so far as railway travelling and other matters of the kind are concerned, have varied very considerably in the different States of the Commonwealth. Some States are very much more liberal than other States in certain particulars, and in other directions perhaps the State that was less liberal in regard to one matter is more liberal in regard to another. The necessity for securing some sort of uniformity so that there might be fairness and contentment amongst the soldiers has been recognised. It was also felt by the whole of the States that the responsibility was a Commonwealth responsibility, and that the Federal Government should deal with it. In October of last year the Premier notified the Prime Minister that after the 30th June all the railway concessions to returned soldiers would cease, so far as the State Government were concerned, and invited the Federal authorities to put up a proposal under which the State would extend, at the expense of the Commonwealth, such concessions as the responsible authority, namely, the Commonwealth Government, considered the soldiers were entitled to. Every State in the Commonwealth endorsed that action. The whole of the States made the same representations to the Prime Minister, pointing out that this was a Commonwealth responsibility, and that it was necessary there should be uniformity, and inviting the Commonwealth Government to take the matter over and see what could be done for the soldiers in respect of railway concessions, and paying the States accordingly. Previously to that time, the Commonwealth Government had, as a matter of fact, reimbursed from the Federal Treasury all concessions made to returned soldiers upon Commonwealth railways. It was recognised that it was not a proper or business-like thing for this service to be performed by the railways, and that it must be done and paid for by the Commonwealth in the interests of the soldier. Therefore, the Federal Government out of the Federal Treasury reimbursed the Federal railways for all the free passes and other concessions that had been given to returned soldiers on the Federal railways.

Hon. H. Stewart: Did they reimburse the State Government?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Oh, no, they did not do that at all. It seems inevitable that, unless the Federal Government deal with this matter, we shall have a different practice prevailing in each State, which is not fair, and not likely to cause contentment. The Commonwealth Government are undoubtedly the correct authority to say what class of returned soldier concessions of this kind ought to be continued. They have a properly organised repatriation department in each State. That department knows far better than we which soldiers ought to be given concessions of this kind. It is only necessary for them to sign an order or application to the railway authorities and the concession will be granted. But we take up the attitude—and it is taken up by every State in the Commonwealth—that we must have uniformity in this matter, that it is a Federal responsibility, and that the Federal Government ought to shoulder it.

Hon. T. Moore. And they are not doing it?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I cannot say that. They have made some concessions already. I think the State Governments are entitled to maintain this attitude and force upon the Commonwealth Government their proper responsibility.

Hon. J. E. DODD (South) [5.31]: I entirely agree with the attitude of the Minister. Certainly the Federal Government should shoulder the responsibility of providing free passes over the railways for soldiers. I think, too, that the soldiers should travel free on the railways, especially those going to the Base Hospital. But one point which occurs to me shows the difference between the treatment meted out to the soldiers now, and that when the soldiers were going to the Front. At that time there was a great agitation in regard to soldiers' railway fares from Blackboy. The Labour Government, who were in power at the time, could not see their way clear to paying the railway fares for the soldiers. They considered it was a Commonwealth responsibility. But I think it will be remembered that a certain election was won on the question of the State paying the cost of the soldiers' railway fares from Blackboy. I refer to the election at which Mr. Scaddan stood against Mr. Robinson. I do not know that the Government should now take the stand that they ought not to pay railway fares for soldiers at the Base Hospital, since, I believe, most of the members of the present Government were members of the Government which decided that the soldiers at Blackboy going to the war ought to travel free on the railways between Blackboy and the city. However, I agree with the Minister for Education that it is a Federal responsibility, and that something should be done to see that the Federal authorities shoulder the burden of these railway fares. Just one other point: I should like to see the debate adjourned in order that Mr. Cornell

who is, I believe, the only representative in the Chamber of the Returned Soldiers' Association, may be here to take part in it.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson, debate adjourned.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.35] in moving the second reading said: This is a very brief Bill and is not likely to be at all controversial. It deals with only two matters. Its first purpose is to give friendly societies the right of foreclosure, such as is conferred on mortgagees. To that, I think, no exception can be taken. It is a proper privilege for anyone who lends money on mortgage. The second purpose of the Bill is to amend Sec. 17a of the Act of 1894, which confers on the registrar the power to require the production and inspection of the books of a society. But that is as far as he can go. The proposed amendment in Clause 3 will enable the registrar to require also the production of securities and other documents. His existing power to demand the production of books is not sufficient. He must also be able to demand the production of securities and documents. Without this it is impossible for him to say that the books are entirely in order. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

