out of our troubles, and that too, much sooner than most people imagine.

General debate concluded; Votes and items discussed as follows:—

Vote (Legislative Council, £854) put and passed.

Votes—Legislative Assembly, £1,725; Joint House Committee, £3,866; Joint Printing Committee, £2,600; Joint Library Committee, £400; Premier's Department, £4,933—agreed to.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

BILL—DIVORCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILL—STATE CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT.

Message received from the Council stating that it did not insist on its amendment No. 8.

House adjourned at 11 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 22nd October, 1919.

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

QUESTION—DROVING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (without notice) asked the Honorary Minister: Has the information for which I asked a few days ago, whether main roads would be considered part of stock routes under the Droving Act Amendment Bill, been obtained?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: I approached the Crown Law authorities on this matter, and their decision is that a main road would be considered a stock route under the Bill.

QUESTION—WORKERS' HOMES, FEE SIMPLE.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN asked the Minister for Education: 1, Have the Government received a request from a number of people occupying workers' homes on the leasehold system to have the freehold titles granted to them? 2, If so, is it the intention of the Government to grant this request? 3, If not, why not?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Yes. 2, The matter is under consideration. 3, Answered by No. 2.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. E. M. CLARKE, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. E. Rose (South-West) on the ground of ill-health.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Hon. A. H. Panton and Traffic Bill.

Hon. A. H. PANTON (West): On a point of explanation: Speaking to the Bill last night, I said that a certain tip dray weighed 35 cwt. Unfortunately, I had left the weighing of the dray to a friend of mine and, on making further inquiries this morning, I learned that he had a big horse in the dray at the time, and, unwittingly, had weighed horse and all. I now understand that the weight of the dray was from 15 to 17 cwt.

BILL—SLAUGHTER OF CALVES RESTRICTION.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1-4—agreed to.

New clause:

Hon. J. MILLS: I move—

> That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 5: "No bull shall be mated with dairy cows within the area defined under this Act unless the bull is of a milking strain, except with the permission of the Chief Inspector of Stock or his duly appointed representative."

I do not know whether the proposed new clause will be in order unless the Title is altered but, if a place cannot be found for it in this Bill, I hope the Government will take steps to give effect to it. The object of the Bill will be lost unless such a provision is made.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot accept the amendment because it does not come within the scope of the Bill, which is to restrict the slaughter of female calves.

Title—agreed to.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—TRAFFIC.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [4.40]: I asked for the adjournment of the

debate yesterday to enable me to look a little more closely into certain inconsistencies which seemed, at first sight, to present themselves to me after reading the Bill; and I hope members will acquit me of expressing any prejudiced views simply because I happen to represent the Metropolitan Province —a district which will be more affected by the passing of this measure than any other district in the State. In the course of the passage of the Bill through another place, certain drastic changes were effected. So drastic were those changes that they altered the aspect, and almost the original intention of the Bill. Certain of those changes, I certainly think after perusing the Bill as now presented to the House, will be detrimental not only to the city of Perth, but also to those municipalities which will be affected, namely, those which will fall within the metropolitan area. The Bill attempts to create what is most undesirable, namely, dual authority in connection with its administration and, if anything is disastrous to the proper carrying out of the functions of any law, it will be found to be disastrous where dual authority is created. In the metropolitan area, the control of traffic is left to the police whilst, in other districts outside the metropolitan area, the control of traffic is left in the hands of local authorities. The metropolitan area, I understand from the Minister's explanation when he introduced the Bill, will cover practically all those local authorities coming within the area between Fremantle and Midland Junction. I venture to think that, in the Bill as it has been presented to this House, there is an attempt on the part of the Government to usurp what are generally recognised to be the functions of municipalities. The Government are attempting to make an invasion into the field of municipal government. That, in itself, is undoubtedly a retrograde step. In other parts of the world Governments, as a rule, do not seek to usurp these functions, which are too gladly assigned to local bodies to carry out. Here, however, the Government seem almost to be envious, if I may use the expression, of the success which has been attained by municipal bodies in carrying out their duties. It would seem almost as though they were desirous of robbing them of powers which they have successfully employed up to the present and which, I venture to think, will not be so successfully employed by the Government or under Government control. There are two very special grounds on which this attempt on the part of the Government to usurp these rights or powers are apparent in the Bill. That is the question delegating through the Government to the police the control of traffic, and, what is worse, the attempt on the part of the Government to obtain the payment of the license and other fees through the Treasury. I can hardly fancy that the Government are moved by any sordid consideration in seeking to do this, but it is a step in the wrong direction. If it is necessary to make a division of the license fees between the particular municipalities concerned, then the method prescribed in Clause 12 of the Bill, wherein it is stated that "all fees paid each year for licenses or transfers of licenses or registrations in the metropolitan area under this Act or any regulation shall be paid into the Treasury to the credit of an account to be called the Metropolitan Traffic Trust account," is not the right one. Provision is also made, after allowing for the cost of collection, that the amount "shall be paid and divided to and amongst the local authorities of the districts and sub-districts comprised in the metropolitan area in such shares and proportions as the Minister shall determine." No appeal is given as to the exercise of this discretion on the part of the Minister. It might be a wise or an unwise discretion that is exercised. It is clearly an unfair power for the Government to arrogate to itself. If it be necessary for fees to be apportioned—and I do not think it is—there is no necessity for this money to be paid to the Government. If the Government collect the money it will mean extra expense.

Hon. J. Duffell: To whom would you pay it; the Perth City Council?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I will show the hon. member to whom I would pay it. There is no necessity for this payment to be made to the Government, because an account is bound to be kept by the different municipalities. If the amounts that are received by the different municipalities require to be apportioned, provision could be made in the Bill whereby certain allowances should be made to or by one municipality to another, thus leaving each municipality to collect the rates on vehicles licensed within their several districts. The apportionment would be made on a basis to be provided by the Act. That would save all expense which will be incurred in connection with the collection by the Government. The Government have given us to understand that they are desirous of effecting economy, but instead of pursuing a policy of economy, here they are pursuing a policy which is quite the opposite. They are increasing the expense. It costs municipalities at present no more to collect these fees along with others, but the Government will require to have extra assistance to carry out this particular work. I indicated previously that I intended to move for the appointment of a select committee so as to look into the Bill a little more thoroughly. The more I peruse this Bill the more I am convinced that there are certain things in it which ought to be more fully considered than they appear to have been. There are also certain inconsistencies to which I propose calling hon. members' attention. I am earnest in regard to my effort to convince the leader of the House that my suggestion for the appointment of a select committee is only right in the interests, not only of those municipalities within the metropolitan and metropolitan-suburban areas, but also in the interests of the various other people who will be affected throughout the length and

