

The landlord would be no worse off. If it turned out badly the money would be gone and the soldier would suffer. The State has no right to give money for the purpose of making a permanent home for a soldier on the share farming system. That is why I am objecting to the clause. The member for Sussex asked the Premier whether it worked in New South Wales and the Premier replied that he did not know about New South Wales, but that it did in Victoria. I asked the Premier whether Victoria was in the same position as Western Australia to offer the soldiers land for permanent settlement. Western Australia has land on which soldiers can make their homes with the assistance of money advanced for that purpose partly by the further assistance from the Agricultural Bank, and partly by funds which they will have on their return, and by their own efforts. Western Australia is in a position to provide land for these soldiers, but the State is not in a position to provide money for soldiers to go and crop somebody else's land. There is no necessity for us to do that. The member for Greenough referred to the Midland Railway land. There is power provided in another Bill which we shall shortly be dealing with to enable the Government to compulsorily resume areas of land on the Midland line at a fair price. If they resume that land and hand it over to soldiers I will not raise any objection to the money being used for the improvement of it, because it would be the property of the State and the property of the soldiers. The clause is opposed to the interests of the returned soldier in Western Australia, although in a State such as Victoria, it might be in his interests. We do not want to encourage soldiers to improve other people's land. Along the Wongan Hills railway thousands of acres have been taken up but never cropped. Would hon. members advance money to soldiers to enable them to go into that district and improve the land for the Terrace farmer?

The Premier: The terms and conditions have to be approved by the board.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Not very long ago a board advanced some thousands of pounds to a tenant farmer to put in a crop on land belonging to another. The crop, when it grew, was seized by the landlord, and the Government were left lamenting. That is what we are getting from boards. The clause is dangerous both to the State and to the soldier.

Mr. MULLANY: The clause is not in accord with the principle of the Bill. The Bill is to provide returned soldiers with permanent holdings, but the clause authorises the advancing of money to soldiers for the improvement of land belonging to other than soldiers. I will vote against the clause.

Clause put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	17
Noes	9

Majority for	8
------------------	-----	-----	---

AYES.

Mr. Broun	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Draper	Mr. Money
Mr. George	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Harrison	Mr. R. T. Robinson
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Maley	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Foley	Mr. Walker
Mr. Johnston	Mr. Wilcock
Mr. Mullany	Mr. Chesson
Mr. Teesdale	(Teller.)

Clause thus passed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

THE WAR—PEACE ARMISTICE RESOLUTION, LETTER IN REPLY.

Mr. SPEAKER [11-13]: I have received the following letter from the Department of Navy, Melbourne, dated 22nd November, 1918:

Sir, I have the honour to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst., transmitting a resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia conveying the thanks of the people of that State for the services rendered by the Australian Navy and Army in the defence of the Empire, and in reply to inform you that a copy of the resolution will be transmitted to H.M.A. ships. I have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient servant, A. Poynton, Acting Minister for the Navy.

House adjourned at 11.15 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 3rd December, 1918.

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

[For "Paper Presented" see "Minutes of Proceedings."]

BILL—FORESTS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th November.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [4.36]: It is very gratifying, I think, to the people of this country and also to members of both Houses of Parliament that the Government have at last recognised the importance of the timber industry and the great necessity there is for forest preservation and regeneration. In the Bill before us we have, I suppose, the ideas of the Conservator of Forests, which ideas, if carried out, perhaps not in their entirety but to a very great extent, will, I am sure, make for the improvement and stability of the industry. In my opinion, no Bill brought before either House of Parliament has exceeded in importance this Forestry Bill. Anyone read-

ing the speech of the Minister for Woods and Forests, the Hon. R. T. Robinson, in introducing this measure in another place, must be gratified to observe the excellent grasp the hon. gentleman has of the subject, and the wonderful amount of detail placed before the people of the country. It must be recognised that during the last 20 years there has been abundant evidence before the various Governments in power during that period of the great necessity during the whole of that period for preserving our forests and for working them efficiently, not only in the interests of the present generation but in those of posterity. To my mind it is simply appalling that the various Governments should have neglected the advice given them in this respect, and should have failed to grasp the opportunities existing then as now. It must be remembered that a Royal Commission reported on the subject of forestry 15 or 16 years ago. I have a very vivid recollection of that Royal Commission, because I was in the Lower House when that Commission was appointed. The Commissioners furnished a splendid report, and certainly did something towards the establishment and conservation of the timber industry. Later, a forestry advisory board was formed, but was dissolved when Sir Newton Moore became Minister for Lands. That step I think is much to be regretted. Again, Mr. Ednie Brown was Conservator of Forests about 20 years ago. That gentleman was a trained forester; and it is notable that the leader of the House, in bringing this Bill before us, specially stated that the late Mr. Ednie Brown had a Bill prepared on almost exactly the same lines. This matter has been in the hands of various Governments for possibly more than 20 years, without any notice whatever being taken of the recommendations of that very efficient officer, the late Mr. Ednie Brown. Unfortunately for this State, Mr. Brown did not live long enough to carry his good work to fruition. At all events, the position is that the various Governments of the past have been blind, or else indifferent, to the necessity for looking after the timber industry. We are to-day reaping the harvest of that neglect or indifference, and it is not a very pleasant harvest. We are also told by those now placing this Bill before us that there has been great waste in our forests—waste in production, waste in the export trade, and waste resulting from the neglect of forest regeneration. There is no question whatever that no serious attention has been given to the regeneration or conservation of our forests. That is a very bad position indeed. However, not much good can be attained by deploring what is in the irrevocable past. I can only hope that what has occurred in this industry will not be allowed to occur in others. It is the bounden duty of every Government—I am not in any way saying anything against the present Government—to keep a keen and watchful eye on all the industries of the State. I will not, though I might, state that there is in this State an industry which has been very much neglected, not by the Government, but criticised and condemned by high officials of this country—criticised and condemned in such a way, for

the most part, I regret to say, unchecked by the Government, as almost to destroy the industry. I would not like to mention the name of that industry. I think hon. members will be able to guess the name. The first evidence we have of a return to sanity in the administration of Western Australia in this respect is the appointment by the Government of three years ago of a trained Conservator of Forests. That appointment I consider one of the most excellent appointments made in the history of Western Australia, and it is to be greatly regretted that when Mr. Ednie Brown died such an appointment was not promptly made. Mr. Lane-Poole, the present Conservator of Forests, has been here, I understand, about three years, and there are some things he has done which have not met with the approval of the people concerned in the timber industry. But those are only initial errors, such as are prone to be made by every man coming to a new country and not thoroughly understanding its conditions.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: But Mr. Lane-Poole might have been right.

Hon. J. EWING: Possibly. However, Mr. Lane-Poole has now had the opportunity of gaining three years' experience in this State; he has been able to study the condition of our forests, and he has placed before the Government in this Bill his own ideas. Those ideas are now placed before us for consideration. Let me say a word in regard to the Minister for Woods and Forests, Mr. Robinson. It is not often I say much in favour of a Minister. I have been prone to criticise Ministers, though always in a spirit of kindness. However, Mr. Robinson has considerable experience in forestry; he has great determination; and he has displayed much foresight in appreciating the necessity for immediately introducing legislation of this kind. Mr. Robinson is a keen man so far as forestry is concerned; he has studied the subject; and he has given all the encouragement possible to the present Conservator to prepare this Bill. The measure comes before us in a form which does credit to both Mr. Robinson and the Conservator. I am not one who is always opposed to Ministerial control. I think that men appointed to Ministerial office should be men of business acumen, men of experience, and men who can not only administer their departments through the executive officers, but who can see for themselves whether a thing is right or wrong, and who will thus be able to guide the policy of the State. Evidently, however, that is not the position taken up in the present Bill, because we find that we have embodied in this measure powers which are given to no other State department of Western Australia, powers that I believe are given in other parts of the Commonwealth, and successfully given there, and with full satisfaction. But, as far as we in this State are concerned, such powers have never been given to any official; and it is for us to consider very carefully whether we are justified in taking the proposed step. Clause 7 of the Bill proposes that the Minister shall administer the department, but on examining the measure hon. members will observe that the department shall

have the exclusive control and management of everything connected with forestry. The whole of the forestry of Western Australia is to be under the jurisdiction and administration of the Conservator of Forests. So far as I can see, the Minister is to be a mere figurehead. That is all right so long as we have the right man in the Conservator; and I believe that we have the right man. But we have to see what provisions are made for the suspension of this officer. If necessary he can be suspended on several counts. But it is within the province of Parliament to reinstate that officer. Of course, I take it that if this were done after the Government had suspended him, the Government, being a self-respecting Government, would at once resign office. There is another point which, to my mind, contains an innovation. Funds collected by the Conservator, or one half of them, are to be expended wholly and entirely by him. Clause 41 sets up that position, which does not obtain in any other Act or any other department of State. Half the revenue derived from forestry is to be in the hands of the Conservator for silvicultural or other purposes. Usually expenditure of public funds is entirely in the hands of Parliament; the amounts to be expended are placed on the Estimates, and Parliament has the right to reject or accept such expenditure. Subclause 2 of Clause 41 states that such funds may be expended by the Conservator, with the approval of the Minister, but without any other authority. That creates a position which does not obtain in any other department in our State. It means that Parliament has no control over certain funds which usually have to be paid into Consolidated Revenue. Half the revenue to be collected from forestry will go into Consolidated Revenue, but the other half is to be in the hands of the Conservator. I am merely pointing to this to show that very great powers are to be vested in the Conservator. I also notice that his appointment is to be for seven years. That I think, is a gratifying condition, because it will enable the Conservator to maintain a continuity of policy. On the other hand, if we have a really efficient Conservator we should require him to enter into an agreement not to resign his position during the currency of that term, except, of course, if he for circumstances entirely beyond his control. We should then have an assured continuity of policy. If the Conservator is an efficient man it will be absolutely necessary that, even though he may have some small disagreements with his Minister, he shall not throw up his position, but shall remain at his post.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Would it be wise to keep him against his will?

Hon. J. EWING: It would be wise for us to keep a really efficient man there as long as we could. He should not throw up his position during the currency of his agreement. Under the Bill the Conservator is to have much greater powers than are vested in the Commissioner of Railways. We should clearly understand that. I am not opposing the giving of those powers, because I believe

they are necessary; but it is imperative that we should clearly understand the position before we allow the giving of these powers to go on the statute-book. The Commissioner of Railways has very wide powers, but they are not to be compared with those to be given to the Conservator. The framing of the forest policy, the expenditure of money—these and other important matters, are to be in the hands of the Conservator.

The Colonial Secretary: You are omitting the proviso, which provides that the scheme of such expenditure shall be submitted annually to, and subject to the approval of, Parliament.

Hon. J. EWING: But the money will have been expended long before that can be done. However, I am not raising any serious objection to the giving of those powers. Happily for the industries of the State, the Government have been able to control the Commissioner of Railways. Were it not for that, we should have been minus a very important industry in this State to-day. It is to the credit of past Governments that they have been able to preserve that industry, and that the powers given to the Commissioner of Railways have not been sufficient to enable him to destroy it.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Commissioner of Railways has not sufficient powers.

Hon. J. EWING: That may be the opinion of the hon. member, but I think differently. If the powers proposed to be given to the Conservator of Forests had been given to the Commissioner of Railways we should to-day be minus an important industry. It has been greatly to the benefit of the State that the Commissioner of Railways has not had those powers. We have to understand the position, and to know that we are giving these extraordinary powers to the Conservator of Forests, powers which, in the hands of the Commissioner of Railways, would have been disastrous to Western Australia.

Hon. J. E. Dodd: If all departments had these powers there would be no need for Parliament.

Hon. J. EWING: I agree with that. I am prepared to vote for the giving of those powers, because I believe that the Conservator is a man to be thoroughly and implicitly trusted, and that no ill effects will arise from the giving to him of those great powers. If he can establish the continuity of this industry, establish his classification surveys and his working plans, when the man coming along as his successor will be able to follow in his footsteps. It must be admitted by all who have studied this question that the methods obtaining in regard to the industry during the last 20 years have been most destructive. Therefore it is time we had such a Bill to give continuity of employment and trade. I am delighted to think the Bill has been brought in. When we are told that some 500,000 tons of marketable produce goes up in smoke every year, it is necessary that some improvement should be effected. One important point is the continuity of the industry. The Government and the Conservator have said that if cutting went on to the same extent as it did in 1912 and 1913

the forests would have a life of only another 25 years. I was astounded to hear Sir Edward Wittenoom say in the House the other day that the period would be less than that, that it would be restricted to 10 years. The hon. member has been so long and intimately connected with the industry that he must have a knowledge of it far surpassing that of other members, and if he can make a statement of that kind, surely the position is very unsatisfactory indeed and can only be the result of an unwise policy. In the years gone by the desire seems to have been to cut out as much forest as quickly as possible, and get the cash for it, without the slightest consideration for the conservation of the forest. It means that we are using what we are not entitled to use, and which rightly belongs to posterity. Many will say that the position is more serious to-day than it was 10 years ago, but I say that all the Governments of the past have neglected this industry so much that they have brought about the present position. The Bill provides for classification surveys. To my knowledge and experience this work is most desirable, not only in regard to forestry, but in regard to lands. The Lands Department are carrying out a system of classification, not only of Crown lands, but of private lands also. I think they are unwise in going beyond Crown lands, seeing that they cannot hope to buy up all the private lands. They should have directed their energies years ago to finding out what agricultural lands they have available. The Conservator of Forests has done a wise thing in starting the classification survey, which we are told will take two years to carry out. When this is complete he will be able to prepare his working plans and to draw a clear line of demarkation between agricultural lands and timber lands. My experience has been that a large area of forest land is included in the holdings of the settlers, to the detriment of those settlers and to the disadvantage of our State. We all know that when a man is given, say, 40 acres of good land, he is given also 150 acres of forest land which he straightway proceeds to destroy, and which thus represents a loss of much national wealth. If the policy laid down by the Conservator of Forests had been carried out for the last 10 or 15 years, we should have known exactly where the agricultural land was, and the cutting up of the land would have been in conformity with the classification surveys. I congratulate the Government on the policy now being carried out. I am sure it is in the best interests of Western Australia. When the working plans are ready, the Conservator will have before him a clear map showing all the timber lands in the possession of the State. He will also be able to say to the Lands Department, "We have certain areas of good land which you are at liberty to take over and settle." That will be a most satisfactory position. The Conservator will then be able to say how much of our forests may be cut annually, how much belongs to us and how much to posterity; and all the time he will be protecting the interests of the State by the con-