BILL—ROTTNEST ISLAND.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.37] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this short Bill is to enable the Rottnest Island Board of Control to grant leases over certain portions of the island to persons desirous of erecting houses thereon as summer residences or places of abode during the holiday season. It will be remembered that a few years ago the then Government set about making Rottnest Island a tourist resort. It was placed under the management of the Tourist Bureau and a very considerable sum of money was spent there. Generally speaking, that money was wisely and well spent. A commodious hostel was erected, a comprehensive sewerage system was installed, cottages and camps were provided, and a great deal was done to increase the popularity of the island. There was a great stream of visitors to the island

throughout the summer season. Then war broke out, and the Commonwealth Government took over the island as an internment camp for enemy subjects. During the occupation of the island by those enemy subjects they did, I think, all the damage they possibly could do to the Government property. One would have thought it would be possible—and beneficial to the men interned there—to have put those men to some useful work, such as road making, perhaps paying them something for it, in which case the large number of men there might have done a tremendous lot for the improving of the island. But they did nothing to improve it. On the contrary they did a great deal of damage to the Government property. When they were removed a sum of money, arrived at as a result of negotiations between the officials of the two Governments, was paid by the Federal Government to the State Government, in all about £2,000. That may have represented—I think, inadequately—the actual damage done and the cost of restoring it, but it did not in any sense represent the direct and indirect loss occasioned to the island as a tourist resort by its occupation for that period by German and Austrian subjects. After resuming the island, the Government vested it in a board of control under the Parks and Reserves Act. That board, of which I have the honour to be president, includes the following members: Dr. Tretlowan, the Hon. J. Scaddan, Mr. J. McCullum Smith, Mr. J. F. Allen, who was formerly a member of this Chamber, and Mr. C. Crocker, the City Electrical Engineer. This board has exercised control over the island for the last three years, and has conducted it without cost of any sort to the Government. During the first year of the board's administration, 7,000 persons visited the island. That number was increased in the following year to 8,000, and last year the visitors were further increased to 12,000. The board has spent a good deal of money. It has made very extensive additions to the hostel, which is now capable of accommodating about 200 visitors. It has converted the old Government House, which had been put to the unworthy purpose of a gaol, and practically destroyed so far as it was possible for anyone to destroy it; we had to spend £1,200 in renovating it and converting it into habitable rent-producing flats. We also built a number of bungalows and camps. The demand for all this accommodation is far in excess of what we have to supply. A few weeks ago, bookings were invited for the forthcoming season. We had 90 applications for the 30 places we have to let.

Hon. J. Duffell: What period would that cover?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: All periods; some want accommodation for only two or three weeks at Christmas time; others for six or eight weeks, while others require it for two or three months. It is just in the holiday season that the congestion is greatest, and it is for the holiday season we find it necessary to reject a number of applica-

tions because we have no accommodation for them, although they are prepared to book up accommodation four months beforehand. The operations of the board during the three years have resulted in a profit of £1,200, of which £800 was made last year. I do not want members to run away with the idea that the board is profiteering. It has to be borne in mind that the board enjoys the benefit of the whole of the expenditure incurred on the island before the board took charge; that is to say, we are paying no interest on the capital outlay on the sewerage system, the hostel, the cottages, and a great deal more money, amounting probably to £10,000 or £12,000, which was spent there before the island was handed over to the control of the board. We do allow in our balance-sheet depreciation on all the property on the island, but the board is only able to show a profit—which is spent in the development of the island—because it is not called upon to pay any interest or sinking fund on the money originally invested in the island.