breadth of the State by the provisions of this Bill, I ask hon. members in the first place to refer to the first schedule of the Bill, which provides for the repeal of various Acts or parts of Acts. There is a total repeal of the Cart and Carriage Licensing Act. Under the Municipalities Act, which extends not only to the City of Perth, but also to all other municipalities within the metropolitan area, or within what will be the metropolitan area, under this Bill, power is given to such municipalities and road boards to collect all license fees under that Act. That now will stand repealed. The next repeal that takes effect is with regard to certain sections in the Municipal Corporations Act, 1906. I took the trouble to look up the sections or parts repealed, and I should like to call attention to the effect of the repeal of this particular part of the Act. Section 179 of the Municipalities Act has a section which provides for the making of regulations. In that section provision is made with regard to the regulation of traffic. The only parts which survive are sub-paragraph (e) and sub-paragraph (x). Sub-paragraph (e) gives power to appoint stands for all of the above named vehicles and prescribes the regulations to be observed thereat. It refers to "the above-named vehicles," but all the vehicles that are referred to are in the repealed paragraphs of Section 179, so that the appointing of stands will apply to no vehicles at all except any vehicles which appear in the Bill or subsequent regulations. I call the attention of the leader of the House to that. It would mean a slight amendment in the Bill. I mention this to show the necessity of looking more thoroughly into the Bill. It has been rushed through in a way that it should not have been, and indeed in such a way that I do not think hon. members quite see the effect of what is happening. Mr. Sanderson stated that it was always his desire and he thought the desire of every hon. member, to see that good workmanship was turned out. I am sure he will support me in my desire to make this Bill one which will comply with that principle. With regard to those stands, I would like to show the inconsistency which is apparent. Whilst it is obviously intended that the municipalities shall have the right to regulate stands in their own streets—and there is no one who should have the right more than municipalities, because in them is vested the control of the streets—under Clause 40 sub-paragraph (iv.) the Government are seeking to take to themselves the right to regulate the use of public stands appointed for the use of any passenger or goods vehicle, etc. I do not know whether the leader of the House has noted that. Again, in clause 40, it is the Governor who may make regulations and not the municipalities or local authority, although it is fair to point out that in Clause 41 there is power given to the Governor to delegate to the local authorities the power to make certain regulations. There is a further inconsistency in regard to stands, because even in Clause 7 of the Bill it was clearly the intention to leave the power in municipalities and all local authorities to have the regulation of these public stands. In Subclause 2 of Clause 7 there is a proviso "that when public stands for licensed vehicles plying for hire have been appointed and fixed in any district, no license issued by the local authority of any other district shall (unless the local authority of the district in which such stands are established so orders) authorise any person to cause or permit any vehicle to stand or be upon any such public stand, etc." These then are inconsistencies and require careful consideration. I omitted to refer to a rather amusing reservation of powers to the municipalities, and it affects every municipality that will come within the scope of the Bill. In sub-paragraph (x) of the Municipalities Act, which is preserved amongst a large number which are repealed, the power is reserved to municipalities to still regulate the use and management of hand carts. All the other powers are clean swept away. I do not know what was the good of leaving such a power as that in. If a municipality is not capable of regulating other things than hand carts, the Government might well take over the whole lot. In Clause 44 power is reserved also to the municipalities to regulate the use of perambulators; so between hand carts and perambulators the municipalities will certainly feel that they have onerous duties to perform. The whole of Part 7 of schedule 12 of the Municipalities Act is repealed. That Part refers to regulations dealing with traffic, and amongst these is one with regard to fixing such matters as stands for hackney and stage carriages. That power should have been reserved according to the apparent intention to which I have previously referred with regard to these hackney stands. It has, however, been repealed. Another power which is taken away from the municipalities is the numbering of carriages, although apparently by the Bill it is intended that the municipalities and local authorities shall issue tablets for the numbering of carriages notwithstanding that the local bodies do not receive the fees. So that the very powers and regulations which are essential to the municipality carrying out its restricted functions under the new Bill are taken away. Under the Health Act municipalities or the local authorities are the local boards of health for their respective districts, and they exercise certain powers as local boards of health. Under Part 7 of the schedule to which I have referred, there are certain provisions which are of importance with regard to health. In Clause 61 of that schedule there are certain regulations with regard to sanitary carts. I do not know whether it is the intention of the Government to take over the duty of looking after those very useful conveyances. If they do not intend to do so, they should have allowed the provisions in Part 7 of the schedule to which I have referred to remain intact.

Hon. H. Millington: The municipalities are capable of running those.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: What I am pointing out is that the Government have by the Bill repealed those regulations which will enable a municipality to carry out the duties in connection with these particular matters of health. Of course if the Government intend to take over the duty of managing the sanitary carts then I am sure the municipalities will not interfere.

Hon. J. Cunningham: Are the municipalities really incapable of doing that kind of work?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It would look as if they were and that the Government had conceived the idea that something should be done to regulate matters in a way different from what has been done in the past. If it was intended that these powers should remain with the municipality, they should not have been repealed. Road Boards will be affected in the same way. It may mean that new regulations may be passed. But why repeal those which should be retained? For that reason I urge that the Bill has not been well constructed. That good workmanship which we expect from another place has not been shown, and if a select committee were appointed a better measure might result and it would to one that would give satisfaction to all concerned. Clause 10 of the Bill opens with these words, "Fees shall be paid to local authorities for licenses as set out in the third schedule of this Act," and notwithstanding that definite provision, Subclause (2) of Clause 12 directs the payment of fees in the metropolitan area to the Treasury. I have already suggested that there is no need for this subclause. If after consideration of the various interests that are concerned, it is found that some allocation should be made, then a provision to that effect can be embodied in the Bill, and Subclause 2 of Clause 12 which directs the payment of fees to the Treasury should be eliminated. Clause 12 provides—

> Notwithstanding anything herein before contained the Minister shall be the licensing authority—

There is no definition as to what a licensing authority is.

> —for every district and sub-district comprised in the metropolitan area, and shall have and may exercise therein such powers and discretions under this Act or any regulation of or concerning—

and I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to this.

> —the issue and transfer of licenses and the effect of registrations as are in other districts or sub-districts vested in the local authorities.

If we turn to Clause 13 we find it is provided that it shall not be competent for a local authority to refuse to grant any license under this part of the Act in respect of any vehicle to an applicant tendering the proper fee. For example, a vehicle may be unfit to be licensed, but the clause is mandatory. It says that it shall not be competent for a local authority to refuse to grant a license, and there is no exception made.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: All fees are to be paid by the local authorities to the Treasury.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: If the hon. member looks at Subclause 2 of Clause 12 he will find that it states that all fees paid each year for licenses or transfers of licenses, etc., shall be paid into the Treasury.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: By the local authority.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It does not say so. The money has to be paid to the Treasury to the credit of a certain fund, and the Minister is going to charge so much for the collection. Under Clause 13 it shall not be competent for a local authority to refuse to grant a license. The power to issue and transfer licenses for the metropolitan area is reserved clearly to the Minister. If that is so then Clause 13 is inconsistent unless provision is made to exempt those municipalities within the metropolitan area. Every local authority will be affected because the clause says it shall not be competent for a local authority to refuse to grant any license, and the Minister reserves to himself the right to issue licenses. Among the regulations which may be made under Clause 40 there are two to which I should like to draw the special attention of those interested. One is the power of the Governor to make regulations to prohibit the passage of heavy or obstructive traffic over any specified road. The other is the power "to prescribe the maximum weight which may be taken across any bridge or culvert," and "to prohibit or regulate the use on any road of any vehicle not having the nails in the wheels countersunk in such a manner as may be specified in the regulation, or having on any wheel any bars, spikes, or projections, specified in the regulation." If there is any body to which such a power should be given then this is a power which clearly should be given expressly in the statute to municipalities, and not merely under delegation as provided for in Clause 41. These powers should be given to the authorities themselves. Who is responsible for the roads? The authorities are. Under the Municipalities Act and also under the Roads Act, the roads are vested in the municipalities, and the municipalities are responsible for maintaining them. That being so, I contend that anything to do with the traffic over the roads the authorities should have clear and express power to make regulations for; the regulations, of course, to be subject to the approval of the Governor in order to secure uniformity. However, there are certain provisions which might apply to outside districts but which would not be applicable to busy centres such as Perth. Conditions prevailing in the city demand a different set of regulations from those suitable for country districts. Absolute uniformity, therefore, cannot be obtained, but we can have a set of regulations as nearly

uniform as possible, having regard to the different conditions obtaining in the various localities. I was astonished to see what power the Minister proposes to take to himself under Clause 43, which represents an absolute interference with the rights of municipalities. The clause provides—

> Whenever any number of persons, or any club or clubs, intimate to the Minister that they desire to hold race meetings or speed tests in any particular place or locality on a day to be fixed, the Minister may temporarily suspend the operation of any regulations under this Act for such purpose, and may define the conditions under which such race meetings or speed tests shall be conducted: Provided that the consent in writing of the local authority of any district concerned shall be first obtained and produced to the Minister.