serving and re-afforestating the forests. The people of Western Australia, especially those connected with the timber industry, have to face a diminishing trade. I do not know, and I should like the leader of the House to explain, to what extent the Conservator has jurisdiction over the concessions, saw-milling permits and leases already granted. Can he go into the forests and say to a concessionaire, "You shall only cut so much," or have the concessionaires the exclusive right to cut what they like? The people of Western Australia, particularly the people in the South-West, have to realise that there may be a diminution in the volume of the timber trade, because the Conservator may say, "You shall cut only so much this year," and in his opinion there may not be the timber there which will maintain the present trade. A great many in this State will not relish the position; still it is but a right stand to take. I hope the past errors in the settlement of agricultural land will be avoided in future, and that the policy now in vogue will be directed to overcoming that difficulty. In the few researches I have made, what most appeals to me is that in Western Australia we have only 3,000,000 acres of forest lands. That is very small compared with the area in other great timber countries and that is the area which we must conserve now. Out of those three million acres, we have three concessions totalling 378,000 acres, 23 timber leases representing 250,000 acres, and 35 sawmill permits, all of which have to be safeguarded under this Bill, and rightly so too, making a grand total of 482,000 acres already alienated, and these leases have to run for a period of eight years. They will expire then and to that we must add another four years owing to the provision made under the Bill for extension for loss of trade during the war. That leaves to the Conservator of Forests only 1,500,000 acres for reafforestation and for silviculture. I want the Minister to let the House know whether the Conservator has the right to extend the operations, whether his power covers all these concessions, and whether he will have the right to declare what timber shall be cut and what shall be reserved within these boundaries. If he has not, he will have only, as I have stated, 1,500,000 acres of timber lands. That is a point which has not yet been disclosed. I have listened to speeches which have been made on the subject and I have also read those which have been delivered, but that information has not been forthcoming. The Bill repeals part of the Land Act 1898 which applies to timber and also the Act of 1904, and whilst repealing those Statutes it is apparent that all rights are preserved, that is, all rights existing under concessions, sawmill leases or timber leases, but they are not conserved to the extent that some of those who have them desire. An extension has been provided for in consequence of the war and loss of trade covering the period of the war, that is, a matter of four years. It is provided that during that period of four years instead of rent being paid for the concessions royalties will be levied. Sir Edward Wittenoom has stated that the royalty will be four times

greater than the rent and he desires that we should be prepared to do something in that direction. I am in accord with him, especially when we remember that the concessionaires have right throughout the period of the war maintained their staffs and their full equipment in order to have things going immediately after the termination of the war. At any rate, we should give favourable consideration to the rent which has been paid during the four years being set off against the royalties which will be paid under the provisions of the Bill. A very serious position obtains at Greenbushes to-day and I regret to say that the Conservator cannot get on with the people there. The position is that for the past 30 years the Greenbushes people have been working alluvial tin. There has been no dredging going on until comparatively lately. The people there have been accustomed to go into the forest area and take what timber they liked, for whatever purpose they required it, for the benefit of the industry. The position now is totally changed. The people connected with coal mining at Collie a little while back became alarmed at the provisions of the Bill. If we read certain clauses we find that they are somewhat ambiguous. They do not convey the true position. It was thought in Collie that under the Bill it would be necessary to pay royalty for the timber that was cut and that the coal owners there would only be allowed to fell such timber as the Conservator thought fit. Of course, as the position stands now they are only allowed to cut certain timber. A deputation was appointed to wait upon the Minister for Forests (Mr. Robinson) and that gentleman assured the deputation that although a State forest might be declared, seeing that the Collie leases had been taken up under the Mining Act 1904, they would be exempt from the operations of the Bill. I want to ask the Minister what difference there is between Collie and Greenbushes, except that they do not use green timber at Collie for fuel because they have excellent fuel of their own there. I may be permitted to read a letter which I have received from the secretary of the Mine Owners and Managers' Association, Greenbushes, and which I think other hon. members have also received, dated 2nd November last, on this subject. It says—

With regard to the Forest Bill now before the House. Until recently the mine owners here have had the right to cut all green jarrah timber for fuel or other mining purposes. The Forestry Department now prohibit us from cutting any green jarrah except unmarketable and useless trees. The dredges depend for their existence on fuel at a reasonable cost. Curly unmarketable green timber is utterly useless for fuel. Fuel cut from green timber is the only possible fuel for this field. My association has been fighting hard for the past two months to have the prohibition removed, but have failed to get any satisfaction. Under the new Forest Bill this prohibition would become permanent and irrevocable, and this would be fatal to all interests in Greenbushes tin mining. My association considers the most equitable way out would be

to remove the Greenbushes Mineral Area from the scope of the Bill and place it under the Mining Act.

That is what suggested itself to me before I got this letter.

My association therefore desires that you will kindly give this serious question your most careful attention and strive to protect the tin mining industry of Greenbushes from being strangled by hasty and ill-conceived legislation. The dredges alone are paying £4,500 in wages per month. What appeals to me is the amount which is paid annually in wages in Greenbushes district.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Are they spending anything this month?

Hon. J. EWING: I do not know. I am not aware of the cause of the trouble with regard to tin, but let us hope the difficulty will be overcome in the very near future. I have had some experience in connection with tin mining and I am satisfied that those who have spent a considerable sum of money in tin fields have had only a small return from the industry. It should therefore be our desire to see that justice is done to it. If £54,000 is spent annually in wages at Greenbushes, does not that prove that the industry is of considerable value to the State? Is it not of greater value than the timber which exists in the limited area which has been reserved in that district? Although we are advocating that the best conditions should prevail with regard to forestry, and while we want to do everything we can to preserve our timber, we must remember there are other industries, and that the preservation of one and the destruction of another is not good in the interests of the State. I am quite sure the leader of the House will bring this matter before the Minister for Forests to see whether some equitable arrangement can be made. I am sure the Conservator has no desire whatever to do any injury to the tin mining industry. He has expressed the hope that a lode formation will be found at Greenbushes. I represented Greenbushes in the Legislative Assembly many years ago, and even at that time the people were hopeful that something would be done in the way of lode working. Unfortunately, it has not materialised up to date. We must not give everything over to posterity. We should let those who are living their lives to-day derive some benefit from the industry. Mr. Kingsmill raised an important point with regard to the waste from our timber products, not so much in connection with the mills as the hewing. Mr. Kingsmill told us, and I have no doubt his figures are correct, that hewing results in a loss of 75 per cent., that only 25 per cent. of marketable timber is recovered, and he also informed us that though the waste from the large mills was not quite so great, it still amounted to 50 per cent. Even that is enormous. This is largely caused by the class of timber which is cut. The mills have been sending sleepers and wood blocks to the Old Country and to the Continent and great loss has ensued. There has been no market for scantlings owing to the small population

in Western Australia, but since the commencement of the war scantlings have found a market in the Eastern States, where their value has of late been recognised. Therefore, when shipping becomes normal again, I am satisfied that there will be a large trade in scantlings and the loss of past years will be considerably reduced. With regard to spot mills, we are told that the loss from them is not so large, and on that account the Conservator declares that they are the mills that we should have. But even the loss from a spot mill is 28 per cent. It is gratifying to know that the Commonwealth Government are recognising the position, and it is hoped that eventually we shall have a laboratory here, and that as a result of research work the loss of over 28 per cent. will be materially reduced. By our policy of denuding the forests and not adopting a policy of reafforestation we are to-day faced with a position which it is the duty of every member of the community to give serious consideration to. The position in regard to hewing might be supervised, although personally, I do not think hewing is good for our forests. In Clause 24 provision is made for hewing in certain localities. These localities are those in which, in the opinion of the Conservator of Forests, all the milling timber has been cut out, or those places which are so inaccessible as not to be able to be used for the hauling of logs for milling purposes. In this case the Conservator can grant the lower permission to follow his avocation. That may be all very well, but the Conservator has in his hands all the time the absolute power to stop hewing under the Bill. He can say to an individual that he cannot hew in a certain locality although there is plenty of good timber for him to work on. I represent the South-West. I also represent those who are engaged in the hewing industry, but I do not hesitate to say that I am against it if the figures, which show so great a loss of valuable timber, are correct. It seems to me that the reason that hewing is agreed to in this Bill is the fact that a large number of the most valiant men, the grandest heroes in the world, such as Captain Murray and Private O'Meara, who have won the Victoria Cross, and other equally fine soldiers, were previously engaged in the hewing industry, and because these and others have done so much for us it is necessary to make provision so that they may return to their old avocations, if they are desirous of doing so. It is for that reason that I support these hewing provisions, and for that reason, I trust, other members will support them also, although they may be somewhat of a disadvantage to the State. The Bill in this respect has my hearty approval because it makes provision for those men, who have fought so well for us, to take up their employment in the old avenues. I hope that the same provision will appertain so far as other industries are concerned. The proviso, limiting the operation of hewing to these men who were hewers before the war, shows what was thought about it in another place. Although the occupation is undoubtedly a wasteful one, so far as our timbers are concerned, we must, on patriotic

and proper grounds, support these provisions. Spot mills will be of great advantage to the men who come back from the war because there will be a large amount of work created by that means. Mr. Kingsmill spoke of the wonderful work done in Germany, France, India, and America, in regard to re-afforestation, and the preservation of forests. I would point out that these are old-settled countries with large populations and great wealth, and that much of this wealth has been expended on the forests of those countries.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: And made out of them also.

Hon. J. EWING: But money has had to be expended in order to improve those forests. If they were anything like the forests in this State, surely a large amount of money must have had to be expended upon them to bring them into the position they are in to-day. I want the people of the State to understand that the work of reafforestation in Western Australia is going to cost a lot of money before we reach the position that is now held by Germany, France, and the other larger populated countries of the world. We have a population in the State of 300,000 people and three million acres of forest land to look after. If we are going to improve our forests in our lifetime we must be prepared to foot the bill. I would like to mention the question of fires in forests. A short time ago I read of a most disastrous fire which had occurred in America. In that country they may have altered their policy, as compared with that of Germany, France, and India, but although they have spent a large amount of money in America the countryside was burnt out on the occasion to which I refer. There is a great difference of opinion in regard to the efficacy of controlled fires in forests. We are told that forests must not be fired. What, I may ask, will become of the undergrowth and the debris, which will accumulate in the forests, if they are not got rid of by some means? What will happen to the country if this debris accumulates and a fire starts through some unexpected agency? It will be impossible to stop such a fire. I would like to know what the policy of the Conservator is in this respect.

Hon. J. Coruelli: In the red gum forests in New South Wales they cut the undergrowth down and thin it out.

Hon. J. EWING: I am talking of the debris, the leaves and small branches and so on, which will accumulate in our forests unless they are fired or got rid of under proper scientific control. The position otherwise must be a very serious one. In my opinion all this debris should be burnt out under control at a proper season in the year. If we are going to clean up all this debris without controlled fires, I say there is not enough money in Western Australia to enable us to do it. If our forests are not going to be burnt under proper control, as should be the case, but which, I am given to understand by experts, is not right, the position is going to be a very serious one. Mr. Kingsmill, and others, referred to the selling of our jarrah and stated that the purpose for which it had been sold has not been

a good thing for this State. This timber has been sold for sleepers, for wood paving, and so on. Mr. Miles interjected that it was too good to walk upon. In years past there has been a tremendous loss, because this timber has been sold in a somewhat menial way. We must give a meed of praise to those who have built up this industry. Millar's Karri and Jarrah Co., for instance, have done more than any other people in Western Australia to build up our hardwood industry on the markets of the world. They have done this through sleepers and wood paving material. In popularising our hardwoods, as they have done, they have wrought much good to the State.

Hon. J. Cornell: And timber has done something for them.

Hon. J. EWING: I have failed yet to see where they have had a return commensurate with their expenditure.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: That is the pity of it.

Hon. J. EWING: Yes. This is so, because the timber has been sold in what I may call a menial way. The best timber has not been sold for structural purposes. We have to crawl before we can walk. Millar's Company have made the name of jarrah world famous in its significance, and are, therefore, entitled to every credit. Mr. Kingsmill said that our timbers should only be sold for structural purposes. If that is the case let us see that it is sold for structural purposes, and that we get the best price that is possible for it. That, however, does not do away with the fact that for many years past the pioneers of this industry have made nothing out of it, and it is not for us to do other than praise their efforts. We are told that the soft woods of Queensland have been so developed that it is now possible for the requirements of Australia to be supplied from them. We, too, are doing good work in the soft wood business, and I hope it will continue. We must all recognise that the stoppage of freights, because of the war, has brought home to the people of Australia, and Western Australia, the fact that they have within their boundaries that which they previously thought it necessary to import. As a result of this discovery, karri timber has been sent to the Broken Hill mines, fruit cases have been made out of karri, and furniture made out of our hard woods. Before the war we did not think it possible for our timbers to be turned to such account, and for 30 years we have been importing to this State timber for which we have a good substitute, and one that fully meets the requirements of the people. I have in my hand a very splendid pamphlet which has been prepared by the Forestry Department in connection with the recent visit of the French Mission. The first portion of it is in French. It appears from the pamphlet that there are 14 different kinds of timber in Western Australia, and it is a revelation to me, on reading these paragraphs, to find out to what excellent use these can be put. Unfortunately, however, they are not being put to that use, and the Conservator has plenty of scope to ensure that these timbers are put to greater use than they are at present. There are mentioned here, jarrah, karri, wandoo, red

gum, tuart, sandalwood, native pear, and salmon gum, which is a splendid timber, and has been used in the Murchison gold mines for many years past. There are also morrell, black-but, jam, river banksia, and other timbers. We have been importing all kinds of timber for the making of furniture, and for other purposes, notwithstanding the fact that we have within our State all these useful and beautiful native timbers. The Bill has my hearty support. I may, perhaps, in Committee move certain amendments to it, but they will be amendments which I hope will improve the Bill, otherwise I would not suggest them. When we have a thorough forest policy, and a sound sylviculture policy carried into effect, and can use all the timbers that so well lend themselves to use, I am sure that great benefit will accrue to Western Australia as a result of this Bill.