Hon. J. Duffell: Invested by whom?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: By the previous Government. Most of the work was done by the Scaddan Government.

Hon. J. Duffell: Did the Commonwealth Government make any allowance?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The internees caused a lot of destruction, and the Commonwealth Government paid £2,000 to have that destruction repaired. That was all they paid. If we were to deduct from our profit interest on the whole of the properties on the island handed over when the board took control, there would be no profit left. I merely point this out so that people shall not run away with the idea that the board is making a profit out of the visitors to the island. As a matter of fact, the board is not. Visitors are not paying any more than they ought to pay. What is happening is that the interest on the money invested by Governments years ago, instead of going into the Treasury, as might well be demanded, is going back to the island for the purpose of effecting improvements. By the passing of this Bill the board will be materially assisted in its work of developing the island. The Bill will also meet the requirements of a number of regular visitors to Rottneest. We desire to improve the island by the construction of roads and in many other directions, and there is also to be faced the constantly increasing demand by visitors for additional accommodation. We are putting up additional bungalows and camps this year, and are doing what we can to meet the demand. If the Bill is passed, we know there will be quite a number of regular visitors to the island who will be prepared to take these leases, build their own places, and thereby make it easier for the board to accommodate other visitors. The intention of the board is to grant leases for a period of 21 years, not longer.

Hon. J. Duffell: An unlimited number of leases?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No, we shall not grant more than we think there is a demand for and, in any case, leases will only be granted on what we consider are suitable sites for residences, sites on which the erection of houses would improve the general appearance of the island without restricting the proper freedom of the visitors. The leases will be granted for 21 years, and a condition of the leases will be that any buildings erected thereon must be approved by the board. It is not the intention of the board to call upon the people who take up these leases to erect permanent or elaborate buildings. We shall not expect anyone who takes up a lease to do any more in the way of erecting buildings than we ourselves do. We put up bungalows, costing from £200 to £300, of a type suitable for a holiday resort, and we should not expect a lessee to do more than that. But we should expect the building to be in keeping with the other structures erected on the island, decent in appearance, and constructed of material which would have a life, roughly, corresponding with the period of the lease.

Hon. H. Stewart: Will the leaseholders build?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: If people take up leases, they must make use of them. We shall not allow them to hold the land otherwise. In fact, it would not be of any use holding the land unless a building were erected. If the Bill is passed, we know that quite a number of people will be willing to take up these 21-year leases and erect places of their own. The great advantage will be that there are people who go to the island at about the same time every year. Therefore, the erection of these places will relieve the congestion just at the time we feel it most, and will give the board a little more freedom in the matter of spending money. The popularity of the island as a holiday resort is, I think, not to be wondered at. It is very handy indeed to the city, it may be reached in a few hours, and the cost of getting to Rottneest and back is very small indeed as compared with the cost of travelling to any other of our holiday resorts. In fact, to go to the Caves or to Mandurah, or to any other such place and back would cost anything from four to ten times as much as to go to Rottneest and back.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: What would happen in regard to the property at the end of the 21 years?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The lease would fall back into the hands of the board, and the building would become the property of the board.

Hon. J. Duffell: All the buildings erected on the leases would fall back to the board?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes, that would be a condition of the leases. But people would not erect buildings which