The Minister is undertaking a duty which is clearly that of a local authority, and not that of a Minister. The matter is one which should be regulated by the local authorities. Under the clause there would probably be considerable waste of time in obtaining the necessary authority from the Minister. Clause 52, Subclause (1), provides—

> The Minister may, if he considers any road unsafe for public traffic, cause the same to be closed for so long as he considers necessary.

This overrides the powers and the functions of local authorities. It is a most drastic power for any Minister to take, and a wrong power too. Under the Municipalities Act every power that is necessary is vested in the local authority. Section 234 of the Municipalities Act provides—

> Subject to the provisions of the Public Works Act, 1902, the council of every municipality shall have the care, control, and management of all public places, streets, roads, ways, bridges, culverts, ferries, and jetties within the municipal district.

There is a clear vesting of this power, but by Clause 52 the Minister seeks to take away that power. It is quite true that, under Subclause (2) of Clause 52, the local authority "may" exercise a similar power with regard to any roads under its control. But what right has the Minister to make an encroachment upon the province of the local authorities? It is absolutely wrong. We do not want a dual control. As representing a municipal district, I object to this clause; and I trust every member representing a municipal district, or a road district, will also object. As regards the method of allocation of the fees under this Bill, we have to bear in mind the fact that the city of Perth in particular has borrowed large sums of money to carry out important works which were necessary. Those moneys have been borrowed on the representation by the municipality that it earns and receives certain fees and revenues under the Municipalities Act. The Act sets out what the revenue of a municipality is, and that applies to all municipalities. There are also municipalities outside Perth which have borrowed considerable sums of money, though not to the same extent as Perth has necessarily required to do. Over a million pounds has been borrowed by the city of Perth; and it has been represented to the lenders that part of the revenue of the city consisted of these license fees. Those who lent the money have naturally looked to the city receiving that revenue and continuing to receive it; not to its being deprived of that revenue in the way suggested by this Bill. Therefore, it is unfair to those who have lent the money that there should be this departure from what has been an established practice, and what has become a right in municipalities. It is wrong that those fees should be taken away from them, and that the rights of those who have lent money should be interfered with, as clearly they will be interfered with if Clause 12 passes into law. There is another phase of the subject to which I desire to refer. In years gone by all municipalities received subsidies, generally pound for pound, based on the general rates. On the general rate in Perth the amount of the subsidy would be a very large one if paid to-day, and would probably have saved the city from the need for raising as much question as it is now raising in connection with this Bill. But the Government subsidy was gradually cut down, and ultimately wiped out. The result is that municipalities are now compelled to fight for those revenues which are justly theirs. One of those revenues is clearly the fees to be paid under this measure. Another point is that a great difference exists between the city of Perth and outside municipalities. All the principal Government buildings are located in Perth, and while the Government pay no subsidy whatever to the city, they make the position worse by paying no rates. Government property is absolutely exempt from rates, and the city of Perth has the burden of maintaining the roads in front of large Government buildings.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: That applies to every town.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: If the Government were to pay rates, the position would be different.

The Minister for Education: This Bill has nothing to do with rating.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I admit that; but it would be a fair proposition that the Government, being free from rates, should not look upon the efforts made by the city to protect such revenues as rightly belong to it, with that feeling of hostility which has been in fact evinced. There are many different interests concerned with the regulation of traffic, and particularly with those clauses dealing with the width of tires in Perth. A large body of people are interested, particularly carriers and contractors, and others. None of those bodies seem to

have had an opportunity of considering the full effect of those provisions. If the Bill were referred to a select committee one could get the benefit of the views of those concerned. In Clause 35 and some of the following clauses it is provided that vehicles shall be weighed; the owner can be compelled to have his vehicle weighed. I understand that if these provisions are made applicable to certain outlying districts where weighbridges are few and far between, and in other places where weighbridges do not exist, considerable inconvenience will be imposed upon the owners of vehicles.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: The weighing has only to be done once.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: But it would put the owners in certain places to great inconvenience to have it done at all.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Would not the two-mile limit provided in Clause 38 meet the difficulty?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I merely suggest that the provision might cause a good deal of inconvenience if made compulsory.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: But a man would voluntarily have his vehicle weighed.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I am not pressing the question, but I refer to it as another instance showing the necessity for further consideration being given to the Bill. I hope the leader of the House will agree to the suggestion. I do not know whether the views I have expressed and the claims I have put forward on behalf of Perth and other municipalities appeal to him, but I do hope that they will induce him to agree to the motion, when it is moved, for the appointment of a select committee. Such a course would result in a much speedier passage of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. J. F. Allen, debate adjourned.

BILL—WHEAT MARKETING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [5.36]: In moving the second reading the Honorary Minister said the Bill did not require very much explanation. Judging by the length of it, we might perhaps concur in that. Nevertheless there are one or two provisions which, if not of a contentious nature, at least require certain explanation. The principal one is to be found in Clause 3, which empowers the Minister to enter into a wheat acquiring agency agreement with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. in the terms of the draft agreement set out in the Schedule. I am seeking information when I ask, why is it that this monopoly still exists? We see by the Bill that the only company that can deal with the wheat business is the Westralian Farmers Ltd. If we look back into the history of this scheme it will be remembered that when it first began there were five companies handling the wheat in this State, of which the Westralian Farmers Ltd. was the youngest. Those companies were Darling & Sons, Dreyfus & Co., Dalgety's, Bell & Co., and the Westralian Farmers Ltd. It was found that as they were in keen competition one against another none of them could make a success of the business, and in consequence applications were made to the Government to deal with the whole question on the zone system, so that each company might take a certain portion of the State to itself and handle the wheat within that zone. Then it came to a question of price, and after a considerable time the Westralian Farmers Ltd. offered to do it at a lower price than the prices quoted by the others. Then a further offer was made by the other firms, who proposed to do it at a price still lower than that quoted by the Westralian Farmers Ltd. Although in the early part the arrangement for dealing with this wheat scheme may have been unsatisfactory and, perhaps to help them out of their difficulties, the whole business was handed to the Westralian Farmers Ltd., there does not seem to me any reason why that monopoly should be continued. As a result of it, two of the firms that were doing business in wheat here have withdrawn from the State. It is a matter for regret that any firm established in the State should be compelled through monopolistic methods to leave. The other two firms, which I understand are still here, namely, Dalgety's and Bell & Co., are existing only with the greatest difficulty, owing to this monopoly. I am asking for information as to why this extraordinary method is taken, instead of a more reasonable one. I believe that generally, where business of this nature is carried on, tenders are called. If the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are capable of doing the work more cheaply and better than any other firm, by all means let them have it. But I want to know why it is confined to one firm instead of tenders being called for the work. The old firms established businesses here and assisted the farmers. Then, by a stroke of the pen, the Government gave the whole monopoly to the Westralian Farmers Ltd., and so these other firms are unable to continue in business. I suppose there are good reasons for this departure from established custom, but I should like to hear those reasons.