Hon. H. J. SAUNDERS (Metropolitan) [5.28]: Although I am known as one of the silent members of the House, I cannot allow, what I regard as one of the most important measures which has been presented to us since I have had the honour of being elected as one of the members of the Metropolitan Province, to pass without one or two words from me. There are some points in the Bill with which I do not agree. I congratulate the Government and the Attorney General, however, upon the very careful manner in which the Bill has been prepared. Clause 6, Subclause 2, refers to a period of 12 months from the termination of the war during which the surrender of concessions or leases may be accepted. I should like to know what the actual date is. Will it date from the time of the signing of the armistice, or from the time when peace is actually signed? This is a most important matter to the timber companies operating in this State. Clause 7, Subclause 2, says that the department shall have exclusive control and management of all matters of forest policy, and Clause 9, Subclause 1, says that the Conservator shall be a body corporate, by the name of "The Conservator of Forests," and by that name shall have perpetual succession and a common seal. I maintain that to appoint one man to control this great industry, and place everyone under him except the Minister, is a questionable policy, and I propose to move in Committee that a board of three men shall be appointed to include the Conservator of Forests. It will put the Conservator in a very much better position, and give him a higher standing, and take some of the responsibility from his shoulders. The responsibility is too heavy for one man to carry, even though the present Conservator seems a very capable man. Many people in this State depend on the timber industry, and it wants every encouragement. I for one will not be a party to giving one man control of the industry. Unlike the last speaker and a good many other members, I like to be short and sharp in speaking. It has seemed to me both here and in another place that a great deal of time is wasted in speaking. If members spoke less and thought more, it would be better for everyone concerned, including mem-

hers themselves. One point referred to by the last speaker confirms my view of the Bill. He said that the Conservator of Forests may decide what quantity of timber may be cut on any one concession. That is another reason why, in my opinion, the Conservator should not be given supreme power. There are one or two other points on which I may have to speak in Committee; but in this, my first speech since election to this House, I do not desire to detain the Council longer.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [5.32]: I notice that this is entitled a Bill for an Act to provide for the better management and control of forests. After hearing the views of the last speaker, it seems that this is also a Bill to establish the principle of government by Commission. I presume the same principle may be extended to other departments of the State. Under this Bill the Conservator has almost autocratic power, and not only that, but the forest rangers are to be a law unto themselves. I shall refer to this point later. I do not intend to offer many remarks of a general nature, because the Bill has already been very well debated in another place and also here. There was one contentious matter discussed in another place, and presumably we find what another place considered a solution of the difficulty in Clause 24. The clause refers to allowing hewers to ply their calling under certain conditions. I believe it was intended that some guarantee should be given that those who left for a time the hewing industry in order to enlist in the A.I.F., and who it is anticipated will return, shall be enabled again to follow the occupation of the timber hewer. Having read the clause in question carefully, I can only say that it does not seem to me to make the provision intended. The clause is one which requires extremely careful reading; in fact, whoever drafted the clause may not have known too much about timber conservation, but certainly knew how to draft a clause which would to a certain extent impose on those who wish to make provision for the hewer. But this Bill, if brought into force, will be the guide of the Conservator of Forests, who will work under the measure. Being an exact man, the Conservator presumably will interpret the clause exactly as it stands. Therefore let me point out what is my interpretation of Clause 24, which clause reads—

Except as hereinafter provided, it shall be unlawful, within the boundaries of a State forest, to hew timber for railway sleepers on the area of any timber concession, lease, or permit granted before or after the commencement of this Act.

That is very definite. There is nothing ambiguous about that. But the clause proceeds—

But it shall be lawful, subject to the provisions of this Act and the regulations, to fell and hew for railway sleepers such timber as may be standing on any such area or portion thereof—(a) after all timber thereon which, in the opinion of the Conservator, is suitable for sawmilling purposes has been felled.

We will presume that the Conservator is prepared to interpret the measure, and to take this clause as a guiding principle, as a direction from Parliament how he shall operate in regard to the sleeper hewer. What would be the position? It would mean that the Conservator would not be able to grant a permit to hew on any area unless he was satisfied that all timber in his opinion suitable for sawmilling purposes had been felled on that area. If he came to the conclusion that there was on the area any timber suitable for sawmilling purposes, he would not be justified in granting a permit to hew. I can see no other interpretation of the clause.

Hon. J. Ewing: The Conservator would not do so.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I presume the Conservator is going to interpret this clause strictly.

Hon. H. Stewart: But the clause says "any area or portion thereof."

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I am taking the clause as it stands. Until all timber suitable for sawmilling purposes has been felled on an area, the Conservator would not under this clause have power to grant permission for sleeper hewers to operate on such area.

Hon. J. Duffell: It would simplify the matter to cut the clause out altogether.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: Certainly. At present, however, there appears to be an impression among those looking after the interests of the timber hewer that this clause makes the necessary provision. So far as I see, it does not make any provision whatever for the returned soldier hewer. I understand the clause does exactly what the Conservator wants. He wants to cut out the hewer altogether. The Conservator is quite honest about the matter. Other people want the same thing. Let them advocate the abolition of the hewer if they wish. But let us not pass a clause like this, ostensibly conferring power to grant hewing permits while doing nothing of the sort. Indeed, under this clause the Conservator would be exceeding his duty in granting permits. I believe it is the wish of the great number of members of both Houses of Parliament that provision should be made for the returning soldier hewer to follow his old occupation. I have listened carefully to the statistics given of percentages of timber wasted by the hewer and the sawmiller and the spot miller respectively. However, there is a good deal of waste going on in this State, and if we wish to practise economy we need not start on the soldier. Let us make a start elsewhere. Further, it is somewhat difficult to compute the percentage of waste by a timber mill, I think even the supporters of the timber miller will acknowledge that. The fire destroys the waste in the case of a mill; whereas the hewer leaves the evidence of his waste, and people are able to point to it. Be that as it may, I had been given the impression that provision had been made by this Bill to permit the sleeper hewer to continue to follow his calling under certain conditions. This clause, however, so far as I am able to see, does not give that power. Either we should say in plain language that the hewer shall not be allowed to follow his calling at all, or else we should make it clear

that under certain conditions—restrictive regulations preserving our timber—hewing shall be permitted. But, in any case, let us not fool the hewer with the idea that we are making provision for him when we are doing nothing of the kind. In Committee I propose to move an amendment which, if passed, will make Subclause 2 read “after such area has been cut over for sawmilling purposes or.” Another subclause of Clause 24 provides that in localities where, in the opinion of the Conservator, it is impracticable to remove timber for sawmilling purposes, hewing may be permitted. I do not know that we can take serious objection to that subclause. But the whole thing as regards making provision for the hewer hinges on paragraph (a), to which I have drawn attention. Indeed, I do not know that I should have spoken on this Bill at all were it not for the hewing phase of the subject. There are just two other clauses to which I wish to refer. Clause 56 is one. Here again we have not only the idea of making an autocrat of the Conservator, but the forest rangers also are to be a law unto themselves. Any forest officer may without warrant arrest any person reasonably suspected of having been concerned in any forest offence. If the accused person refuses to give his name and residence, or gives a name and residence which there is reason to believe to be false, or if there is reason to believe that he will abscond, then the officer making the arrest shall without unnecessary delay take the person so arrested before a justice of the peace to be dealt with according to law. Now is it necessary in modern, allegedly civilised, times to have such a provision? It seems most remarkable to invest a forest officer with such powers. I quite realise the difficulty of providing against offences in the forest, but I cannot lend my support to such a provision as this. The clause seems to me a provision similar to that enacted some time ago with reference to gold-stealing charges. I think Mr. Keenan was responsible for that provision. Strong exception was taken to it, and still is taken. But whereas it is possible to make out some sort of case in relation to gold stealing, I fail to see how any case whatever can be made out for such a provision under a Forests Bill. Again, in order to make sure that the officer in question shall not be penalised for doing what he considers to be his duty, Clause 66 just clinches the matter. The clause reads—

No matter or thing done by any forest officer bona fide in the exercise of his powers or in the performance of his duties under this Act shall subject such officer to any personal liability in respect thereof.

So he is going to be encouraged to exercise his autocratic powers given under Clause 56. Not only is he an autocrat, but he appears to be responsible to no one. He is removed from all liability. I direct the attention of the House to these three particular clauses, which I think are extremely undesirable. Even taking into consideration the necessity under which we are labouring to protect the forests, I fail to see that the two last-named provisions are required. They are altogether too drastic. I again refer

to Clause 24, dealing with sleeper hewers. I believe the majority of members in both Houses desire that some definite provision should be made for the sleeper hewers who are likely to return to their calling. With those exceptions I give my support to the Bill, recognising that it is time we had such a measure to conserve the forests. I intend, when in Committee, to move an amendment to Clause 24, which will provide that there shall be some guarantee to the returning hewer who desires to follow his calling. I think the Government should see to it that there is no ambiguity about this provision, because of all men whom we are not entitled to fool in any way the returned soldier is at the top.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [5.47]: We were all pleased to hear the speech made by Mr. Saunders. That hon. gentleman was a member of this Council about a quarter of a century ago.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: You will make him feel old.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I may be a year or two over or under the mark, but I am not far out. We are all glad to welcome him to the Council again, and I think it is a matter for regret that we do not hear him more often, especially as he has shown us by his clear and direct speech that his utterances are worth listening to. Personally, it gives me pleasure to be able to say that I am in thorough accord with the remarks he made to-day. I quite agree with those hon. members who say that the Bill is a good one. I cannot conceive anyone interested in Western Australia who is not also interested in the great forest wealth of the country. I can hardly conceive of anyone who knows anything about Western Australia, yet who does not appreciate the value of the forests as an asset to the State, and also the need to make the timber industry of Western Australia a permanent industry. At the same time, given full appreciation of all that the forest industry means, I think the Bill goes too far. I do not look at this question from the point of view of the timber companies, from the point of view of the hewers, or from the point of view of those very estimable gentlemen who are the enthusiasts of the forest league in this country. I try to look at this question from the point of view of an ordinary citizen desiring to do what is best for our forests and for the State generally. One fact in connection with the Bill which has been impressed on me, is that the forest league, or the forest enthusiasts, to whom a good deal of credit is due for having directed attention to the forest wealth of Western Australia, have, embodied in the Bill, all that they want. It is quite true that certain amendments were carried in another place which the forest league may not regard as desirable. On the other hand I am not sure that the Bill does not contain even more than the forest enthusiasts have asked for. The forest league, I can only say, is fortunate indeed in having a Government that grant them everything. The forest resources of the State have certainly been neglected, and our forest wealth has been the Cinderella amongst

the natural resources of Western Australia. It was either neglected or ill treated, but now we are going to the other extreme. I think it is rather too big a step to take all at once. The other industries of the State all have their advocates. I represent a province which is exclusively mining. We find there a great many mining enthusiasts who consider mining the main industry in the State, that all other industries are secondary, and they put forward very many proposals. Neither this nor any other Government have dreamt of giving them all that they want. The same may be said in regard to agriculture. We have the Country party, who come forward with considerable demands in the interests of agriculture. Certainly the Country party at present occupy a strong position in the State. It might almost be said that they hold the balance of power. I am not quite sure that that party do not at present get more than they ought to get. I have always been strongly sympathetic towards the agricultural industry, and the man on the land. But at the same time, notwithstanding that the Country party and the agriculturists may get more than they ought to, they do not get everything they ask for. The same may be said of the pastoralists and the fruit growers, but it has remained for the enthusiasts of the forest industry to get everything they have asked for, and even more than that. Mr. Kingsmill described the Bill as a modest little Bill. That was just the remark I should have expected to come from an enthusiast who happens to be president of the forest league. It was one of those remarks that suggest to the House, "Oh, it is some trifling little Bill, hardly worth while examining, and consequently it ought to be passed without much controversy and without close investigation." The Bill contains no fewer than 74 clauses. It is very far-reaching in its consequences, and in some respects the proposals contained in it are exceedingly drastic. I agree with the Bill in its general proposals, but I hope hon. members will closely examine the Bill for themselves and see exactly how it affects other industries and the public interests. We require to see to what extent it may affect the other industries, such as agriculture, fruit growing and mining. What does this "modest little Bill" provide for? It provides for a Conservator of Forests, appointed for seven years at a salary not specified, and removable only at the will of Parliament. The present Conservator is a gentleman with whom I am not acquainted, but I can say I have heard no one speak of him except in terms of praise. I have no reason whatever to think he is not a very worthy gentleman, that he is not well acquainted with the forest industry, that he has not a thorough and scientific knowledge, and considerable experience. But there are a few points that have been presented to me by gentlemen who admit the Conservator's great ability, points which are worthy of consideration. I do not know how long the Conservator has been in this State, I understand for a couple of years. I would suggest that in a Conservator of Forests