would have a life of more than about 20 years.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: You do not propose any compensation?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No compensation whatever is proposed. We do not expect to get very much revenue from this proposal. The rental will be small, but when the rental has been fixed, the site selected will be offered for competition. We do not expect to make much, but we expect to make something which will be of assistance to the board. But the best assistance to the board will be the relief from responsibility for providing sufficient accommodation for all the visitors to the island. All members of the House, I suppose, are familiar with Rottneest. They know it is one of the most beautiful spots in Western Australia. It has an absolutely ideal climate, particularly in the hottest parts of the year. From a fisherman's point of view, its waters are probably equal to any portion of the coast near to the city and, in every respect, it offers opportunities for a quiet holiday which no other portion of the State possesses. A little later on, it will be recognised that it is the duty of the Government to develop very much more rapidly than is being done all the holiday and pleasure resorts Western Australia has to offer. I am sure it will be good business from the point of view of giving our own people places to go to rather than that they should rush off to the Eastern States. We have several very fine holiday resorts and, if we spent money to develop them, we could keep our own people here—in itself a great advantage—and also attract tourists in large numbers. But the Government feel that, in the present position of the finances of the State, the time for launching out in that direction has not yet arrived. We hope it will not be long in coming. In the meantime the Government ask the Rottneest board to carry on its affairs economically and spend whatever profit it can make in developing the island. These are the lines on which we have been proceeding, but up to the present we have found it necessary to put all the profits into buildings which will return us an immediate revenue, and we have had nothing to spend on roads, which are very necessary, or on the general development of the island. If the Bill is passed it will afford the board material assistance in the matter of carrying on the general development of the island. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [5.53]: I have pleasure in supporting the second reading. After what the leader of the House has told us, and from our knowledge of the island and its possibilities, I am sure there is nothing left to be said, and nothing further is required to commend the Bill. It is due to the board, who have carried out their work voluntarily and gratuit-

ously for so many years, that we should express our thanks for their services. I am sure the Government must have acknowledged their services, and the public should do the same. Having regard to the close proximity of the island to the metropolitan area, I recognise its great advantages to the people particularly in the summer time, and the proposal in the Bill, making it possible for people to have houses of their own, is to be commended in every way. The only thing that occurs to me is that, assuming someone is desirous of building a structure of a more permanent character than that usually erected on the island, and which will be erected under the conditions of the 21-years lease, it might be desirable to give the board power, in the circumstances, to extend the period of the lease when buildings of more than a certain value are erected. I do not know whether that appeals to the leader of the House.

The Minister for Education: It does not.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Apart from that, it is my intention to support the Bill.

On motion by Hon. J. Duffell, debate adjourned.

BILL—PRICES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.55] in moving the second reading said: It will be within the knowledge of hon. members that the existing Prices Regulation Act expires on the 31st December of this year. The measure was enacted by the last Parliament and, under the closing section, the life of the Act is limited to the end of the present year. It is therefore necessary, unless price-fixing is to be abolished after the 31st December, 1920, for a continuance Bill to be passed. In addition, an error was made in the existing Act. I do not know exactly where it was made or by whom it was made. This House inserted a proviso to Clause 15—sales subject to conditions in restraint of trade prohibited. The clause appeared in the Bill as it came to this House, and this House inserted a proviso which, I think, was moved by Mr. Nicholson. At any rate, the proviso was passed as a proviso to Clause 15, but it appears in the Act as a proviso to Section 14. It certainly was not the intention that it should appear in that way. I do not know that it has caused much trouble, because the intention of the proviso is so obvious that it could not possibly apply to Section 14. In practice it has been taken as applying to Section 15. A conference of members of Price Fixing Commissions in the different States of the Commonwealth was held in Melbourne in June of this year. The whole matter was discussed very fully, and methods were devised by which the different commissions could be of a good deal of assistance to each