Hon. J. F. ALLEN (West) [5.43]: It is not my intention to oppose the Bill, but I propose to say a little regarding it. As has been said by Sir Edward Wittenoom, it is high time the old acquiring agents who used to operate in this State should see the fulfilment of the promise made to them by the Prime Minister, that at the expiration of the war their businesses should be returned to them, or rather, that they should have opportunity for prosecuting their businesses as they did prior to the beginning of hostilities. There is due to Parliament and to the people an explanation why that promise has not been fulfilled. I could almost desire to re-

peat much of what I said last year when this Bill, or its predecessor, was before us, but I shall not weary members by doing so. They can read it for themselves in the records of the House, and they will see exactly what my sentiments on this question were. There is no doubt that last year, some dissatisfaction must have been felt by the wheat scheme board or its officials or by the Government at the manner in which the Westralian Farmers Ltd. handled the wheat harvest, or else the pressure of public opinion at that time induced the Minister or the board controlling the wheat scheme to apply to the old acquiring agents for tenders for the handling of last year's harvest. A request was made to those acquiring agents to submit prices for this year's work and I believe for last year also, but, before they were submitted, the request was withdrawn, and the offer of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. last year was accepted for the handling of that year's harvest. You will remember, Sir, that the Bill which was introduced into this Chamber on that occasion provided for the handling of the harvest for two years—last year and this year—but this Chamber decided to restrict the operations of the Government under the Bill to last year's harvest only, in order to give Parliament an opportunity to discuss the question before any further arrangements were entered into. The Royal Commission which sat last year recommended that, when tenders were invited for the handling of the harvest this year, the manager of the wheat scheme should be given an opportunity also to tender. I pointed out last year that the manager of the wheat scheme had advised the Royal Commission in his evidence that a sum of something like £16,000 could be saved to the farmers of this State by the elimination of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. and the handling of the wheat crop by the scheme officials themselves. This statement was made by the manager of the wheat scheme in the course of sworn evidence before the Royal Commission. That statement, so far as I know, has never been disputed or refuted. It was made by a gentleman who is considered by the Minister controlling the scheme to be the best man the Government could have secured for that purpose. He was considered to be a man of such outstanding ability that special arrangements were made with the firm for whom he was working to secure his services. His services for the firm were known, and I presume he will be returned to the firm when his services are no longer required by the Government. A special agreement was made to secure his services for the Government, and a special consideration was granted to the company for his loan. If this gentleman is so competent and so desirous of being secured by the State to control the wheat scheme, and seeing that his experience in past years has been in carrying out the very work which the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are under contract with the Government to carry out, I think the very knowledge he possesses is being wasted by the Government in not being applied in the direction in which he has been applying it all the years of his life. At present, he is only at the head of an office staff, really registering the work of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. The work beyond that is only a very small portion of the actual work to be done in connection with the wheat scheme, and the very experience which this gentleman possesses is the experience which would enable the Government to do that class of work now being done by the Westralian Farmers Ltd. I should like the Minister to fully explain, if the manager of the wheat scheme can show that he would be able to save these thousands of pounds to the farmers by handling the wheat from the farm to the ship, why that saving is not effected. If his opinion is not worthy of the consideration of the Government and will not stand the test of proof, then I claim the gentleman who has been appointed by the Government to control the wheat scheme is not the competent gentleman the Minister maintains he is. Last year we were also promised that nothing would be done in connection with the agreement for handling this year's harvest until Parliament had had an opportunity to express an opinion thereon. I take it the first occasion when Parliament would have an opportunity to express an opinion would be when the second reading speech was delivered in connection with the introduction of the Bill. The Bill was introduced in another place and the second reading was moved on the 2nd September, or in the sixth week of the present session of Parliament. If it was intended by the Government to give Parliament an opportunity to discuss the question of this contract prior to it being entered into, the Government should have been in a position to introduce this Bill—a very important measure—earlier in the session. Instead, however, we had to wait until six weeks of the session had expired before the House was taken into the confidence of the Government. I have every reason to believe that this contract was entered into long before that date, although not signed. I believe it is not signed by the Government to-day. That was the position when the Bill was before us last year; it could not be signed until after Parliamentary sanction had been given. The Westralian Farmers Ltd. have entered into this agreement, and the only thing now necessary is the actual attachment of the signature of the Minister to the document. Is this taking Parliament into their confidence? Is this giving Parliament an opportunity to discuss a question of this magnitude? I say it is not, and it is not keeping faith with Parliament when a promise is evaded in this manner. This is an important question, dealing with a primary article of food of the people, and we are fast drifting into the position of one company in this State being given absolute power to control the acquirement of wheat, not only under the period during which they are employed

by the Government in connection with the wheat pool, but after that period, for they have so established themselves in the industry by the controlling interests which they have and their ramifications throughout the State, that it will be impossible for any other company to enter into competition with them. The Government have helped to build up a great monopoly which, when they cease to control it, will I believe, continue to operate despite any legislation we in this State can bring down. I shall not oppose the second reading of the Bill because we cannot do anything but accept the agreement. All arrangements have been made for the handling of the harvest and, at this moment, it would be impossible to reverse the position, but I take this opportunity to enter my protest as a member of this Council, as a member of the public, and as a member of the Royal Commission appointed by the Government last year to inquire into this question, at the lack of opportunity given to Parliament to discuss the question before final arrangements were made with the company interested.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.53]: I am very sorry to hear that we cannot do anything in regard to this matter except pass the Bill. The hon. member may be right. Personally, I would be quite prepared, realising the responsibility one would be taking, to refuse to ratify this agreement with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. The position seems to me to be fraught with great danger to the future of this country. I always hesitate to say anything on the floor of this House in the way of criticising people outside. We have the right to do that, and sometimes it is necessary to exercise the right, but it is a most ungrateful task for me, and probably for any other member, to criticise a private company when they have not the right to reply.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: They have a good champion.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I do not think it is fair to say that the Westalian Farmers Ltd. have got a champion or a spokesman in the Honorary Minister. I can hardly think they would put him forward as their defender. What has never been cleared up is this: What is the connection between the Country party and the Honorary Minister and the Westralian Farmers Ltd.? If we knew that quite clearly, we should have a very good grasp of the situation. I am going to deal with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. in this manner. I have no wish to criticise them here. If I criticise them, it will be on the public platform where we are not protected by privilege. I rejoice to see that the farmers and settlers and other people connected with the wheat industry have sufficient sense and sufficient loyalty and sufficient intelligence to move together to co-operate and protect their own interests, but what I do object to is to the dice being loaded. I object to any body of men outside using their political power to advance their own financial interests. So far as the farmer is concerned—I am not speaking of the farmers and settlers—so far as the Country party are concerned, and the Honorary Minister is certainly the spokesman for them, they are engaged in what the Labour party are engaged in—only the Labour party have had more justification—exploiting the Government for the benefit of their own pockets without regard to the welfare of the general community and my warning to them is that, though they have the power, the sword will break in their hand. They are irritating the rest of the community to such an extent that the country will do what it did 20 years ago: It will rise up and brush the Country party out of existence. If they think they can do this because they have a wheat farmer who, we understand, is remarkably prosperous at Wickepin or Doodlakine or somewhere out there, and that his vote is worth half a dozen or 20 of a man who is living at Subiaco or Gosnells, they are mistaken. It is impossible for that method of government to go on; it must break down, but, unfortunately, in breaking down it will carry us with it. Anyone who looks at the figures of this wheat marketing affair, whatever his opinion, must be very seriously concerned with the position as a whole. If we had a Minister of the greatest ability, and the greatest experience and the greatest impartiality, it would not be a matter of ease to negotiate and put this work of handling the wheat through. The only sound view it appears to me is to get rid as soon as possible—I admit we cannot do it at once—of all these Government controlled organisations, whether a wheat pool, a wool pool, a shipping pool, or any other pool. Another difficulty in criticising the position is that, even if the Honorary Minister and myself were in agreement on the outline of the position, which we certainly are not, we have to deal constantly with the Australian Wheat Pool, and he has to go over to Melbourne every quarter to report himself, I suppose to his elders and betters. Anyone who has read the Budget Speech delivered in the Federal Parliament on the 8th October, in which the position was very clearly put, must feel concerned—I do not wish to use exaggerated language—at the figures involved. Here is an overdraft of the Australian Wheat Board at the time the Speech was delivered of £9,600,000. Further advances are being made to growers to the extent of four millions, making a total liability of £13,600,000. This is a considerable sum of money. Who is our representative? Who is the person who constitutionally speaks for us? It is the Honorary Minister. It is true that, turning to the other side of the balance sheet, we may expect the payment of a total of £13,594,000. This gives a narrow margin of about £20,000 or £30,000 to work on, and when we have figures of this magnitude to deal with it seems to me to be very dangerous