with the very drastic powers embodied in the Bill, something more is needed than a knowledge of forestry. Such a man may know all about trees all over the world, he may have devoted his whole life to the study, he may be a thorough scientist; but he requires to be more than that. We require to be quite sure that he is a good administrator. I do not say that the present Conservator is not a good administrator, but we should be perfectly certain that he is not only the forester of high repute which he is said to be, but that he is a capable administrator also, and that he has such a knowledge of affairs in this country as will enable him to carry out the duties of Conservator of Forests without creating friction. He requires to understand West Australian conditions and know the people, and to have a proper sense of proportion of the value of the timber industry as compared with other industries. From what Mr. Ewing said, one would infer that somebody associated with the Forests Department has not a proper sense of proportion as between the value of the forest industry and the value of the tin industry. These are points we ought to consider in connection with the appointment of the Conservator. The fact that the Conservator is such an excellent officer in respect of his knowledge and experience of forests has been advanced as a reason why he is a good man to be Conservator. But to be the administrator necessary under the Bill he must be possessed of a knowledge of Western Australian conditions and of the Western Australian people. Personally, I think that whilst we cannot altogether overlook the gentleman who will take the position if the Bill be passed, still we ought to look beyond that. We do not know how long the present occupant of the position will continue therein if appointed. There are many reasons why he may leave the State and we may have to get another, and we should look forward to the possibility of other Commissioners, some of whom may not be efficient. Therefore, we ought to be very careful before we give to any one man the drastic powers contained in the Bill. The powers are of a most extensive character. They are autocratic. We are virtually establishing a sort of forest king in this State. He can say what land shall be permanently dedicated as a State forest and shall be reserved. Of course, the Colonial Secretary will point out that all these powers are checked in some way or other because there is in the Bill a reference to the Minister or to the Governor, but we know what that means, that after all the check is very small indeed. We are giving the Conservator of Forests more power than any other man in this State possesses and over an area which he himself has the power to define. Take that excellent book which was published not long ago by Hutchins on the forests of Australia, and in which he dealt with the forests of Western Australia. We saw in the coloured maps the extensive area of forest country which we have. We do not know how far the Conservator of Forests may consider the forest country may extend or what restric-

tions he may impose, and to what extent such a procedure may affect other industries. The very enthusiasm of the Conservator of Forests—and we hope he is enthusiastic because he would not be of much use if he did not have a great deal of enthusiasm—must cause him to exaggerate the importance of the forest industry. It would be desirable in a Conservator that that should be so, but it is equally desirable while recognising that, that we should not give him too extensive powers, but that we should limit his powers in some way. Hon. members can see for themselves in the Bill the enormous powers which are given to the Conservator. Regulations are to be framed under no fewer than 42 different sub-clauses. They cover all sorts of things. He can deal with any vast area of country that he may choose to call forest country. There is one clause that seems to me to contain most remarkable power to give to any man, and I doubt whether this Parliament has the power to do so. The particular clause I refer to is the clause under which the Conservator may prohibit the exportation of certain kinds of timber. It may be a desirable clause, but I doubt whether we can constitutionally allow it to pass in its present form. It is Clause 67, and reads—

The Governor may by notification in the "Gazette," declare that certain species or classes of timber to be therein specified shall not be exported until after such timber has been inspected and the permission of the Conservator to the exportation thereof has been obtained.

And the second part is significant. It states—Any person who exports any such timber which does not bear a mark or brand, to be affixed by a forest officer, indicating that such permission has been given, shall be liable to a fine of £10 per load of 50 cubic feet of timber exported.

The importation and exportation of the commodities was one of the exclusive powers possessed by the Commonwealth Government. It was one of those powers which the State surrendered to the Commonwealth Government. It is not included in the current or residuary powers left to the State, but here in this clause we are actually forbidding the exportation of a certain commodity. The Colonial Secretary may find some authority for it. I hope he will be able to give us some justification for it when he replies. There is another aspect of this Bill which we should not overlook because at the present time there is no legislation affecting in any way the finances of this State that should not be carefully examined by this House. In the clauses dealing with finances, it is provided that half of the revenue of the Forest Department will be used as a fund for forest improvement and reafforestation. That is, half of the revenue derived from the forests. I take it that means gross revenue.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: There is only one sort of revenue; the gross revenue.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I would ask hon. members what this means. We know that the revenue from the timber industry during the past few years has not been normal. There-

fore we have to go back to the pre-war year of 1913-14. In that year the revenue was £53,000. The expenditure during the same year was £12,000. That meant that the net revenue was £40,000, and that the State finances benefited by that amount. I contend that if we pass this Bill it is inevitable that we are going to lose that amount of money. I assume that the revenue to be derived from the forest will, now that the war is over, approach the total which I have quoted. It will probably be more, but if we take it on the basis of the 1913-14 figures, the finances will lose that £40,000. It may be said that the Bill only provides that half the gross revenue be devoted to forest improvement and reafforestation. On the basis of the pre-war revenue, that would be £26,000. The expenditure, as I have stated, was £12,000. If we pass this Bill, it is certain that the expenditure of the Forest Department will be increased. It is no exaggeration to say that this Bill will be responsible for twice the expenditure of the pre-war year. Assuming the expenditure will be £24,000, that would mean that practically half the total revenue would go towards forest improvement and reafforestation, and the remainder would go towards the ordinary expenditure of the Forest Department as required under the Bill. It seems to me amazing that at a time like this the Treasurer should have so readily agreed to a Bill which will make him £40,000 a year worse off as compared with the pre-war period. We hear the Treasurer say that there is no chance of economising. He quotes figures and shows expenditure which is inevitable on account of interest and sinking fund, and also to meet charges that he has no control over and which Parliament has embodied in Bills, and then he points out that after all, the area over which economies can be effected is very limited. But whilst he is constantly making that plea the Government are increasing expenditure and passing legislation which is making the position worse. Later on if the Bill as it stands becomes law, he will say that this is something over which he had no control. I feel that we ought to modify this particular portion of the Bill by an amendment that will still leave ample money with which to make a beginning with the work that it is desired to carry out. What I will propose is that in place of half the gross revenue, half the net revenue should be set aside for forest improvement and reafforestation. A double purpose would be served if this is carried because, in addition to a slightly reduced expenditure on forest improvement and reafforestation there would also be some inducement for the department and the enthusiastic head to keep down departmental expenditure so that there might be more money available for improvement and reafforestation. The exact effect of the amendment would be that, on the pre-war basis, instead of getting £26,000 a year for forest improvements and reafforestation the Conservator would have £20,000. It would only mean an actual difference of £6,000 to the expenditure on forest improvement and reafforestation, but I consider that it would mean a good deal more indirectly and it would be a guar-

antee that at any rate some amount would go to Consolidated Revenue. I know hon. members will say that £20,000 is a mere trifle to spend upon forest improvement. I am inclined to take the view that very little can be done with such a sum of money, but it is not the amount that should be expended in a matter of that sort; it is what the State can afford. There are a great many directions in which expenditure might be usefully and profitably spent in Western Australia, but with a deficit of £3,200,000 and the prospect this year of another deficit of anything between £600,000 and £750,000, it is about time we began to be cautious before passing a Bill which will make the finances annually worse to the extent of £40,000. It may be said that we will get it back in additional revenue from the Forest Department. The result of this will not be seen immediately. We are legislating in this Bill not for to-day, but for generations ahead, and there will be no immediate beneficial results from this Forest Bill. Despite what has been done financially in other States and despite the needs of the forests and of the future we should cut our coat according to our cloth. We cannot at present afford to carry out all the financial proposals contained in the Bill.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 till 7.30 p.m.

Hon. J. MILLS (Central) [7.32]: I desire to make a few remarks in connection with this Bill. I notice that the leader of the House has introduced a new clause, No. 48. At first I thought it was the intention of the Government to provide this fire break in order to protect the private owner. My opinion is, the more fires that go through the forests, the better it will be for their preservation. The leaves that fall annually provide sufficient material for the fire to keep the undergrowth down, whereas if there were no fire for a year or two, the undergrowth would be a menace, not only to the young timber, but to the forest. I argue, therefore, that it would be better for fires to be encouraged as much as possible every year, and with this object in view I suggest that men could be employed in the forests to clear around the small seedlings and remove fallen timber. This would be a splendid avenue of employment for returned soldiers who, owing to the exactions of the war, are physically incapable of any strenuous employment. Of course it would entail a lot of expense, but I think it would be justified. I am certain, if we make fire breaks in the manner suggested by the Bill, sooner or later a fire will destroy the whole forest if the leaves and debris have been allowed to accumulate for eight or ten years. It is not more possible to stay forest fires than to prevent the rains falling from heaven; therefore, I cannot support that clause.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [7.35]: It is my intention to support the Bill. We have no right to exploit the forests of this State unless we make some provision for those who come after us. There is a limit to the extent of our duty to do this, and it is a question whether this is an opportune moment for the purpose of introducing a measure of this description. With the cessation of hostilities in

Europe, there will be a large demand for building materials, and if the passing of the measure places any restriction upon the free export of timber, it may do us an irreparable injury in years to come. We have before us a splendid opportunity of advertising what the State will produce, and our timber is not the least of our valuable products. A good deal has been said about the timber and its value, and the Colonial Secretary, in introducing the Bill, remarked that our timbers have been used in the past for purposes for which they were too good, namely for sleepers and so forth. I do not quite agree with that. The reputation of our Western Australian timbers has been based upon those qualities that they possess, and the engineers, architects, and builders of the world do not wait for the people of Western Australia to tell them what they are good for, they assess them at their own value. I suggest that the Government should do the same. Let me give an instance of the manner in which the Government advertise our Western Australian timbers. Only a few weeks ago I was at North Fremantle, where a train was taken over which had been constructed by the W.A. Ironworks. No fault could be found with the contract, but it was extraordinary that the carriages were furnished throughout inside with teak from India, with the exception of a few shutters which were made of honey-suckle wood. Is that the way we are going to advertise the timbers of this State? If we do that, how can we expect the people of other parts of the world to adopt our timbers? Recently we had another instance. We had the Bulk Handling of Wheat Bill before us. One or more speakers advocated the use of jarrah for the construction of the silos, but the Minister in charge of the Bill said that jarrah was unsuitable for the purpose on account of the risks of fire, and that the cost of fire insurance would be so great that it would not pay to use jarrah. Since then evidence has been given before the Royal Commission on wheat marketing, and published in the Press, which goes to show that, even assuming the silos were constructed of jarrah, the cost of the insurance of the silos and their contents would be less than the interest on the increased cost of construction in concrete. When we realise that we produce the jarrah and that we have a Government introducing a measure for the purpose of using an imported material, in preference to our timber, it seems hypocrisy. I join with several speakers on a good deal of controversial matter. I also consider that the powers given to the Conservator of Forests are too great. I realise that we must have continuity of policy, and that we must have an officer with a certain free hand, but we know that those with enthusiasm in any walk of life fail to realise the bearing of one industry upon another. Our foresters would no doubt be seized with that spirit of the forest which seems to animate those engaged in that class of work. It is right that that should be so, but it needs the controlling hand of those interested in other directions to see that they do not go too far, and therefore I favour the suggestion that a board of control should be

created with a fixed tenure of office to act with the Conservator. I do not approve of an advisory board. We have had instances already of advisory boards. One was existing in connection with our forests, but a time came when the Minister dispensed with it and acted on his own initiative. We have had a similar instance of an advisory board in connection with wheat marketing. We must have a board of control with executive powers, in conjunction with the Conservator of Forests. There is another difficulty which the Bill presents: what is the difference between a State forest and a timber reserve? I imagine that a State forest is a permanent reserve in which we shall perpetuate for all time the timber production for our requirements, and timber reserves are only temporary reserves for that purpose. But I may be wrong.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: The interpretation clause bears on that.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: The interpretation is very wide. In other words, it says a State forest is a State forest and a timber reserve is a timber reserve under this Bill. I looked up "holding" and "tenure" and I saw a slight difference there. But the most important difference I notice is in relation to hewing. A good deal of controversy has taken place both here and in another place on this question, and I find that timber hewing is not allowed within the boundaries of the State forests. But it says nothing as to whether it is allowed or not inside a timber reserve. If it is to be allowed inside a timber reserve, I imagine that it might as well be allowed in the State forests also. If, on the other hand, it means that the hewers can work in neither the State forests nor the timber reserves, it seems that that clause of the Bill dealing with hewing should be in another place. Another question which struck me was that of the finances, namely, that one-half of the revenue of the department should be expended by the Conservator without any other authority than the Act. I see an amendment by the Colonial Secretary on the Notice Paper, however, that the proviso at the end of Clause 41 should be transposed to Subclause 2. This will clear up the position.

The Colonial Secretary: That will make the matter clear.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: Yes. I see that it applies in a proper manner. Another question about which I am not quite clear is as to how far this Bill will interfere with existing rights granted by other Acts. We have an Act giving Mr. Rowley certain rights over blackboy in the State forests. I am not quite sure how far these rights would be interfered with, or whether he would be protected under this measure.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Have they not lapsed?

Hon. J. F. ALLEN: I do not know about that. If these rights have lapsed then there is nothing more to be said. There may be other concessions, however, which have been granted. Then there is the question of oil. The Conservator is given power over the minerals within the boundaries of State forests. Does this

apply to any discovery of oil within these boundaries? If so, it may prevent the founding of an industry which will be of greater importance to the State than the timber industry. If this is not so, well and good. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson debate adjourned.

BILL—STATE CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT.

Select Committee's report.

Debate resumed from the 26th November.

Hon. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [7.48]: Generally speaking the report of the select committee is the unanimous verdict of the members composing that body. There is, however, an exception, and that is in regard to the clause which deals with the question of State control and a State children's council. The committee on this point were equally divided. The question is of sufficient importance to warrant me in placing before the House some extracts from the evidence which was tendered to the select committee by various witnesses. With this object in view, I refer members to the evidence which I am glad to see has now been placed before them. The first witness called was Mr. Cowan, a member of the children's court. After a preliminary examination, certain questions were put to this witness by the chairman. It will be found in question 25 that this witness makes the following statement—

If there were a State children's council it would be a different thing. From the point of view of the Children's Protection Society, for which I desire to speak, there should be a State children's council.

I ask hon. members to note this. It seemed to me, at the time certain witnesses were giving evidence on behalf of the Children's Protection Society, that they were probably being unduly influenced on behalf of this society, on the question as to whether there should be a State children's council or whether the matter should remain as at present in the hands of the Minister through the State Children's Department. Mrs. Cowan was the first witness who made reference to this question, and she says, in reply to the chairman's question, No. 35, "You are a member of the Children's Protection Society?"

Yes. I have been a member since its inception.

The chairman then asked her—

What is your opinion of the method of control of the State Children's Department as it exists and as it should exist?

Mrs. Cowan replied—

Knowing a good deal about what is going on we feel there should be a State children's council.