other. It was also thought desirable that there should be uniformity of action by the commissions so far as possible. There should be an exchange of information and, in certain directions, uniformity of legislation. This amending Bill does not embody anything like all the sections which appear in the Acts of other States. We are not aiming at uniformity in that direction, but there are certain provisions in certain Acts which in practice have proved of advantage to the commission concerned and the absence of which has proved a disadvantage to the commission where they have not existed. In that way we propose to amend our Act by including certain provisions from the New South Wales and South Australian Acts, and I understand that other States intend to alter their laws when they come up for revision by including certain sections which appear in our Act. There are these three objects in introducing this Bill: firstly, to continue last year's Act. We do not propose to make it a definite piece of legislation; we regard it still as an emergency piece of legislation, and the intention is to continue it for another 12 months. Secondly, we propose to rectify the error which occurred last year and, thirdly, we want to include certain provisions considered desirable by the conference of commissioners held in Melbourne. I do not propose to-day to say anything in justification of the continuation of this principle of price-fixing. The report of the Commissioners has this afternoon been circulated amongst members, and they will have ample opportunity of reading it and considering it before they will be called upon to take part in this debate, or to vote upon the second reading of the Bill. I do not think it is necessary for me to say much more regarding the report. I simply draw attention to the fact that the report covers a large number of household commodities, things that are in common use every day in every household; and it shows what the effect of the Commission's work has been in regard to those various articles. I think that report alone justifies the continuation of the Commission. I am quite sure that if this Bill were not passed, then on the 1st January we would see a considerable increase of price in a great number of articles that have to go into every home. The same thing is mentioned in the letter from the Agent General which I read a little while ago, where he says that in London the removal of control quickly resulted not in some slight increases, but in a soaring of prices. As a matter of principle, I think very little can be said in favour of price-fixing; but I recognise that present conditions are not normal. I recognise that so far as wholesale dealers are concerned, in a very large number of lines the old competition, which was the protection of both the producer and the consumer, has disappeared entirely, and that unless we put up something in its place both the consumer and the producer are in danger of

being at the mercy of the middleman. The Prices Regulation Commission have avoided fixing prices wherever they could. What they have done has been to "proclaim" articles, which prevents increases in prices; and then, when the trader wants to make an increase in the price, he has to come to the Commission to allow him to do so. A great deal has been done by agreement without proclamation—agreement between the Prices Regulation Commission and the traders. If hon. members will read the report carefully, they cannot come to any other conclusion than that the work of the Commission has had the effect of steadying prices in a great many lines which no household can do without. But for the Commission, people would have been paying a great deal more than they are paying now for articles they cannot possibly do without. The Commission have also drawn attention to a thing which will, if followed up, prove of great advantage to the community, in my opinion; that is the unnecessarily high cost of distribution in a number of articles. I have already discussed that question so far as the prices of milk and bread are concerned. Those are not the only articles in which there is an unduly high cost, in which there are too many fingers in the pie and too many people between the man who grows the stuff and the man who uses it. I think the work of these Commissions, not only of ours but also of Commissions all over Australia, in drawing public attention to these things will eventually have a very beneficial result. A question was asked to-day in regard to butter. The work of the Commission has been of great value in regard to butter. The Commission have worked in conjunction with the pool controlling the winter supply of butter. There has been a good feeling between the two bodies. The pool, through the instrumentality of its chairman, Mr. Watson, has been able to make very advantageous contracts for the purchase of butter, and, working hand in hand with the Commission, has enabled the Western Australian consumer to obtain the advantage of those contracts. Now, of course, the price has to go up, or it will go up as soon as all the butter covered by those contracts has been disposed of. But, largely through the investigations made by the Commission, there is now a movement on foot for the establishment of a local committee which will, I think, assist a good deal towards removing the prejudice that seems to exist against our local butter. The committee will probably be able to help the local producer as well as maintaining a control over the imported article. It was never suggested, at all events not by me, that our Prices Regulation Commission were going to prevent increases in prices. Increases in prices must go on as long as there is a shortage. But it was suggested by me, and I think my contention has been borne out, that the Prices Regulation Com-