finance. They may tell us the present outlook is bright, and that everything is going to work out satisfactorily, but a turn of the wheel may come about and the margin may be found to be insufficient. So far as Western Australia is concerned, in the methods that are being pursued in the negotiations with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. the deliberate intention is to give a monopoly in the handling of wheat in this State and to turn out of their offices, bag and baggage, everyone else who has been interested in the business—I do not care whether it be Jas. Bell & Co., Dreyfus & Co., Dalgety Ltd., or any other company. The more of these wealthy and strong financial institutions we have in this country, the better it will be for all of us. The deliberate object of the agreement apparently is, so far as the wheat is concerned, to keep them out altogether. I am no champion for any of these firms. I am speaking purely from the public point of view, and realising the magnitude of the wheat industry, I want to see the right firms backing the bill. Instead of that, what are we doing? We have the Westralian Farmers Ltd. with, on their own showing, quite insufficient capital to handle the thing. They are making large profits, which they have admitted in their balance sheet, by exploiting the Government. I do not care whether it is in respect to handling wheat or State implements, this is the position. Here is the spokesman of the Country party, who is connected—do not let us overdo the part—with the Westralian Farmers Ltd. The outlook, so far as the general public is concerned, is bad. Let me give the result of the conditions under which we have been working. I call it a result, although some other members may say that the result is caused by something else. The crop for the year 1915-16 represented a yield of 162 million bushels; for 1916-17, 138 million bushels; for 1917-18, 103 million bushels; and for 1918-19, 64 million bushels. To my way of looking at it there is some connection—how close it is, it is not easy to say off hand—between the wheat pool business and the falling production of wheat. I do not pretend to be an authority on the wheat pool, and I am not going to confuse other members or myself by quoting a large number of figures. I am outlining the position as it appears to me. I want to warn hon. members—the Country party are past all warning and argument. The position suits them while they have control of the Government of the country, and we will not say anything about it except that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. are on a good wicket. There is at all events some connection between the two. That is why I particularly regret the concluding remarks of Mr. Allen when he says he cannot do anything. I would be prepared to do something without the slightest hesitation. I would say we are not going to hand over the whole of the control of the wheat marketing business to the Westralian Farmers Ltd. so long as the Government are the controlling factors in the situation. I would say that the Government are most anxious to get rid of the whole of the responsibility at the earliest possible moment —though nothing is to be done in a hurry— in connection with the wheat pool. Until we get rid of it, I would say that we are going to give to those parties who would be legitimately, honestly, and intelligently interested in the wheat business, a fair deal right through the piece. If the Westralian Farmers Ltd. by their efforts and with their own money, and by their own intelligence, can control the wheat business in this country, so far as the Government are concerned they are welcome to do so. I would be quite prepared without any hesitation to say that, as far as this Chamber is concerned, we do not care what the Government have done, but are going to take the matter into our own hands, since we are asked to do so by the Bill, and refuse to ratify this agreement unless the position is put on the lines I have indicated. I will not press that point. Possibly Mr. Allen is more intimately acquainted with the procedure than I am. Personally I can see no difficulty in doing this and I am not afraid to do it. I am, however, afraid to allow the Country party and the Honorary Minister and his colleagues to go on running this country into a position from which nothing but disaster can come to all of us. It is with the object of stopping that that I would be prepared to act in the manner I have indicated.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East—in reply) [6.7]: Mr. Sanderson's speech has been one of warning. He has referred to the danger in which this State now is, but he has not said wherein that danger lies.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: He refers to you.

The HONORARY MINISTER: He also said that the Westralian Farmers Ltd. had exploited the Government. Where does the exploitation come in? We have a cheaper rate of wheat handling to-day than when the old agents were operating. We have also had better handling in the past year than in any other previous year in the history of the scheme, and probably better than before the scheme came into operation. In addition to that, it is the farmers' wheat we are handling. It is true the Government have advanced certain sums each year, but the assets have been there for the advances made. The Government cannot sustain any loss on present valuations. Where is the grave danger which the hon. member would have us believe exists? I do not know that the figures he quoted regarding our wheat in Western Australia have much to do with the matter, seeing that we are in a far better position to-day than any other State. There is not much concern manifested over there either. I have the latest information as to losses, and the only one year in which there will be any loss in Western Australia, I will compare with the loss in the Eastern States. In South Australia in 1916-17 they estimate a loss of five million bushels, which is equi-

valent to 12 per cent. on the wheat acquired under the scheme. In New South Wales the estimated loss is 3,500,000 bushels, giving an average of 11 per cent. In Victoria the estimated loss is two million bushels, equivalent to an average of four per cent. These figures are very interesting when compared with Western Australia. Our loss for that particular year was 250,000 bushels, or 1.8 per cent. There is nothing alarming about these figures.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Why did not you call for tenders?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The loss on the year 1916-17 will mean approximately 1d. per bushel on the wheat acquired. Seeing that we have had indiscriminate stacking at every siding and every station in that particular year, this State should be very proud of such a small loss.

Hon. J. F. Allen: Do you place that to the credit of the Westralian Farmers Ltd.?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No. I am speaking with regard to the warning contained in Mr. Sanderson's speech that the taxpayers of the State are likely to lose money. I do not see that it is possible that anything can be lost. I would also take notice of the hon. member's remark that the Honorary Minister has had to go to Melbourne every quarter in order to report to the Wheat Board. As a matter of fact the meetings of the Australian Wheat Board held in Melbourne are very important indeed. They deal with matters of vital importance concerning the wheat business of Australia. I do not know whether hon. members can say that I go there to report. At the last meeting of the board I was twitted on the ground that I was running the meeting myself. There is not much in the way of reporting about that. If the hon. member will call at the office and look at the papers he will see that my motion was responsible for the two advances which were made on the 1916-17 and 1917-18 harvests, and will also see that my motion was carried increasing the guarantee this year from 4s. 4d. per bushel at siding to 5s. There are also other matters in connection with the making of the dockage uniform throughout Australia, instead of every State having its own dockage system, with which I had a great deal to do. This serves to show that it is not a matter of merely reporting. The work in connection with the board is strenuous, for it goes into questions in which there is much at stake.