I will miss questions 35 to 44, dealing with the question of a State children's council as against State control. The next witness to whom I would call attention is Jean Beedle, a member

of the Children's Court. In question 174, she is asked—

Have you considered the creation of a State children's council?

The witness replied—

Yes. I think it would be an advantage if it were constituted on proper lines. I do not think that just anybody should be appointed to that council, but only capable men and women should be chosen. Then it would be a splendid thing, for if members are to be chosen for their social and political opinions I could not expect much of them.

I ask hon. members particularly to note that. Later on they will find from the evidence that it was desired that there should be a State children's council, because such a body could better control the work. I intend showing later on, as a result of these questions which were asked of representatives of the Children's Protection Society, that they based the whole of their opinion, and the whole of their reasons for stipulating for a State children's council, upon the system that is in vogue in South Australia. Mrs. Jessie Gover, who is the secretary of the Children's Protection Society, was then called. She, with others, states that she considers a State council could do better work than the State department. She went on in her evidence to instance the fact that the State children's council would be able to obtain more money than probably the department would be able to obtain, having better facilities for getting money from those who were entrusting the child to the care of the council. The Rev. D. I. Freedman, in question 335, is asked—

You take an interest in and hold an official position upon the Children's Protection Society?

The witness answered—

I am chairman of the executive committee of the Children's Protection Society.

The same witness also advocates a State children's council. Then we come to Major David McClure, of the Salvation Army, and social secretary for the State. He is a man who has had a great deal of experience in this class of work in South Australia. Before I refer to the evidence of this witness, I would like to state that the South Australian Government issued a booklet giving particulars upon which the State children's council of the State is founded. The council is composed of six ladies and six gentlemen, who are appointed by the Government from time to time as may be necessary. The council have no right even to suggest names to the Government, and every year on the 1st December four members must retire, but are eligible for re-election. Members will see at a glance that, in the form in which these members of the State children's council of South Australia are elected, room is given for any reasonable-minded person to come to the conclusion that they are to a great extent subject to political influence, the appointments being controlled by the Government in power. This booklet also refers to the finances of the South Australian State children's council, and it says—

The financial affairs of the department are almost exclusively under Ministerial control, the council only making a recommendation once a year to the Government as to the expenditure. The council does not, however, deal with accounts or consider monthly expenses.

I mention this, because in the evidence of one or two of the witnesses before the select committee, it was stated that it would be necessary to have some executive power; in other words, if the State children's council were appointed here they would require to have some control over the charity vote, which I think would be detrimental to the best interests of child life in the State. Then it was argued that if the State children's council were appointed they would be able to get more money from the fathers of illegitimate children. Instances were given of this which do not appear in the evidence, because it was asked as a special favour that they should not appear, indicating where money was really got from a father under circumstances which I am quite sure would not redound to the credit of any such council, should such a body come into existence. Suffice it to say that notwithstanding the fact that the State children's council of South Australia is held up as a model council, a little further on in the booklet I find this paragraph, relating to the methods of the collection of money for the maintenance of the children—

The collection from defaulting parents for their contributions towards the support of their children is another part of the department's work. The sum collected last year towards the total cost of State children was £1,534, and is much short of what should be paid.

It will be seen that this model State council of South Australia with all its machinery, and in spite of all that has been said in evidence regarding it, is not what it is cracked up to be. With the ability and efficiency of the officers of our State Children Department, and in view of the manner in which they carry out their duties, and also considering the proposed enlargements and improvements of the jurisdiction of the Children's Court, I have no doubt that the State Children Department of Western Australia would prove more effective than a body selected from time to time subject to political control, a body continually changing, a body which may consist to-day of the best men and women in the State, but to-morrow may be of an entirely different character. In the circumstances I have no hesitation in affirming that our State Children Department can more effectively carry out this work than could a State council such as mentioned by Mr. Kingsmill; and I hope that when the Bill is in Committee that which at present exists here in this respect will be maintained, and that the Government will be assisted in their efforts to deal with State children. For further information in regard to the operations of the State children's council of South Australia, I would ask hon. members to peruse the evidence of Major McClure, of the Salvation Army, whose labours extend over a period of 25 years in South Australia, and compare this evidence with that tendered

by those witnesses who support the idea of a State children's council in this State. I have the firm conviction that hon. members will come to the conclusion that State control is preferable to control by State children's council.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [8.3]: I have very few words to add in supporting the motion. I feel deeply indebted to the select committee for the very thorough manner in which they have examined the Bill. It recalls to my mind the fact that a committee composed of almost identically the same members last year did similar service not only to the Government, but to the State in connection with the Bill to amend the Health Act. The result of their labours is that at the present time this State of Western Australia is in a better position for coping with such an outbreak as that of pneumonic influenza recently reported, than is any other State of the Commonwealth. For that happy condition of affairs I think we are chiefly indebted to the foresight of our Commissioner of Public Health, and the tactful manner in which the select committee of this House carried that Bill over a number of controversial clauses. As regards the amendments recommended by the select committee, there are very few that I am not prepared to adopt just as they stand. But there are two or three regarding which I desire to offer a few words of comment. So far as the proposed State Children's Council is concerned, I do not think it is necessary to say anything just now, as the committee being equally divided, do not make a recommendation. I think it will be generally conceded that a movement of this kind—whether it is in the nature of reform or otherwise I need not argue just now—should not be put into force until there is behind it a sufficient body of public opinion to convince at all events a majority of the select committee constituted as this one was, that the step is necessary. Therefore it is hardly worth while discussing the matter at present. Of the amendments which have been proposed one relates to the appointment of a probation officer. I am not sure whether that is an amendment or a suggestion, but at all events it is a suggestion which the department hope to be in a position very shortly to carry into effect. In the Children's Court at the present time the police who have to attend do not wear uniform. Every effort is made to render the Children's Court as unlike a court as possible from that point of view. There is one paragraph of the report which deals with the constitution of the Children's Court and the position of the special magistrate, which rather suggests to my mind that the select committee might not be entirely conversant with the present practice. That paragraph of the report reads—

Your committee consider that it is essential that the special magistrate of the court, with whose functions, present and proposed, it has no desire to interfere, should be a magistrate, police or resident, or a person with legal training, but does not consider

that his time should be exclusively devoted to the service of the court. The present practice seems satisfactory.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: That is the present practice.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That paragraph seems to my mind rather contradictory. The committee in the first place set up the proposition that it is desirable that the special magistrate to the court, the man who as a matter of practice presides over the court and directs its affairs, should be a magistrate, police or resident, or a man with legal training; and then the committee go on to say that the present practice seems satisfactory. But the present practice is that the special magistrate, police or resident, the person with legal training, never appears in that court at all, or very, very seldom.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: Not very often, no.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is not very often the magistrate sits. Therefore, how it can be considered by the select committee as desirable that the active head of the Children's Court should be a resident or a police magistrate or a man with legal training, and also considered by the committee that the present position is satisfactory, when in point of fact the resident magistrate takes very little interest in court, having very little time to attend to it, I do not quite understand. I think that in a very little while it may be found desirable to have at the head not only of the Perth Children's Court but of all the Children's Courts throughout the metropolitan area such a trained man as the select committee seem to suggest. As regards the select committee's proposal for the abolition of Clauses 9, 10, 11 and 12, which deal with the apprenticing out of children from institutions and the control of their moneys, I had already agreed to this as the result of a deputation which waited upon me before the select committee sat. Consequently I am quite in accord with that recommendation. The suggestion that the word "convicted" should be struck out of Clause 2, paragraph 2, I am also quite in accord with, and for the reasons advanced by the chairman of the select committee. We do not want to class as a State child every child who may be convicted of a minor offence. But I think the select committee would probably agree with the amendment which I propose to submit, substituting for "convicted" the words "committed to an institution." It is considered desirable that such children should become State children. The select committee propose a new paragraph to be added to Clause 6—

Upon any order having been made in connection with any child by the Children's Court it shall be the duty of the department to carry out in all particulars such order.

That is all right so far as it goes, and without any such clause in the Bill it is undoubtedly the duty of the department to carry out such orders. But I do not know whether it is intended that that paragraph should interfere with the discretion at the present time given to the Minister under the Act in these cases.

If it is intended that the discretion should be interfered with, then it seems to me that some further amendment of the principal Act will be necessary. The appeal from the Children's Court is to the Supreme Court and of course can only be taken in proper time. I am sure no member will desire that there should be no recourse except an appeal to the Supreme Court. As a matter of practice it is very rarely indeed that the department, through the Minister, interferes in any way with the decisions of the Children's Court; and I venture to say that every instance in which those decisions have been interfered with could be entirely justified. In one case that occurred a very little while ago, the Children's Court had ordered a certain child to be entrusted to the custody of its grandmother in preference to its mother. Having read the evidence very carefully, I have no doubt that the decision was absolutely a right one. A very short time afterwards, however, the whole situation was altered by the return of the father of the child from the war and his establishing a home with his wife. I do not know under the present Act of any means by which that child could have been restored to its father and mother except by the order of the Minister, which did undoubtedly interfere with the decision of the court. I think, however, that the interference was a very proper one. There is one other case—and I think it is the case which gave rise to the evidence on which the select committee founded their conclusion, because it is the only case in which, to my knowledge, any objection has been taken to the action of the department in interfering through the Minister with the order of the court—a case of a boy 16 years of age who had been convicted for a second time of theft, and who had been sentenced by the court to three months' imprisonment. On reviewing the case it seemed to the department, and it also seemed to me, that something better might be done; and there were also people who came forward and undertook to look after the boy if he was committed to their charge. The course taken in that instance was to recommend the Governor through the Attorney General to remit the remainder of the sentence, just as would have been done in the case of a criminal of mature age.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: That case was not mentioned to the select committee.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is the only case in my experience of these matters in which any resentment has been expressed at the action of the department in interfering with the decisions of the court. As a matter of fact, that lad of 16 years was released and very shortly afterwards, before actually reaching the required age, he enlisted and went abroad in the service of his country. Another matter which has to be considered in this connection is that this Act operates all over the State. In Perth we have a Children's Court comprised of men and women who attend very regularly and are familiar with the Act and have a very fine appreciation of their duties; but now and again cases of this kind are taken before justices in remote parts of

the State who may not be familiar with the Act and who in some cases possibly may not have that very high appreciation of their duties. I hope it is not intended by the addition of this clause to take away the right the Minister now has under the Act—apparently a right deliberately conferred—of reviewing decisions of this kind. I think those are practically the only amendments suggested by the Committee with which any fault whatever can be found, and consequently I cordially support the motion moved by Mr. Kingsmill.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan—in reply) [8.13]: I wish to thank the Colonial Secretary for the kindly manner in which he has reviewed the amendments suggested by the select committee, and also for the extremely complimentary remarks he has made about the work of the committee. Regarding the Children's Court, let me point out that there is no contradiction whatever. So far as the select committee are concerned, they are quite satisfied with the present method of running the Children's Court and do not think it necessary that a special magistrate should invariably sit in the court. As a fact, a special magistrate in my opinion—and I think the committee agree in this—is a man who need be called upon only when legal questions arise, as they must often arise, in the Children's Court, demanding more knowledge of the law than is likely to be found amongst those persons who at present do the bulk of the work of the Children's Court. For that reason, and in order that it may not be possible to appoint as president or special magistrate of the court a gentleman who has not the requisite legal knowledge, the select committee deemed it necessary to place that recommendation before this House. There are cases hon. members can think of for themselves which may arise even in the Children's Court where an intimate knowledge of the law and an intimate knowledge of the consequences which may arise from a decision given by the court—which decision might have far-reaching consequences—are necessary, and therefore the services of a special magistrate are needed. But the select committee do not think it necessary or advisable that the special magistrate should be taken away from the work for which I understand we have all too few magistrates to-day, in order that he may sit daily in the Children's Court. I cannot imagine that for some years to come a set of circumstances might arise which would necessitate his doing so. I think that is the view which the select committee have taken of that aspect of the matter. Now let me deal with the matter the Colonial Secretary dealt with last—the question of reviewing the verdicts and sentences of that court. When a court is set up it is set up in a judicial capacity, and no person should have the power of varying the commitments of that court. If it be desired to make such variations I suggest that he should embody in the Bill an amendment providing that such sentences as he spoke of might be referred to the court for the court itself to review. But to create a court and then to reverse or vary its verdicts

is, I think, a stultification of justice. I do not think it is right or proper to the court or the community, and that is the reason I, and I think the other members of the select committee, thought it was the duty of the department to carry out without variation any of the verdicts of the court whether they agree with them or not. Mr. Duffell made various remarks about the children's council, but I intimated at the beginning that I had abandoned this project for the time being, and it would be beating the air to reply to his remarks, although a perfectly convincing reply, I think, is available. I have again to thank the leader of the House for the kindly manner in which he has viewed the amendments recommended by the select committee, and I hope that the Committee of the whole will support the select committee that they have appointed.

Question put and passed.

BILL—CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT.

Message received from the Assembly notifying that amendments 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 had been agreed to, but that No. 2 had not been agreed to.

MOTION—HONORARY MINISTERS AND DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION.

Debate resumed from the 28th November on motion by Hon. A. Sanderson, "That in the opinion of this House, the present system of entrusting the administration and control of important departments of State to Honorary Ministers is undesirable."