mission would have the effect of preventing undue increases in prices. Extensive extracts from the Commission's report have appeared in the "West Australian," and in this morning's issue of that newspaper I noticed a very interesting article dealing with the report. That article makes reference to the question of lateral profits, and quotes the case of galvanised iron, iron originally imported into the State at a cost of £37 10s. per ton having been finally sold to the user at £82 per ton. There was no control over iron at that time. A thing of that sort could not happen under the present Commission. As a matter of fact, the price of our galvanised iron at the present time to the user is £66 10s. per ton, which represents a reasonable profit in view of the fact that the landed cost to the wholesaler in Western Australia is £53 10s. per ton. The question of price of galvanised iron is at present under discussion between the importers and the Commission. The instance quoted by the "West Australian" merely shows a case in which there were too many fingers in the pie. Undoubtedly, if anything can be done to stop that sort of thing, it ought to be done. It is not, in the interests of the community that there should be a lot of people peddling about between the man who produces a thing and the man who uses it. It is not only the question of cost of living that is affected. To my mind it absolutely strikes at the whole fabric of our society, because it is unfortunately the case that the easiest livings are made by dealing in commodities. I do not suggest for a moment that the trader can be done away with; I do not under-rate for a moment the value of the trader. But when one finds instances of that kind, instances of stuff being handled over and over again between the producer and the user, one must come to the conclusion that it not only puts up the cost of living unnecessarily, but that it is not placing an attractive prospect before our young men. A lot of our young men are led to think they can do a great deal better, and can live a great deal more easily, by turning over something that somebody else has produced than they can by producing themselves. Anything we can do to remove that condition of affairs will be for the benefit of the community, altogether apart from any question of price-fixing. There are many lines in which the Commissioners have not done much. The report states that soft goods have been practically untouched.

Hon. J. Duffell: The dealers in soft goods are the greatest offenders of all.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Possibly they are, but the Commissioners have commented upon it from the point of view of the necessities of life. The Commission have not been at work long, and I can assure the House that they have worked very hard; they are three very hard working men. They have only started on their work, and they are going on with it. But they

have started by confining themselves chiefly to the absolute necessities of life. As the Commission have pointed out, the public can do a great deal to regulate prices as regards things which are not necessities of life but luxuries. The Bill itself provides by Clause 2 a new principle so far as our legislation is concerned. That clause is taken from the New South Wales Act of 1919 and from the South Australian Act of the same year. It provides—

- (1) If the Commissioners are satisfied (a) that a person has in his custody or under his control any foodstuff or necessary commodity, and has failed, on demand and tender of the fixed price, to supply any particular person with such foodstuff or necessary commodity—

Before any action can be taken under this new provision the person against whom action is taken must have committed an offence. He is not allowed to refuse to supply to any person at the fixed price.

or (b) that any foodstuff or necessary commodity which, in their opinion, should be distributed for public use is being withheld from sale, the Commissioners may recommend to the Governor that such foodstuff or necessary commodity be forfeited. It cannot be done by the Commissioners. They have to make representations to the Minister, who will recommend to the Governor-in-Council, and the final act will be done by the Governor-in-Council.

- (2) The Governor may thereupon, by notice in the "Gazette," order that the whole of such foodstuff or necessary commodity, or such quantity thereof as is specified in such notice, be forfeited to the Crown.

Clause 3 goes on to provide that—

When any foodstuff or necessary commodity has been so forfeited, it shall be lawful for any member of the police force, or any person thereunto authorised in writing by the Minister, (a) to seize any foodstuff or necessary commodity which he has reasonable cause to believe is forfeited under this Act; (b) to store the same in any place provided by the Minister for the purpose; and (c) to sell or otherwise dispose of the same at such times and in such manner as the Minister may direct, or as may be prescribed.

Clause 4 provides for just and adequate compensation to the person from whom the commodity is seized—

When any foodstuff or necessary commodity is seized under this Act, the person who was the owner thereof prior to the forfeiture shall be entitled to be paid therefor by the Minister at the fixed price, after deducting (a) the amount of any penalties imposed on such person in any proceedings under this Act, whether in respect of the goods so seized or otherwise, and the amount of any costs awarded against him in such proceedings, or so much of such amounts as have not already been paid; and (b) the costs and

expenses of any application to the Commissioners for a forfeiture, whether in respect of the foodstuff or necessary commodity so seized or any other foodstuff or necessary commodity; and (c) the costs and expenses of searching for, seizing, storing, and selling or otherwise disposing of such foodstuff or necessary commodity. Those, I think, are quite just provisions. Clause 5 is on the same lines—

Any member of the police force or person thereunto authorised in writing by the Minister may at any time enter into and search any premises or vessel where any foodstuffs or necessary commodity forfeited or liable to seizure under this Act is, or is supposed to be, and, if necessary for that purpose, may break into and use force to enter such premises or vessel, and may break open any chests, trunks, packages, or other things in which any such foodstuff or necessary commodity is, or is supposed, to be.