Hon. J. F. Allen: What percentage of that guarantee do the Government carry the responsibility for?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Government are responsible up to 3s. per bushel, and over that amount we are equally responsible with the Federal Government if there is any loss. Judging from the present outlook there is not likely to be any loss, but rather a further profit to the farmers. Mr. Sanderson also spoke in regard to the amount of overdraft. The figures he gave appear correct, but it is curious that the warning note should have been struck at this juncture. Our overdraft some time ago exceeded 20 million pounds, and the prospects of the sale of wheat then were not nearly so good as they are to-day. The position now is satisfactory, and yet we hear this note of warning about an overdraft of 1¾ millions, representing about two-thirds of the overdraft, on the wheat when it was realising low prices.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Why did you not call for tenders?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Sanderson also struck a warning note as to the possibility of the taxpayers suffering in respect to the wheat we have on hand. I would point out that a million and a half bushels of wheat were sold to the British Government at 5s. 6d. a bushel, and that sales to Java and other adjacent ports have been made on the basis of 8s 1d. per bushel.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: Is that f.o.b. Fremantle?

The HONORARY MINISTER: We have made sales up to as high as 10s. 4d. a bushel. There is no need to worry in that direction. Mr. Sanderson, I am sure, will be pleased to hear these facts.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Sanderson raised a very important point when he stated that there was some connection between the wheat pool and the decline in the production of wheat. As a matter of fact, there are several factors working in that direction, but the wheat scheme can in no way be held responsible. The most important trouble has been that, during the past four years, an average of approximately 4s. per bushel has been obtained, while the cost of production has gone up enormously. That, naturally, was not an incentive to those already engaged in wheat growing to increase their operations much less to new farmers to start operations. We know that the acreage under cultivation has decreased. Our highest acreage in Western Australia was 2¼ millions, while this year the area is down to 1¼ millions. Another factor also was the returns which farmers were getting and the uncertainty of those returns; while still another was the high price of stock and the inability of farmers to turn their fields into grazing areas. Mr. Allen referred to the Prime Minister's promise, but I cannot recollect that a definite promise was made. If it was made, I do not see how it was to be carried out. The position to-day is that if we are to revert to the old system of agents operating in this State, there would be an increase in the cost of handling, and no Government would be justified in increasing the cost to our farmers. It has been proved that, in competition, the prices were very high, and if competition is brought about that is the only way in which the alleged promise can be carried out. Then there would be an extra tax upon the wheat growers of the State and the Government would not be justified in imposing it. The hon. member also referred to

the general manager of the Scheme. I quite agree with him that the general manager is a gentleman who understands his business, and he may be right in his assumption, but, on the other hand, there are a great many difficulties in the way of handling, and the probabilities are that all these difficulties would very likely mean loss, instead of the profit that the general manager thought at the time would result. If the Government could have been in the position to carry it out on the lines suggested by him, very probably we would have been successful. Be that as it may, I remember at the time a great deal of consideration was given to this by the Government, and the conclusion was arrived at that it was a sound policy to work under the present system. I recognised that the hon. member has cause for complaint in regard to the delay in bringing down this measure. Certainly Parliament was in session for a few weeks before the Bill was introduced in another place, but every endeavour was made to have it brought forward at the earliest possible moment. There has been considerable delay in getting it through another place and that, with other difficulties, is the cause of its late arrival here. Sir Edward Witte-noom asks why a monopoly still exists. The monopoly exists for cheap handling. If we go back to the old order of things, we are going back to expensive handling, and the Government would not consider that for one moment. In addition, the present agents have given every satisfaction. No trouble arose in the past year and there were no losses, while the handling was cheaper than in previous years. The Government, therefore, felt that they were quite justified in re-engaging the agents who had done good work, and who had an organisation, rather than go outside again when they could not have benefited either the wheat growers or the State.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: There was a loss in one year.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There was a surplus of 78,000 bushels in 1915-16, and there was a small loss in 1916-17, but as far as can be ascertained there will be a surplus in connection with the other years.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: How do you get the surplus?

The HONORARY MINISTER: By the natural increase in weight. The loss of 1916-17 was not as bad as it was thought it would be, because a quantity of that inferior wheat was taken to Fremantle and reconditioned, and in the reconditioning process a lot of foreign matter was removed from it, and, consequently, the wheat realised a higher price than it would otherwise have done. I think I have answered the questions which were asked during the course of the debate and I have every confidence that the Bill will receive the support of hon. members.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—PURE SEEDS.

Point of Order.

The PRESIDENT: Before the second reading of this measure is moved, I would like an assurance from the hon. gentleman in charge of it that the Bill is the same as the one which previously appeared on the Notice Paper as the Sale of Seeds Bill. It is a most unusual circumstance that the name of the Bill on the Notice Paper should be changed. It demands an explanation.

The Honorary Minister: It is the same measure as the one I gave notice of.

The PRESIDENT: It is a most unusual procedure.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I do not know whether I am in order in raising the point which I mentioned yesterday. With regard to the appearance of these Bills, I am under the impression, Sir, that your predecessor ruled that these Bills, when first introduced, should be circulated amongst members. So far as I am personally concerned, I looked in my file and could not find a copy of the Bill. The point of order is this: whether a Minister, or anyone else, is permitted to put a second reading on the Notice Paper unless the Bill has been circulated. I maintain we should have the Bill before us on the second reading. Directly it is introduced it should be circulated.

The PRESIDENT: I have looked up authorities on the point raised by the hon. member. I find that our Standing Orders are not very explicit on the subject. Standing Order 171 reads—

> The member having leave, or one of the Committee appointed to bring in a Bill, shall present a fair copy thereof to the Clerk at the Table at any time when other business is not before the House.

That shows evidence of being very much out of date. It is also so indefinite that we have to look at the practice of the House of Commons for guidance. "May," tenth edition, on page 442, lays down—

> Unreasonable delay ought not to be allowed in the printing of a Bill after its introduction; though the fact that the Bill remains unprinted does not justify a motion that the order for the second reading be read and discharged. If a Bill has not been printed when it is called on for second reading, the postponement of the Bill is the usual course; though, as no rule forbids the second reading of an unprinted Bill, a member is in order in moving its second reading; and it is for the House to determine whether, under the circumstances, the Bill should be read a second time.

The history of the presentation of Bills shows that the tendency is to postpone the presentation more and more. When a Bill was read a first time in the 17th century, the practice

was for the Bill to be read—that is, every clause of the Bill was read. Then the practice was reverted to—which I am thankful is not now in vogue—that the Speaker or President could give what was called a breviate of the Bill, that is, giving his version of the purposes of the Bill either from memory or from a prepared document. Gradually the practice came about that on the first reading of the Bill a slip of paper bearing the name of the Bill was handed to the Clerk to be read. Now it is usual for a Bill to appear on the second reading. If we are guided by common sense it must be evident to hon. members that it is necessary and advisable that a Bill should be in the hands of hon. members when it is first introduced. My ruling is, therefore, that while it is not absolutely necessary that the Bill should be printed and distributed before the second reading, it is, taking all things into consideration, eminently desirable that such should be the case.

