

# Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 3rd December, 1946.

	PAGE
Assent to Bill .....	2335
Motions: Police, as to provision of compensation for injury or death, passed .....	2335
Road transport restrictions, to inquire by Select Committee .....	2338
Bills: Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act Amendment, 1k. ....	2342
Coal Mines Regulation, 1r. ....	2342
Marketing of Potatoes (No. 2), 1r. ....	2342
Western Australian Trotting Association, 3u. ....	2342
Cemeteries Act Amendment, 3a., passed .....	2342
Timber Industry (Housing of Employees), 2a. ....	2342
Bread Act Amendment, 2r. ....	2356
Comprehensive Agricultural Areas and Goldfields Water Supply, 2a. ....	2360

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

## ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Legal Practitioners Act Amendment Bill.

## MOTION—POLICE.

*As to Provision of Compensation  
for Injury or Death.*

**HON. E. H. H. HALL** (Central) [4.34]:  
I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should at once arrange for all members of the Police Force and/or their dependants to receive adequate compensation for injuries or death sustained whilst any such member of the Force is carrying out his duties.

It has been said that truth is stranger than fiction, and I must confess that had anybody told me that members of the Police Force of this State were not protected in the way that Parliament has laid down that employees should be safeguarded, I would have been considerably surprised. Reading a statement in the Press some few weeks ago, following a very sad occurrence, I was reliably informed that police throughout the State, whether in the metropolitan area or away in the far North-West; whether dealing with civilised people in the settled portions of the State or with uncivilised wild natives in the far-flung areas, receive no consideration from their employers in the event of their death or serious injury. I found it very difficult to believe that.

Only during the last few years it has been laid down by Act of Parliament that employers must insure the people in their employ, and the fact that such a measure was passed by both Houses of Parliament is sufficient indication that it was approved by almost every member. It is only right that men who are serving in any capacity should be protected in the event of either injury or death. So I do not think I need offer any apology for bringing this very important matter before the House; nor do I think it necessary for me to indulge in any lengthy address. I have not spoken to members about the matter, but I feel they cannot make fish of one and flesh of another. The Government of the day should be in all respects an ideal employer. I would like to take the opportunity to say—I have not made inquiries on the subject—that if other members of the Civil Service in general are not protected in this way, it is the bounden duty of the Government to afford them that protection. Why some association or union—say the Police Union or the Civil Service Association—has not taken this matter up, I cannot understand. I do not want to be accused of telling them their job, but I consider that in the interests of everybody measures like this should be on the statute-book. It is not necessary for me to say that we are all of the opinion that members of the Police Force should have the utmost protection.

I have for many years been of the opinion that every honest man should look upon members of the Police Force as his friends. Those of us who have to be away from home for lengthy periods, day and night, certainly do so. It was a great comfort to me when my family was young and I was absent for any considerable time to know that my wife was in telephonic communication with the police station. Police officers are available day and night to protect our property and our lives and liberty. Without further ado, I submit the motion for the consideration of members.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.40]: I feel constrained to say to Mr. Hall that it would have been just as well if, before moving a motion of this kind, he had informed himself of the actual circumstances, instead of moving the motion and admitting that he has made no

inquiry, and therefore does not understand what the position is.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: On a point of explanation, I dare say it was my fault, but I did make inquiries about the Police Force from an official quarter, though not about the Public Service generally.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member went so far as to say that members of the Police Force received no consideration at the hands of their employers, meaning the Government, and later he said he did not propose to suggest to the Police Union or to the Civil Service Association what their duty is in matters of this kind. I think that he can very well leave matters in the hands of the Civil Service Association or of the Police Union, as the case might be. The police of this State receive every consideration at the hands of the Government and the hon. member ought to be aware, if he is not, that they are specifically excluded from the Workers' Compensation Act. They, together with a number of other people, are definitely excluded from the term "worker," the interpretation of which is as follows.—

"Worker" does not include any person whose remuneration exceeds five hundred pounds a year or a person whose employment is of a casual nature and who is employed otherwise than for the purpose of the employer's trade or business, or a member of the police force or an outworker or a member of the employer's family dwelling in his house.