Clause 6 gives the Commission power, in determining prices, to determine the basis on which they shall make their recommendation to the Governor—

In addition to, but without affecting the generality of the powers conferred by section ten of the principal Act, the Governor may, by Order in Council, determine the maximum prices, whether retail or wholesale, which may be charged for foodstuffs and necessary commodities in any proclaimed area, on the basis of manufacturing, landed, delivery, or other cost; and may, in like manner, declare what items may or may not be included in such cost, and whether, in determining such cost, regard is to be had to the invoiced cost of materials used, or to the cost of replacing the materials used, or to any other method or principle specified in the Order in Council.

That is taken from the Victorian Act, and in the opinion of our Commissioners it will supply a want that has been felt in the existing legislation. Clause 7 provides that—

Every retail dealer in goods in any proclaimed area shall, if required so to do by an order in writing of the Commissioners, mark in plain figures the prices of all goods of the kind specified in such order which are kept by him for sale, or exhibit and keep exhibited on his business premises a written or printed list of such prices, whether such specified goods have been declared to be foodstuffs or necessary commodities for the purposes of the principal Act or not.

The object of the clause is to enable the Commission to protect the public in cases of agreements made between the Commission and traders without proclaiming prices. A great deal has been done in that direction. Instead of proclaiming a price, the Commission have made an agreement with the trader; and such agreements have been, so far as the Commission are aware, honourably observed. Clause 7 provides in such circum-

stances the same power to compel the trader to exhibit prices as the existing Act provides in the case of proclaimed goods. Clause 8 merely corrects the error in the principal Act to which I have already referred. Clause 9 continues the existence of the principal Act, as amended by this Bill, until the 31st December, 1921. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 7th September, 1920.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—CHILD IMMIGRATION.

Fairbridge Farm School.

Mr. MUNSIE asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, For what period does the 4s. per week, allowed to the children being brought to the State by Mr. Fairbridge, continue? 2, Have the Government entered into any arrangement to subsidise the Fairbridge school in the future? 3, If so, to what extent?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, A capitation grant of 4s. per week will be allowed to the children until they reach 14 years of age. 2 and 3, Answered by No. 1.

Ministerial explanation.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. F. T. Broun—Beverley) [4.32]: I desire to make an explanation in respect to a question asked by the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie) on 31st August. I notice that in the "Votes and Proceedings" giving the answer to the question, in paragraph (3) it

was stated that the rate of maintenance paid by the Government by way of subsidy for the 150 children, which Mr. Fairbridge proposes to bring out from England, was 4s. per day. This should read 4s. per week, and not 4s. per day.

QUESTION—MURDER OF J. T. DON.

Mr. DUFF asked the Minister for Mines: Is it not in the interests of justice to offer a substantial reward for the apprehension of the alleged murderer of John Thomas Don, of Broome?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Mines) replied: It would not assist the ends of justice to answer this question at the present juncture.

QUESTION—STRAITS SETTLEMENTS AND JAVA TRADE.

Mr. ANGELO asked the Premier: Will he give this House an opportunity of considering the following resolution passed by the Legislative Council last session and forwarded to this House for concurrence: "That in the opinion of this House, in view of the necessity for the encouragement of production by the provision of adequate markets for the results of such production, it is advisable that the Government of this State should take steps to develop trade and commerce between this State and the Straits Settlements and Java?"

The PREMIER replied: The hon. member can give notice of motion in the usual way.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Time of Registration Extension.
- 2, High School Act Amendment.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILL—BROOME RATES VALIDATION.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 2nd September.

Hon. T. WALKER (Kanowna) [4.36]: The difficulty one has in considering this Bill, much more in discussing it, is that we are not made acquainted with the regulations to be framed under it. It seems to me that the regulations will be the Bill. How the disputants, as to any classification or position, salary or other trouble affecting the civil service, are to be brought before the board is a very material matter. We do not know what provisions are to be made, not even how members of the board are to