Second Reading.

The HONORARY MINISTER Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [7.42] in moving the second reading said: This measure has been under consideration for some time. At present there is no power to deal with unscrupulous speculators in the seed business, hence the necessity for the proposed legislation. No reputable firm would refuse to give a guarantee of the quality of seed, but because there are unscrupulous traders it is necessary that it should be compulsory for all traders in seeds to give a guarantee. The Bill makes the necessary provision. Noxious weeds from overseas are dealt with under Commonwealth legislation. Owing to the presence of noxious weeds in many districts in the State, it is not considered practicable to prohibit altogether the sale of locally grown seed containing noxious weeds. The seller, however, is compelled to declare the quantity, if any, of the noxious weeds present, and in this way the buyer is warned of any danger to be guarded against. The farmer who sells seeds to a merchant or to another farmer is exempted from the provisions of the Bill, provided he guarantees that the seed sold is as grown by him. These seeds come later under the provisions of the Bill when resold by the seedsman. Provision is also made in the Bill for the right of the inspector to enter premises on which seed is being sold, for the purpose of taking samples. Further, provision is made for the purchaser himself to take samples or to have them taken on his behalf by a departmental officer. The main clause of the Bill, Clause 5, deals with warranty and provides that a purchaser shall be given such information as will enable him to assess the value of the seeds being offered him for purchase. The warranty does not compel the vendor to supply seed of a certain standard. Whilst it is desirable that the quality of seeds should be as high as possible, it is sometimes practically impossible to obtain seed of the desired standard. Obviously, therefore, it is better to permit the sale of seeds of a lower standard provided their quality is made known. The Bill provides that descriptions of seeds shall be given in detail, and shall state (a) the kind of seed, the species, not the variety, and the percentage of seeds true to species; (b) the quantity of total impurities; (c) the quantity of noxious weeds; (d) the percentage of pure seeds which will germinate; (e) the quantity of dodder or other impurities in the case of certain prescribed seeds; (f) in the case of clovers and other specified seeds the number of hard seeds, that is, seeds which will not germinate without special treatment with hot water or acid, cracking, and other artificial means of germination; (g) in the case of a mixture the proportion of each kind of seed in the mixture; (h) the country of origin of such seeds as may be described. The last particular is of great importance, and the requiring of it is in accordance with continental practice. I think it would be wise to cite one case out of the many mixtures of seeds being sold, to show hon. members how important it is that legislation should be enacted to control the sale of seeds. I will now refer to a consignment of Yorkshire fog grass, which recently arrived in Sydney from New Zealand. A sample was sent to the Government laboratory in Sydney, and it was found to contain 80,000 hawkweed seeds, 48,000 cocks-foot grass, 26,800 sheep's fescue, as well as 16 other weeds. Thus, in one pound of Yorkshire fog grass, there were no less than 176,600 foreign seeds. It makes one wonder whether the seed supposed to have been sold was present in the parcel at all. While on this subject I will also give hon. members particulars of a germination test recently carried out by Mr. Mann, the Government Analyst. The full report is open to the inspection of any hon. member who wishes to see it; but in order not to delay the House unduly I will take only the very worst of the cases. Of lettuce seed, 7 per cent. germinated; of cabbage, 1 per cent.; mangold, 10 per cent.; swede, 9 per cent.; Chinese cabbage, 5 per cent.; kohl rabi, 5 per cent.; early carrot, 5 per cent.; Brussels sprouts, 1 per cent. These, I repeat, are the very worst of the results. On the other hand, in the case of New York lettuce the percentage of germination was 69 per cent., and in the case of oxheart carrots and large red tomatoes it was 49 per cent. Generally, the figures show how very necessary it is that we should have some legislation to let the buyer know what he purchases. The Bill does not prohibit the sale of inferior seeds, but provides that the seller must make known to the purchaser the actual quality of the seed being offered. A very important point is that the passing of this measure will militate against the spread of noxious weeds, which are becoming very serious in this State. Recently we have had an outbreak of carnation weed, one of the worst pests, and it is costing a lot of money to eradicate that weed from

the Geraldton district. Undoubtedly it was introduced in some imported seed. The objects of the Bill are to protect the grower by providing him with a true and detailed description of the quality of the seed being offered for sale, and by aiding against the further spread of noxious weeds and pests. Further, the measure will protect both the grower and the seller against the fraudulent practices of unscrupulous dealers in low-grade seeds. Briefly, I may describe the objects to be attained by the passing of this Bill as, firstly, a guarantee of purity of seeds; secondly, a guarantee of germinating ability of seeds; thirdly, the prevention of exploitation of the grower, and, fourthly, the control of the dissemination of weed seeds throughout the State. When the Bill is in Committee I shall be glad to give any information desired by hon. members on the various clauses. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [7.53]: This is a proposal which has been before the country for some years. Referring briefly to the question of the introduction of Bills, I think it is very much to be regretted that a Bill of this kind cannot be in the hands of members in time to permit of their communicating with those people who are specially affected by it.

The Minister for Education: Adjourn the debate.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is no use adjourning the debate. I want to see the Bill knocked out.

The Honorary Minister: Without consideration?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: We should be able to consider this for ourselves. As for the people outside, it would probably take two or three weeks to communicate fully with the various parties interested in the Bill.

The Honorary Minister: The seedsmen have had four or five conferences on it already.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I will not labour that point, because it might be said that the Bill has been before the country for 20 years. I remember a resolution on the same subject being carried at a producers' conference certainly 20 years ago. My objection to this kind of legislation is that it is going to cause more expenditure by the Agricultural Department and give the department more power. I say without hesitation that the fruit and vegetable growing industries of this country would be on a very much better footing, both for the growers and the consumers, if our Agricultural Department had never existed. I could give a dozen illustrations to fortify that expression of opinion. I will content myself with one, but it is an illustration which interests every householder in this country. It has reference to the potato growing industry. We all know the extravagant price of potatoes in Western Australia. I am not going to attribute the whole of the trouble to the Agricultural Department, but I say they have been charged with being indirectly and directly connected with the extravagant rate at which potatoes are sold here now. I myself have made more than one attempt to introduce the best seed potatoes —seed potatoes, let it be marked—that could be obtained from the Lowlands of Scotland and from the south of England, feeling satisfied that if we could get the right seed into this country and treat it properly, we could grow potatoes at a profit and give satisfaction to ourselves as growers and also to the consumers. If I was wrong in that, at any rate I was prepared to make the experiment and to back my opinion. Some six years ago I communicated with a firm of nurserymen in Kent asking them to collect for me the best seed potatoes that could be obtained. I knew that there were regulations in connection with the importation of potatoes. That, of course, is a matter within the scope of the Federal Government, but it is the same kind of legislation as is desired in this instance by our Agricultural Department. I sent Home a copy of the regulations governing the importation of potatoes into Western Australia and this was the reply I received from the nurserymen, well known people in England, George Bunyard & Co., Maidstone, Kent—

> In reference to your letter as to the importation of potatoes, we consider the restrictions of the Western Australian Government—

There is an error there; I think it should be "the Australian Government"—

> quite prohibitive. Nothing short of a microscopical examination of each tuber could establish the absence of any of the scheduled diseases, even leaving out the well known difficulty of proving a negative. There are, as far as we know, no Government inspectors who are willing to undertake this work of inspection. In the circumstances we fear it will be impossible to comply with these requirements.