Hon. J. W. HICKEY (Central) [8.20]: I rise to support the motion. I do so because I realise that to a great extent this is a motion of censure upon the present Administration. So far as I could gather from the trend of the remarks I think the criticism and the debate tend to that conviction. However, I do not suppose that the Government will take very much notice of the motion, because they have had so many kicks in the past that they will take a more or less philosophical view of the situation and say that one or two kicks more or less do not matter much. Whatever may be said about the appointment of Honorary Ministers in the past, this can be said, that it has never been done under the same conditions as at present. During the debate we have had the history of the appointment of Honorary Ministers given to us by old political heads in this Chamber. They have traced the system back to those who were appointed in an advisory capacity. From their remarks it appears that since the advent of the Labour Administration the Honorary Ministers were given a little more work and perhaps rendered a little more assistance to the administration, and of course received a certain amount of remuneration. But it was evidently left to this Government to appoint Honorary Ministers to the full control of departments and full responsibility of administration, and practically pay them office boys' wages. If these appointments and the assistance are necessary—and evidently the Gov-

ernment think they are—then if the people were given proper reasons they might be prepared to give the Government power to alter the Constitution, so that instead of having Honorary Ministers acting like they are to-day they could have ministers who rank as such. The present Government are emulating to a considerable extent the national worker or the blackleg organisation. As the Honorary Minister has been mentioned pretty often in connection with this debate, I wish to say I have had very little experience of him, but what little experience I have had will induce me to keep well away from him in the future. There is one particular department of his work in regard to which I have come closely in contact with him, and consider he is totally unfitted for. I say so without any heat, recrimination, or harsh thoughts of the past. I refer to his stand in connection with industrial matters. Some time ago this country was thrown into practically a state of chaos so far as wheat loading was concerned. I am not going to review the history of what was known as the strike on that occasion. I have been connected with industrial matters for many years, and I have always been able to deal in a businesslike and practical manner with the opposition. In some instances the men have been to blame, and I have had no hesitation in telling them so. In other instances the employers have been to blame, and after having explained the matter to them I have generally been able to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion to all concerned. In this case I endeavoured to do the same thing, and accompanied a deputation to the Honorary Minister. I think we know pretty well the result. I might say, with all due respect to the Honorary Minister, I have never had to deal with a man who was less prepared to meet me, or who was more uncompromising than the hon. gentleman. He placed the country to a great deal of expense, and that is a matter for our consideration. With regard to the merits or demerits of that particular strike, I will give no opinion just now. I gave it to the hon gentlemen on a former occasion. While I was in entire sympathy with the demands of the men on that occasion, I frankly admit I was not in sympathy with the methods adopted to secure their demands. As I told them, I was prepared to go into the matter with the Honorary Minister. I attempted to discuss the matter with him, but he turned me down flat, and said there was nothing to discuss. I even went so far as to ask him, whether, if I were prepared to go back and take it on my own responsibility to ask the men to return to work to-morrow, he would re-employ them. He said there was nothing further from his mind. That amounted to victimisation. I said to him, "You are prepared to victimise them even if I admit they are wrong." He said, "You can call it victimisation if you like, but they are no longer in the employ of the Wheat Scheme." In connection with that matter I asked a question on the floor of the House, and he denied victimisation. But if that was not victimisation I should like to know what it was. I

asked, "Is it a fact that the Minister declined to discuss anything in the nature of terms?" The Minister replied, "There is no question of terms to discuss. The men employed ceased work. They were given a certain time in which to change their minds and were told that if they did not return to work on the terms specified they would be refused further work in connection with the Scheme." Some days after that they asked to be re-employed on the same terms, and this was refused, and yet the Minister says there was no victimisation. These are the sort of things that breed class bias, bitterness, and hatred. If we find a man uncompromising, even when we go so far as to practically admit we are wrong, and even then he will not give a fair deal, how can we expect industrial peace to reign? Evidently the Honorary Minister has regretted his past actions.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): Oh, no.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: He claims there was no victimisation on that occasion. Evidently he was guided or dominated by Mr. Keys, although I was rather surprised at that, because I always thought the Minister had sufficient backbone to fight his own case. But now I am more satisfied than ever that Mr. Keys is the man who controls the Minister.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Have we not an arbitration court to settle these disputes?

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: I am coming to that in a moment. There was no arbitration court to go to and this was the man we had to deal with. I have no doubt hon. members have had something to do with industrial disputes, and they know something about the practical, businesslike and tactful way of going about this business. I am satisfied that the Minister's sympathies were a little bit with the men, but at the same time he did not have a chance. Since that time those stacks have been left alone by unionists. That meant that many of the best carriers refused to go along to the stacks, with the result that the Government have had to pick up labour in a haphazard way. Bearing in mind the fact that these men are an asset to the country, it has taken since February last to remove the victimisation which was placed on them. I have here a letter from Mr. Keys, the man who bosses the Minister, written on the 28th November, and which reads—

Further to my recent conversation with you over the telephone, I have pleasure in forwarding you herewith copy of a letter that has been addressed to the various officers in charge of the country wheat depots under the control of the Scheme. This is the letter referred to—

I have to advise you that in the employment of any labour at the depots for the coming season, no applicant is to be prejudiced by the fact that last year he may have been one of those who went out on strike, and his participation in last year's trouble shall not in any way count against him.

That looks something like victimisation. That looks as if there had been an embargo placed on those men. If not, it is rather strange that the secretary of the organisation should have received a communication of that nature from the controller of the Wheat Scheme. In answer to that letter, to show how the men are keeping faith, the secretary's reply is as follows:—

Your favour to hand of the 28th inst., with copy of letter addressed to the officer in charge of the wheat depots, for which I thank you. In return for that consideration my union have publicly notified all members that the embargo placed on them by the Minister has been removed and they, with others, are free to accept work on any of the depots at the rates you submitted to me on the 20th December last year until our case is determined by the Federal arbitration court.

Could anything be fairer than that by the representative of the men? They are prepared to fall in with the proposals and they are prepared to accept work at last year's rates. During all my association with industrial matters I do not think I ever went so far with a man as I did with the Minister and what is more, the two men on the deputation who were with me, and who were both well known labourites and shearers in this country, one of whom also had come into contact with some employers who were most hidebound and conservative, declared that they had never met anyone more uncompromising or, as one, perhaps, vulgarly remarked, more pig-headed than the Honorary Minister.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Stability.

Hon. J. HICKEY: Perhaps, but it has taken a long time to develop. There is no need to go further. I have no feeling in connection with this matter at all. I am only mentioning the subject in order that hon. members may be prepared for future development. What I have stated this evening is correct. I offered that morning to go back to the men and recommend that they resume work on the old conditions, provided the Minister was prepared to re-employ them. He said he would not and he had to engage 15 or 20 policemen at Spencer's Brook for a long period. All he had to do there was to tell me that he was prepared to remove the victimisation. Instead of that he plunged the Scheme into chaos and involved the country in considerable expenditure. By no stretch of imagination can it be said that the work was afterwards done as satisfactorily as it had been done before. I made myself familiar with everything that took place and I adopted my own method of finding out what was going on. I was there to see for myself. The Minister might ask how I got there. The fact remains I got there and I know exactly what happened. With regard to the arbitration court award, we advised our men to accept the conditions and to abide by the decision of the court when the case came on. We expected that the hearing would take place this year. The general secretary of the organisation in Sydney has cited a case for the arbitration court and we hope it will come on for hearing in the near future, and, whatever the result may be, we intend, as we have

done in the past, to loyally abide by the decision, just as the association has abided by every decision which has been given by the court in Australia. The members of the union have had certain disagreements and ruffles with the employers, but it can be said to the credit of the A.W.U., which perhaps is the most powerful organisation in Australia, that they have never broken an arbitration court award. But what do we find? Whilst they are prepared to do that, Mr. Baxter and Mr. Keys are going to test the legality of whether the award can operate in Western Australia. Is that kind of thing conducive to good arrangement? Will it help industrial matters in Western Australia? If an arbitration court award is good enough for any part of Eastern Australia, it ought to be good enough for Western Australia, even though a shilling or two shillings more is awarded for this State. Yet those in authority are prepared to plunge the country into a condition of industrial upheaval. I am not using any threat but I want hon. members to know what the position is, and to know what is likely to occur, and I desire to utter this warning, that if Mr. Baxter and Mr. Keys are not prepared to do something to bring about a solution of this difficulty, the responsibility of any trouble that may arise will be on their shoulders. The men understand that the arbitration court has jurisdiction all over Australia, yet even to-day Mr. Keys is getting advice from the Crown Law authorities as to whether the award will cover Government employees. They are prepared to contest this matter and they are quite satisfied to hunt around for an excuse for again throwing Western Australia into a position of chaos. I sincerely trust that will not happen again. I do not mind being mixed up in a little hurly burly or industrial strife on occasions, if necessary, but I always look for the line of least resistance and try to get down to solid business. These men are going back to work on the old conditions and I say it advisedly, without any heat or without any intention of making a threat, that if the position is not accepted by the Wheat Scheme of Western Australia, the responsibility of any difficulty which may arise will rest entirely with the Minister and the management of the Scheme. I would even say that the next upheaval will hardly be like the one which occurred a few months back. On that occasion it was a disjointed and a spasmodic effort by a handful of men. On the next occasion possibly there will be an organisation behind them and it is difficult to say how far the trouble will extend.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member will speak to the motion.

Hon. J. HICKEY: I have been drawn off the track, perhaps, in connection with the motion because I happen to know something of this particular difficulty which has arisen as a result of the Honorary Minister's administration, and I am expressing the hope that there will not be cause given for a recurrence. I am not any longer concerned about what happened before, but I am uttering a warning to the Minister that if there is a recurrence of trouble it may assume serious proportions, and something will occur if the Minister and Mr. Keys do not adopt a reasonable attitude. The diffi-

culty may have been thrown upon the Honorary Minister somewhat suddenly after assuming office and he may have acted entirely on the advice of his manager. As a practical man now, and having had some experience, he ought to be in a better position to act and to prevent a recurrence of any kind of a difficulty.

Hon. R. J. LYNN (West) [8.43]: I realise this is only one more pious resolution submitted and that a good deal of repetition has taken place in connection with the debate. I have no wish to record a vote in connection with this motion without explaining to some little extent my reason for voting. I propose to support the motion, though not because the Honorary Ministers are not capable of administering their departments. Fortunately, perhaps, for me I am not able to speak with any degree of authority of the work of the Honorary Ministers from an administrative point of view. I could, however, speak respecting the administration of other Ministers, but as that does not come within the scope of the motion I am debarred from saying anything in that direction. I am supporting this motion purely from the constitutional aspect. I believe myself that the actions of Honorary Ministers have been quite illegal in connection with most of the matters pertaining to the administration of their departments. I do not know of any constitutional authority which authorises any Honorary Minister being designated Minister for Agriculture or Minister for Lands or any similar title. It is highly essential that if the motion is carried, the Government should take some notice of it and amend the Constitution to provide for the necessary Ministers to control the departments. I am quite satisfied that the leader of the House has an impossible task to perform. It is almost too much to ask any one Minister to take control of all the measures that come before the House. I do not wish to suggest that the leader of the House is not controlling his departments as well as, if not better than, any previous occupant of his office; but when we consider that the great bulk of the expenditure in the Estimates is under the control of the leader of this House, it is seen that when the House is sitting for long periods his is an almost impossible task. I support the motion, believing it is necessary that we should have more than the statutory number of Ministers to control the many departments of State. Consider the number of trading concerns that the Government have to-day. When we remember that one Minister has control of half a dozen of them, it is seen that his task is an impossible one. How can any one Minister control Police, Hospitals, the Hospital for the Insane, Education, Harbours, Rivers and Lights, Harbour Trusts, Health, Fisheries—anything up to 20 departments and their branches. If one Minister can control all those departments and give to them the essential supervision, display the knowledge necessary to the running of those departments, and exercise that efficiency which will give the best results to the State, all I can say is that a Minister so qualified—especially if, as a Minister in another place has said, Ministers get only £500 to them-

selves—should be considering the throwing up of his portfolio and the obtaining of some more remunerative class of employment outside of politics. I want there to be no misunderstanding respecting my supporting of the motion. I am supporting it, not on personal lines, but because I consider that under the Constitution, if an injunction were asked for in the Supreme Court, restraining the Honorary Ministers from signing papers and documents, that injunction would be granted. I am not sure that many of the titles signed by Honorary Ministers could not be questioned in the Supreme Court. If I am wrong, I suppose the Government will continue to carry on as they have done in the past. I will support the motion.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [8.50]: I am glad Mr. Sanderson has moved the motion. I am quite sure that hon. member has had no personal motive in doing so. Those who know Mr. Sanderson, whether inside or outside the House, will not accuse him of being animated by any other purpose than the conserving of the best interests of the State. Mr. Baxter seemed to think that the motion was personally directed against himself, and his reply was exclusively confined to a defence of his administration. That gave a somewhat personal aspect to the matter. Seeing that it was a system introduced by the Government which was being attacked, it was surprising to me that the reply did not come from the leader of the House.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): I merely replied to the criticism aimed at myself.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I should have thought it would have been more agreeable to the Honorary Minister had the reply come from the leader of the House. Then, if there were any personal reflections agitating the Honorary Minister, he could have answered them later on. The motion is a direct attack on the Government over a system which the Government have instituted, rather than an attack upon any one Minister or any three Ministers. A good deal of adverse criticism of Mr. Baxter has been indulged in. I can only speak of Mr. Baxter in regard to one personal matter, and the energy and promptness which he displayed on that occasion were certainly creditable to him. I informed Mr. Baxter of a certain matter that had been indirectly affecting his department, and I said it was in another Minister's department and that any business man in Western Australia would have completed in two hours what had been for over two months in that other Minister's department without being completed. I must say that Mr. Baxter, although he was very busy at the time I put the matter before him, when he heard that it was affecting his department and the interests of the State, promptly got to work; and, owing to his representations to other members of the Ministry, the matter was fixed up in two hours. When the Honorary Minister has been subjected to so much adverse criticism it is only right that I should mention an incident of that kind. If the Honorary Minister has

made all the mistakes he was represented to have made, the blame should not rest entirely upon him. A very large portion of it must rest upon those who placed him in his position and gave him duties which, according to the statements made in the House, that hon. member has not the capacity to satisfactorily carry out. It seems strange that Mr. Baxter should have been chosen for the work he was selected to do, instead of being given charge of a running department where there are permanent officials to fall back upon. That would be a very simple thing as compared with some of the work which Mr. Baxter has been asked to carry out, as for instance the taking over of the whole of the administration of the Wheat Scheme, which was an entirely new thing. That Scheme would tax the administrative capacity of any member of the Ministry. Moreover, some of the other duties which the Honorary Minister was asked to perform have presented considerable difficulties. One of the problems was to deal with the rabbit invasion. This is an almost impossible task. The hon. member who has just sat down mentioned some of the duties which the Colonial Secretary has to carry out. I should like to give a list of the duties that, so far as I can make out, the Honorary Minister has to attend to. If he is incapable of carrying out those duties, the responsibility and blame should rest upon those who selected him for such a task. Amongst those duties, I find he has had control of the jam factory, of the department of rabbits and vermin, he had to deal with the Commissioner of the Wheat Belt, the Chief Inspector of Potatoes, fruit-growing, noxious weeds, tree pulling, stock, brands, wool classing depot, the entomologist, cornsacks and the branding of bags, the Wheat Marketing Scheme, cool stores at Wyndham, at Perth and at Albany, the proposed cool stores at Fremantle, all the butter and bacon factories, the State farms, the Narrogin School of Agriculture and farm—these are just a few of the subjects which the Honorary Minister has been asked to handle. And the curious thing is that he is still called an "Honorary" Minister. It is a remarkable fact that the two Honorary Ministers, the men with the least experience in the Ministry, namely, Mr. Baxter and Mr. Willmott, have been given departments in the administration of which they are subjected to the criticism of a section of the community which at present it is most difficult to satisfy. I should very much like to see a gentleman with the capacity of the leader of the House having to meet the Country party and satisfy them that the Government are doing all that is best in the interests of the farmers. However, whatever the merits or the demerits of the Honorary Ministers, those merits and demerits have nothing to do with the motion. If those gentlemen were either the best or the poorest Ministers we have ever had, it is quite beside the question. It is entirely the Constitutional issues, as Mr. Lynn has pointed out, which we have now to consider, that is, the system of appointing Honorary Ministers, which has been extended much farther than the framers of the Constitution ever intended. Mr. Kings-

mill quoted a section of the Constitution Act which I had intended to quote. It has so important a bearing upon this question that I think it deserves to be quoted again. It is as follows:—

There may be six principal executive offices of the Government, liable to be vacated on political grounds, and no more.