Naturally one had to give up the attempt. I repeat that if we had no regulations at all as to the importation of potatoes, we would have a much better and a much cheaper supply in Western Australia. It is well known to those acquainted with the nurserymen's industry that the most reputable and the best of the nurserymen refuse to give any warranty either with regard to seeds or with regard to trees. It does not require a technical knowledge to see that it is impossible for these people to give a guarantee that a seed will germinate or that a tree is true to name. I am not speaking of nurserymen in this country, or in the Eastern States, or in England; but of all nurserymen. The highest class of nurserymen will refuse to give guarantees.

The Honorary Minister: They are doing it to-day.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I say that the best men refuse to give guarantees. To ask a nurseryman for a guarantee is like asking a doctor to guarantee a cure. The doctor will say that he will do his best. What will be

the result of passing a Bill of this nature? An increase in the cost of government in this country, which is objectionable enough to start with. To enforce this measure, we shall need inspectors, and the inspectors will have to be paid. Another effect will be to harass the nurserymen, and particularly to harass the most reputable men, because they are most anxious now to furnish their customers with seeds that will give satisfaction. That stands to reason. If a grower is dissatisfied with his seedsman, his best plan is to try another seedsman or to import seed himself. But to ask the Government to interfere in a question of this kind, apart from the remedies that everybody has at present, seems to me ridiculous. Take this case, for instance: A man buys seed from a nurseryman to-day, and the seed may be perfectly good; that is to say, it will germinate and it will prove true to name. But what guarantee can the man give that the seed will germinate under the treatment it will receive from the purchaser?

The Honorary Minister: He is not asked to guarantee under those conditions.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: What is he going to guarantee; the seed when he sells it?

The Honorary Minister: When it leaves the shop.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Guarantee what? That it is true to name? The man who knows what he is doing will ask, "how can I possibly do it?" If it is a case of deliberate fraud the purchaser has his remedy now in the courts. The botanist of the Agricultural Department—we had a botanist 25 years ago. Let us ask the best men we have had in the Agricultural Department what they think of the department. We had a fruit commissioner. Ask him what he thinks of the department. I am not making an attack upon individual officials, nor even upon the Minister. The department seems to have been a very bad friend to the fruit and vegetable industries. Furthermore, the Bill provides for innumerable regulations and prescriptions. That in itself is objectionable. Then it is provided that any purchaser of seeds shall, on payment of a prescribed fee, be entitled to have the purchased seeds examined by the botanist, and to receive from him a certificate of the results of the examination. I hope hon. members will not think I am labouring this question, for it is of the deepest interest to those who take part in the work of the cultivation of the soil. A measure of this kind is not calculated to assist that work.

Hon. J. Duffell: Send it on to a select committee.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Certainly not. I am prepared to assist to throw it out. It is provided that any officer may enter any place which he has reasonable ground for believing is kept or used for the sale of seeds, and may inspect such seeds. This is going to irritate and put to a considerable expense the seller of the seeds, while it will give no protection whatever to the purchaser. If anyone thinks that by this Bill he will be protected from the risk of purchasing seeds that will not germinate or are not true to name, he is considerably mistaken. It is provided also that if the purchaser is dissatisfied with his seeds he is to report to the inspector and divide the packet into three portions, the department to take one, the purchaser to take one and the seller to take one. If that packet of diseased seeds is to be divided amongst the three parties, who will then get to work and see what is to happen on the germination of those seeds, we may expect truly extraordinary results.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That is how they do with milk.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Don't talk to me about milk! We are discussing the Pure Seeds Bill. If it was for the protection of the health of the people, one could very easily understand Parliament taking a part, but the object presumably is to protect the people against fraud. The grower of the seed will be brought into it later. There are in this State people experimenting in the production of seeds. Presumably most of them are doing it to benefit themselves on a cash basis. Those people will go to the merchant in the city and endeavour to sell their seeds. Who is going to be responsible in that case, the grower or the merchant? The merchant will say, "I will not have the things in my place. They will bring inspectors into the place, and they may even get me into the Criminal Court." Is the grower of that seed going to give a guarantee?

Hon. J. Duffell: He will make you pay for it if he does.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: If a man is going to deliberately deceive either the merchant or the purchaser of the seed he may succeed once, but he certainly will not do so a second time. The grower of the seed, even though he may be asking for a Bill of this nature, will find that it is going to hamper him as well as the merchant and the purchaser.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What power will there be if the seed is imported? You could not prosecute a person outside the State.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: No, but they will prosecute the shopkeepers, the people whom I represent. I ask the Committee, as a mark of their disapproval of this class of legislation, to reject it on the second reading. The Bill is going to injure three classes of the community and, in the long run, the public generally. And in addition it is going to waste our time; because if it goes into Committee it cannot be permitted to pass in its present form and, as we are led to believe by statements made by the Premier that the session is to close at the end of next month, and seeing that we still have a considerable amount of important legislation to deal with I ask, why waste time with the Pure Seeds Bill?

On motion by Hon. R. J. Lynn, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2) FIRST READING.

1, Merchant Shipping Act Application Act Amendment.

2, Midland Railway.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

House adjourned at 8.11 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 22nd October, 1919.

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

QUESTION—HAMPTON PLAINS, WOODLINE EXTENSION.

Mr. LUTEY asked the Minister for Mines: Has there been any application by the woodline companies for permission to run spur lines to, or near, the new finds at Hampton Plains?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: No.

QUESTION—JUSTICES OF THE PEACE.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Premier: In view of the decision of both Houses of Parliament, will he consider the question of withdrawing all commissions of the peace, with a view to an equitable distribution of such commissions in the spirit of the Justices Act Amendment Bill?

The PREMIER replied: No.

QUESTION—HORSE PURCHASES, DEFENCE DEPARTMENT.

Mr. MALEY asked the Premier: Will he make representations to the Defence Department to ensure that any horses required for artillery or other purposes within this State be purchased locally?

The PREMIER replied: Yes.

QUESTION—RAILWAY EXTENSION, YUNA-MULLEWA.

Mr. MALEY asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Has he given consideration to the suggested extension of railway from Yuna to Mullewa? 2, Is he aware that this connection, if made, would obviate the haulage difficulties on the steep gradients of the present Geraldton-Mullewa line? 3, What area of land is it estimated the extension of this railway would make available for selection outside a 12-mile radius of present railway facilities? 4. What area has been already alienated outside this radius?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No, but information will be obtained. 2, No. 3, 132,560 acres. 4, 21,440 acres.

SELECT COMMITTEE, STATE CHILDREN AND CHARITIES DEPARTMENT.

Extension of Time.

Mr. SMITH (North Perth) [4.35]: I move—

That the time for bringing up the report of the select committee be extended for three weeks.

The committee have sat on a good many occasions and have taken a considerable amount of evidence, but we find that the work still to be done will prevent us from submitting our report in less than three weeks from now.

Question put and passed.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Hardwick leave of absence for two weeks granted to Mr. Piesse (Toodyay) on the ground of ill-health.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Merchant Shipping Act Application Act Amendment.

2, Midland Railway.

Transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BILL—PRICES REGULATION.

Further report of Committee adopted.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION— INCORRECT DIVISION LIST.

Mr. MALEY (Greenough) [4.40]: I desire to make a personal explanation. The "Hansard" report of the division taken on the amendment moved by Mr. Angwin in