The direction that there may be six and no more clearly implies that having nine Ministers is contrary to the spirit, if not to the actual letter, of the Constitution. And, not only are there three Honorary Ministers, but we have heard of the possible appointment of a fourth. Under the present system there is no earthly reason why a dozen should not be appointed. Judging by the list of duties which Mr. Baxter has to carry out, the Honorary Ministers have as much power, in fact greater power, than some of the Ministers holding portfolios. It is an open secret that they are paid for what they do, and it is quite right that they should be paid when they have such onerous duties, but it is contrary to the spirit of the constitution, because they are holding an office of profit. If not directly under the Crown, it amounts to the same thing. Therefore, I think that this motion was a timely one and I am going to vote in favour of it. The Government may say, and perhaps there is justification for it, that the duties of Ministers have been considerably increased owing to the extension of governmental powers. The extension of State socialistic enterprises has possibly increased the work of Ministers, and if they argue that the work of Ministers is such that the six portfolioed Ministers cannot get through all the work, then they ought to act in a proper constitutional way and bring in a Bill to amend the constitution in order that further portfolios could be arranged for. There is a right way to increase the number of Ministers, but my contention is that at present the system is contrary to the spirit of the Constitution. It is contrary to the spirit of the Constitution that a person who virtually holds an office of profit under the Crown should not go before his constituents. It is a good thing that when a member accepts an office of profit he should go before his constituents. I know a departure has been made in the case of the Commonwealth Constitution, but there is good reason because if the Commonwealth Ministers had to go for re-election there would have to be Senate by-elections, and Senate by-elections would cost an enormous amount of money. For that reason it was agreed in the convention that members accepting office should not seek re-election, the State being one constituency for the Senate. In the case of the State, I think it is a very good thing that members joining Ministries should go before their electors. I could mention two or three different cases in my knowledge, and one case in particular, where a member of Parliament accepted an honorary portfolio, and I am perfectly satisfied that if he went before his constituents, he would not be re-elected, and that he would in fact

lose his deposit. It is also contrary to the spirit of the Constitution to have nine Ministers instead of six, and it is certainly an absurdity to have men who are called "Honorary" Ministers, when we all know that they are not honorary, inasmuch as they accept remuneration.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [9.5]: I desire to compliment the leader of the House upon the opportunity which he has given hon. members to discuss this motion. It is only in accordance with the many acts of the leader of the House to give the fullest publicity to any motion of any character. A lot has been said on the personal aspect. I intend to eliminate the personal aspect, but I am concerned with the constitutional aspect and with the trend of events in the direction of appointing Honorary Ministers and the duties they perform. The Hon. Mr. Kingsmill gave a very good account of the doings of Honorary Ministers and of their inauguration in years gone by. I can only speak of Honorary Ministers in this House for a period of a little over six years. During my connection with the Labour party in two Parliaments and for nearly five years, I was always under the impression that the appointment of two Honorary Ministers was for this purpose, one in this House to assist the leader of the House or to take his place when the leader was absent or ill—a necessary and a wise precaution—and the other Honorary Minister in the other House to represent the leader of this House in another place. I think if anyone takes the trouble to refer to the tenure of office of the Labour Government they will find that the system of Honorary Ministers in the Labour Government only dealt with the ambit of matters in the Colonial Secretary's jurisdiction. Mr. Dodd was Honorary Minister in this Chamber and Mr. Angwin in another place. For a little while Mr. Dodd acted as Honorary Minister for Mines in the absence of Mr. Collier and everyone will agree that he was qualified to act in that capacity. While those gentlemen acted in the capacity of Honorary Ministers I think all that they were called upon to do was to administer charities, arbitration, and other minor administrative acts in which the revenue to be expended was a vote on the Estimates in another place, and no initial expenditure without the authorisation of Parliament, or very little, ever came under their jurisdiction. Now it will be found that the Premier is nominally holding the positions of Minister for Lands and Minister for Agriculture, but we find actually that the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Agriculture are both Honorary Ministers. If there are two departments of great magnitude and far-reaching effect they are the Department of Lands and the Department of Agriculture, and I say, and say it advisedly, that if any Minister is to administer these departments, he should be a Minister in the constitutional sense of the word and not an Honorary Minister. I am more concerned with the trend in the direction of the enlargement of powers than as to

who fills the position of Honorary Minister I do not desire to say much more, only this, that if the functions of Ministers have so increased in recent years in this State that the present Ministers cannot administer the portfolios that they are deputed to administer and are set forth in our records as being responsible for, then the time has arrived when we should increase the number of Ministers under the Constitution. That is the view I take of it. I am pleased to assume that this criticism will make good and that later on something in the direction of giving us more Ministers will accrue. If Parliament does not assert itself, probably we will have a further handing over of powers. The time is overdue when this should cease.

[The Deputy President took the Chair.]

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (North) [9.11]: As one who advocated the appointment of an Honorary Minister for the North-West, I feel in supporting this motion that my remarks will be directed against the Government and not against Honorary Ministers. If this Government had carried out the functions of Government as they should have done and abandoned the State enterprises as they have pledged themselves to do, there would be no need for Honorary Ministers at all. The six Ministers could govern the country and appoint capable officers and pay them decent salaries. I want to refer to the way in which the State steamship service has been run. I referred to it six months ago and brought it under the notice of Ministers and Honorary Ministers, and I say that it is a scandal and a disgrace that the service has been allowed to continue as it has in the past. The other day there was an advertisement announcing the departure of the "Bambra" early in December. That ship is still in Sydney, and there is no chance of her leaving Fremantle till the end of the year. If the Government are going to continue to run State enterprises they should be run on business lines. When I pointed out their mismanagement previously I was not sure whether it was the fault of the management or the Government, but I said the management was being called upon to do too much. Thirty shillings is being charged to carry goods to Darwin, yet 50s. is charged for goods which are carried half the way. I pointed out that the agent at Darwin had beaten the Government for £600 through faulty management and maladministration. Although they admit the damage has been done, no steps have been taken to remedy the matter and he has not been brought to book. Recently the "Kwinana" came down the coast, and although the lighters in Shark Bay were loaded with produce, she left the produce behind. Another instance of mismanagement was provided not long ago when the Government paid £250 for the "Minderoo" to call at Derby and Shark Bay on the way north. While this sort of mismanagement goes on we are asked to pay increased taxes. The Government are not carrying out their duties. I want to know who is responsible. It is not the Hon-

orary Minister who is responsible, but the Government. Recently Mr. Stewart referred to a remark made by Mr. Sanderson. "Looking at country members, Mr. Sanderson referred to them as bucolics. I think he should have looked at representatives of the North-West, the home of the pastoral industry, for the dictionary tells us that the word is applied principally to pastoral and grazing pursuits." I also have looked up the meaning of the word "bucolic" and I connect it with the "Kwinana." The "Kwinana" has been taken off the North-West coasts, whether by representatives of the Country party or not I do not know, to be sent to Christmas Island to bring manures for the farmers; and the people along the North-West coast are left without a ship to convey their supplies. I find the word "bucolic" also refers to agriculture, and is "used humorously or disparagingly." In my opinion, when Mr. Sanderson used the word "bucolic" and looked at country members, he was quite in order. I do not know whether it is the Honorary Minister who has such power with the Government that he can induce them to divert the "Kwinana" as she has been diverted. However, it has been done. If the State Steamship Service paid the fines due to the Federal Government for failure to carry out the mail contract, they would be paying £10,000 a year to the Federal Government instead of receiving £5,000 a year subsidy from the Federal Government. A shipping man with whom I was discussing this matter the other day said to me, "As a taxpayer of this State I would like to see the State Steamship Service abolished, but as one in opposition to the State Steamship Service, I say for goodness' sake let it continue." As for the remarks made concerning Mr. Baxter, if he was the Minister responsible for the appointment of the manager of the Wyndham freezing works, I congratulate him on being the only Minister, or at all events the only Honorary Minister, who has appointed an officer of State at a decent salary. Other members of the Ministry might well follow Mr. Baxter's example, and also increase the salaries of other heads of departments. Then we would get better administration than we have had in the past. I support the motion.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [9.18]: I feel somewhat at a disadvantage in addressing the House on this question, owing to an unfortunate and unavoidable absence. But the importance of the motion which has been moved by Mr. Sanderson is such as certainly calls for some comment by every member. So far as I can ascertain, most members of the House have addressed themselves to the motion. Had that motion been directed against the Honorary Minister, Mr. Baxter, in his personal capacity, I certainly should not have voiced one word in support of it. I recognise, however, that a serious and an important principle is at stake, and that Mr. Sanderson's object is really to rectify an error which, in his opinion, is being committed by the Government. What has been stated here to-night is, I think, sufficient to indicate to the leader of the House that members of this Chamber

believe that something of an illegal character is being done by the Government in appointing Honorary Ministers. The section of the Act which has been alluded to by other speakers is sufficient to show that a limit is placed upon the Government in the number of Ministers who should be appointed—namely, six shall be appointed and no more. I do not wish to allude for one moment to any question as to the position held by the Honorary Minister who sits in this Chamber. But, having regard to the views which have been expressed, I feel that it is my duty to support the motion submitted. Probably the mover may have contemplated that he would be able to make the insecurity of tenure of the office of the Honorary Minister much more secure, rectifying that insecurity in some way or another by bringing the matter before the House by this means, and thus inducing the Government, should they find it necessary to alter the Constitution, to avail themselves of the opportunity which now presents itself in another place.

Hon. H. STEWART (South-East) [9.22]: I do not intend to speak at length, but I have not yet decided how I am going to vote. I regard the motion purely as it is worded, and not as a vote of censure on the Government. The motion says—

That in the opinion of this House the present system of entrusting the administration and control of important departments of State to Honorary Ministers is undesirable.

It depends largely on the reply of the Colonial Secretary—and I hope the hon. gentleman will endeavour to vindicate the position of the Government—how I shall vote, although my present inclination is to support the motion. If I do so, I shall do it purely because of the wording of the motion, and my vote must not be taken as in any way reflecting on individual Ministers, or on the Government as a whole. There seems to be no doubt whatever that the position of Honorary Ministers in administering departments is simply that of acting for responsible Ministers. My conclusion—and I have given the matter some considerable thought—is that the position as put by Mr. Lynn is very likely correct. I shall be glad to hear the Colonial Secretary's reply to Mr. Lynn. After having seen the way in which the Honorary Minister in charge of the Wheat Scheme, as he is always termed in this State, has been acting for a considerable period, it was rather a surprise to me to come across a piece of letter paper from the Central Australian Wheat Board. The letter paper of the board first came under my notice within the last three or four months. On that letter head the Minister in charge of the Wheat Scheme was given as the Hon. H. B. Lefroy. Mr. Baxter's name did not appear as a member of the Central Wheat Board, although here we know him as the Minister who has had charge of the work.

Hon. J. Cornell: Mr. Lefroy is Minister for Agriculture, and this is part of the work of the Agricultural Department.

Hon. H. STEWART: I know exactly what I am referring to. At present I am only

pointing out that the Honorary Ministers merely act for portfolio Ministers. On the departmental papers the Honorary Ministers are described as Ministers acting for the Minister administering the Wheat Scheme, or for the Minister administering the Agricultural Department, as the case may be. Therefore, it is clear that, although generally designated as Ministers in charge of the Wheat Scheme or in charge of the Agricultural Department, the Honorary Ministers are not such in point of fact. Yet all their actions are just as if they were fully in charge as responsible Ministers.

On motion by Hon. J. J. Holmes debate adjourned.

MOTION—POTATO EXPERT.

Debate resumed from the 5th November on the motion by the Hon. E. Rose—"That in the opinion of this House, having regard to the prevalence of blight in the potato crop in the South-Western District, the Government should immediately appoint an expert in the place of the late Mr. Bratby."

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister) [9.27]: This motion asks for the appointment of a potato expert. The Government have already an inspector carrying out that work, and I do not know that the appointment of an expert would improve the matter in any way. Reference has been made to the late Mr. Bratby. That gentleman was on the temporary staff of the Agricultural Department, and in receipt of 12s. per day, though just a few weeks prior to his death his remuneration was increased to 13s. Upon Mr. Bratby's death applications were called by the Public Service Commissioner for the vacancy of senior potato expert. Numerous applications were received, and these were all referred to the Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, who at that time was temporarily in charge of the South-West Division of the State. The Commissioner for the Wheat Belt favoured the application of Mr. Young, an officer of the department who had been officiating under the late Mr. Bratby.

Hon. J. Ewing: Is Mr. Young in charge of the work now?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Yes. The Commissioner for the Wheat Belt, in a minute dated the 18th May last, stated—

Mr. Young's record in this department is satisfactory, and shows that he has the knowledge of potato diseases necessary for the due performance of the inspectorial portion of his duties. Of the applicants, he is the most suitable for the position. I therefore recommend that he be appointed on probation for six months.

There were objections to the appointment of Mr. Young, inasmuch as his age is 53 years. The Public Service Commissioner, in a minute dated the 25th June last, says—

It is very desirable to avoid appointing an officer of Mr. Young's age to the permanent staff unless it is imperative in the interests of the State to do so. I concur, therefore, in the proposal to appoint Mr. Young to the position lately occupied by Mr. Bratby, and to increase his wage from 11s. to 14s. per day.

Prior to this, Mr. Young had been engaged on the temporary staff as assistant potato inspector, since 1913. The Public Service Commissioner's classification for the new position which Mr. Young is now filling has a range from £192 to £210 per annum. I might mention that the duties of the inspector are as follows:—To inspect potatoes on arrival at ports, to see that regulations in connection with potatoes are enforced, to instruct settlers on the cultural operations of potato growing, to inspect crops where necessary for prevention of disease, to enforce legislation where necessary and such other duties as may be instructed.

Hon. J. Ewing: And for all that he gets 12s. a day?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): He is in receipt of 14s. a day. Mr. Rose stated that here was some other disease affecting potatoes and that tubers were not affected. I might state that, on the occasion of a recent visit to the Brunswick district, the senior potato inspector made a careful survey and came to the conclusion that the disease was Irish blight.

Hon. E. Rose: What experience has he had in Irish blight?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): He has had considerable experience. He stated that at those places which he visited, and where potatoes were being dug out, the potatoes were affected by Irish blight.

Hon. H. Stewart: Did he send any samples?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Yes. He was perfectly convinced it was Irish blight. As a matter of fact, there is no country where potatoes grow and where Irish blight does not occur. The only successful way of dealing with Irish blight is for the settlers themselves to take the matter in hand and to spray. Mr. Young is quite competent to advise settlers in that direction. Where continuous efforts are not carried out by the settlers, there are great losses, but where spraying is carried on, the results are successful. It is a difficult matter, however, to keep Irish blight down. During the past two years this disease has been responsible in a great degree for the diminution of our potato crop. Still, I will show that it has not been as bad as one might have expected. It is a question now as to whether it would be right or not to make it compulsory for growers to spray their potatoes. The difficulty is the expense and the high cost of bluestone. Apart from that, improved methods of cultivation are necessary to establish the potato growing industry and in that direction the departmental inspectors are endeavouring to educate growers. According to the reports we have had from the different officers, the methods which have been carried out by a number of our growers are very crude. If they do not adopt a good system of farming they cannot be successful in their operations. Beyond the assistance which the inspectors are giving, I do not see that it is possible to do much more, but if the growers do not take the advice which is given them, they cannot expect good results. Hon. members might be interested to have some information with regard to the

local production of potatoes. In normal times the State's requirements are estimated at 25,000 tons per annum. Last year's crop to the 30th June was estimated at 15,513 tons. The previous year's crop was estimated at 22,750 tons. Those figures show a decrease of 7,247 tons. That, perhaps, is accounted for by the abnormally wet season swamping some of our best areas, notably Bengier and Albany districts, as well as the prevalence of Irish blight throughout the State. The imports for the year ended 30th June, 1918, equalled 3,587 tons. So that, after all, we are not producing very much below the requirements of the State. The potato growers are being assisted by the State and at the present time the Government are considering the advisability of rendering them further assistance. It is intended that they should be assisted in every particular, because it has been shown conclusively by the officers that there are parts of the State where potato growing can never be a success. In those places the settlers are being encouraged to go in for other lines, such as dairying, pig raising, etc., and more especially dairying. Mr. Rose suggested that the inspectors should carry out experimental tests at Brunswick. I may mention that 4¼ acres have been planted with potatoes at that farm. The area is not great, but the object is to provide good seed. The varieties include Delaware, Manistey, Carmen, Vermont, Scottish Triumph, Serran Chief Up to Date, Windsor Castle, Von der Font, and Ring-leader.

Hon. E. Rose: Are they in separate patches or are they mixed together?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): In separate patches. We already have supplied a variety of seed to the settlers. In addition it is the intention of the Government to extend that experimental work at the Brunswick farm. Mr. Ewing regrets the policy which is being carried out in the South-West. I am not aware that there is anything to give cause for regret. The results which have been achieved at the Busseton butter factory have been satisfactory.

Hon. E. Rose: Financially?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Yes, also financially. Mr. Ewing also referred to Mr. Connor's services in the South-West. Since Mr. Connor's departure from the State, his work was carried on for a while by Mr. Sutton, and afterwards by Mr. Wicken, who is still in control. It has been deemed advisable to appoint Mr. Wicken temporarily to see whether he will prove successful in the work with which he has been entrusted. So far his work has been well carried out. It may be asked what Mr. Wicken's qualifications are. It would be as well to mention them, because I feel hon. members are not aware that in Mr. Wicken we have a highly qualified officer. Mr. Wicken has a Hawkesbury College diploma in practical agriculture and principles of agriculture, chemistry, botany, including vegetable pathology, geology, entomology, farm bookkeeping, surveying, etc. He holds dairymen's certificates from the New South Wales

travelling dairy. He has had seven years' service as experimentalist at the Hawkesbury College. He has been for 18½ years in the Department of Lands and Agriculture of this State. From 1900 to 1910 he was field officer and was in control of the State farms at Narrogin, Chapman, and Hamel. Mr. Wicken was in control of the Western Australian exhibits at the various exhibitions, including the Franco-British, the Chamber of Manufactures at Adelaide, the A.N.A. in Melbourne, and the Colonial Exhibition in Java. From 1911 to 1917, during the boom time of land settlement, he was transferred to the Lands Department for the purpose of advising new settlers in connection with agricultural matters and was officer in charge of the information branch. With such qualifications I think hon. members will agree that Mr. Wicken is bound to make good in the South-West. Since he has been given charge of South-West matters, marked improvements have been noted in several directions, principally in connection with the Busselton butter factory, the farms which he controls, and the wool depot. The duties which he has to carry out now include inspection and advice on south-western agriculture generally, apart from fruit and wheat, the control of the Brunswick and Denmark State farms, the control of the Denmark butter and bacon factory, the control of the Busselton butter factory, the oversight of potato inspection, the oversight of inspection and prosecution under the Fertiliser Act, the oversight of wool classing depot at Fremantle. Mr. Ewing asked what is happening at the Brunswick State Farm. That hon. member has not been at all satisfied with the way things are going there. The position has been rather unfortunate. For some time past the Repatriation Committee have been considering whether to take over the farm and work it in conjunction with the Agricultural Department. Personally, as Minister controlling the Agricultural Department, I have been of opinion that if we were to put a lot of soldiers on the Brunswick State Farm the probabilities are we should not be achieving the ends we set out to achieve, namely, the supplying of stock and seed to the settlers in the district, and the demonstrating by experiment what should be grown in the district.

Hon. J. Ewing: Mr. Willmott has sold all the stock.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I must ask the hon. member to confine himself to the question before the House.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): Am I in order in replying to criticism?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I did not hear the criticism. The hon. member's remarks are not immediately directed to the appointment of an expert.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): I was replying to Mr. Ewing's criticism. Am I in order in continuing?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I will allow the hon. member to go on, although he is not strictly in order.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (Honorary Minister): The Brunswick State Farm has been held up for some time while the two departments considered whether they should work jointly or separately. It has now been decided to work it as an experimental farm and as a training farm for soldiers. In Mr. Connor's time a lot of the stock was sold from the farm. At present we are purchasing cattle to re-stock the farm and we have five very fine pedigree animals under offer. In addition to that, we are establishing some good breeding pigs, and a small flock of sheep. The whole place is being ploughed so that it may be laid down in grass with a view to carrying more stock. The motion will not assist in any way. We have already an officer quite equal to the occasion, and the matter lies in the hands of the growers. The purchase of spraying machinery is on expensive item at present. When normal conditions return, spraying will be made compulsory on the growers, with a view to the elimination of Irish blight. If the motion were carried we might have to go outside the State to procure an expert who in all probability would be no better than, perhaps not as good as, the officer carrying out the work to-day.

Hon. E. ROSE (South-West—in reply) [9.50]: I thank the Honorary Minister for his remarks, but I do not agree with a number of the statements he has made. He has already appointed an inspector in Mr. Young, who he says is a competent officer. I should like to know where Mr. Young has gained his experience in agriculture. I understand he has been inspector of potatoes at Fremantle for the last three or four years, but he has had no experience whatever of potato-growing. My object in moving the motion was that we might have a qualified man to advise the potato grower on all matters relating to the industry. A number of returned soldiers and others are taking up mixed farming in the South-West, and yet we can get but very little assistance from the Government in the shape of advice to the growers. All we require is the appointment of a competent man to advise the settlers. If, as Mr. Baxter stated, it will be made compulsory to spray, we must have a competent man to advise us on the subject. In Mr. Young I have no confidence whatever, nor have the growers of the South-West. They have not seen him and they do not know what he is capable of doing. The only experience he has had is that of inspector of potatoes at Fremantle. Mr. Baxter says he has raised this officer's salary from 11s. to 14s. per day. Fourteen shillings per day is a very paltry amount to pay any fully qualified expert. It is the wage or an ordinary man who has not had to pass any degrees or examinations. Mr. Young may be a capable man but, under the recommendation of Mr. Sutton, he knows nothing whatever about the conditions of the South-West. I am surprised that Mr. Baxter should have taken notice of a recommendation by Mr. Sutton who, as a capable wheat man, can know very little about potatoes.

Hon. H. Stewart: Mr. Sutton was doing the work in the East before he came here.

Hon. E. ROSE: I do not think his work here has qualified him for recommending a potato expert for the South-West. We want a fully qualified man. As a rule the men appointed to these positions are not qualified. Mr. Baxter says that Mr. Wickens has control of the State farms and of the butter and bacon factories. Judging by the result of the Busselton factory, I do not think he has proved himself altogether capable. The State farm at Brunswick is sending the whole of its cream all the way to Busselton. That in itself should condemn the action of the manager. Why should not that cream be sent to Bunbury and so save many miles of railway carriage?

Hon. H. Stewart: Does not Mr. Wickens know all about potatoes?

Hon. E. ROSE: I cannot say, but I know we certainly want a potato expert down there to advise the growers. Mr. Baxter quoted the tonnage of potatoes grown in Western Australia during the past two years. Over 2,000 tons per annum are sent away from farms along the Collie River. It was that district I had in mind when speaking of the blight. The question there is very serious. Unless we learn how to eradicate the blight, all the smaller growers will be squeezed out of the industry. We want to know the best and cheapest way of eradicating the blight. Mr. Baxter also stated that 4½ acres of potatoes were growing at the Brunswick State Farm. From what I have seen, the potatoes have not been a success at Brunswick. Only two or three years ago they had a blight there, and I asked Mr. Connor what was wrong with the potatoes. He replied, "Irish blight." I then asked him if he had tried the spray and he said, "No. Have you any other questions to ask?" That was the attitude of Mr. Connor towards a civil inquiry. I do not know that it is necessary to say anything further, seeing that Mr. Baxter has already appointed Mr. Young for the time being. I hope that, if Mr. Young is not found to be capable, he will be replaced by an expert. There are only 18 cows milking on the Brunswick State Farm, and how the farm can be financially successful, I do not know.

Hon. C. F. Baxter (Honorary Minister): I did not say it was. I thought you were referring to the butter factory.

Hon. E. ROSE: If Mr. Wickens were the man he is said to be, he would advise the Government to buy more stock and so make the farm more profitable. I am pleased to hear that it is proposed to purchase some cows and to introduce good pigs down there. In view of what Mr. Baxter has said, I will withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

House adjourned at 9.59 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 3rd December, 1918.

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

[For "Questions on Notice" and "Papers Presented" see "Votes and Proceedings."]

PAPERS—WITHDRAWAL FROM TABLE.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that the file relating to the Goldfields Mining and General Workers Industrial Union of Workers has been asked for by the department. I shall be glad if hon. members will peruse it before tomorrow as I intend to permit its removal from the Table of the House.

BILL—DISCHARGED SOLDIERS' SETTLEMENT.

Resumed from the 29th November; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 24—Restriction on right of transfer:

Hon. J. MITCHELL: This clause will not allow a soldier to transfer his land under a period of 10 years. I think that is too long. It seems to me that five years' residence should be sufficient.

The PREMIER: We should not allow a returned soldier to transfer under a period of 10 years a lease which has been granted to him under such generous conditions. It would be unwise to allow the lease to be transferred too soon and five years is not long enough.

Mr. SMITH: I cannot agree with the Premier. I do not see why we should make any distinction between leases granted to soldiers and leases granted to others. We are granting these concessions to soldiers for services rendered, and if they put in the ordinary term of five years there should be no objection at the end of that period to the soldiers doing what they like with the property. They have rightly earned it, and having spent five years in improving the property, it would be hard upon them to make any distinction so far as they are concerned. I move an amendment—

That the word "ten" be struck out and "five" inserted in lieu.

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

Clause 25—agreed to.

Clause 26—Power to extend Act to advances made before the commencement thereof:

Hon. T. WALKER: What is the scope to be given to those who are interested, apart from the Government or the board, in settling soldiers upon the land?

The PREMIER: This is intended to legalise any concessions that have been granted to the returned soldier in accordance with the provisions of this Bill.

Hon. T. Walker: By whom?

The PREMIER: By the Government. It cannot apply to any scheme, but that which has been set in motion by the Government.