That is the reason why members of the Police Force are not covered by the Workers' Compensation Act. If Mr. Hall had cared to make an inquiry on that score he could have been supplied with that information. He could also have been told of the provision made for members of the Police Force. Although members of the force in this State are excluded from the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act they are provided for in the following way—they are entitled to sick leave for 168 days on full pay.

Hon. C. B. Williams: And the miners get nothing.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Subject to the approval of the Minister, the period may be extended further, according to the circumstances of the case. I know of no other section of workers to which the same sick leave provision applies, and, of course, sick leave covers the period for which a police officer may be off duty suffering as the result of

some injury sustained in the course of his work.

Hon. C. B. Williams: They get full pay while on sick leave.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They are also given full medical attention, medicines and hospital maintenance. Again I say very few sections of workers are entitled to that consideration. Then there is the provision that where a policeman is retired on account of being medically unfit he shall be paid for all the leave that is due to him up to the time of his retirement, and he is entitled to free transport for himself and his family to the metropolitan area, and to the full superannuation for which he has contributed under the Superannuation Act.

Hon. A. Thomson: How much does he contribute?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That rests with him when he elects how much superannuation he will take out. A minimum is provided, and he can take out as much as he likes over that. In the event of injury proving fatal, the widow, under the Superannuation Act, receives benefits in accordance with the provisions of that measure and, as members are probably aware, in recent cases the Government has seen fit to make up the pension that the widow would have received to the full pension that the police officer would have received had he remained in the force until he reached the retiring age. Therefore it cannot be said that members of the Police Force do not receive any consideration at the hands of the Government.

Until a year or two ago there existed a fund known as the Police Benefit Fund, which was used to provide additional benefits to police officers, but it was wound up after the superannuation fund came into operation. Certain arrangements were made as to contributors to that fund, and today all police officers are subject to the superannuation fund. I might say, for the information of the House, that this very matter is at present receiving the attention of the Police Union, the Department of Labour and my own department, and one could almost imagine that the hon. member knew something of what is taking place at the present time.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That is not fair.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: All that is happening is that the question of whether the Police Force would be better off under

the Workers' Compensation Act, than it is today under the conditions that have prevailed for many years past, is being discussed. It does not matter much whether this resolution is carried or not. It is a matter that is receiving the attention of the interested parties and, as Minister for Police, I say I am just as keen as is the hon. member or anyone else to see that members of the force have satisfactory working conditions and that adequate provision is made in the event of their being injured or losing their lives.

I do not think I would be justified in saying anything more except to reiterate that at all times the Police Force has had every consideration at the hands of this and other Governments, more particularly in reference to the circumstances to which the hon. member has referred. While there is no statutory responsibility on the Government to do what was done on the last occasion, I think had the hon. member cared to make any inquiries he would have found that members of the Police Force are quite satisfied though, as I say, discussions are taking place at present between the Police Union, myself, and the Department of Labour, to see whether there is some alternative—something different from that which exists at present—that would be more satisfactory. I raise no objection to the motion, as to whether it is carried or not. Members of the Police Force will continue to receive every consideration at the hands of the Government.

**HON. A. THOMSON** (South-East) [4.48]: I do not think Mr. Hall should offer any apology for having brought this matter before the House, as the explanation given by the Chief Secretary is one that the public as a whole has needed sadly.

The Chief Secretary: The hon. member might have made inquiries before moving a motion of this kind.

**Hon. A. THOMSON**: The public were not at all satisfied, and while this is not altogether connected with the motion moved by Mr. Hall, there is a section of the public that seems to have the idea that certain of our police should be armed. Had the constable, who unfortunately suffered recently through a very foolish crime, been armed, it is probable that it would not have happened.

However, I consider that the information given by the Chief Secretary has more than warranted the action of the hon. member in moving the motion. The Chief Secretary has told us that he does not care whether the motion is carried or not. I hope it will be passed, because the mere fact of our passing it should strengthen the hands of the Minister, sympathetic though he is.

The Chief Secretary: He does not require his hands to be strengthened in a matter of this sort.

**Hon. A. THOMSON**: I am not suggesting that; nor am I suggesting that the union has not been active in the interests of its members, but there has been a feeling of anxiety amongst sections of the public. Thank goodness, such tragedies do not often happen in Western Australia, though we frequently read of similar occurrences in Victoria and New South Wales. Possibly some day the Police Force may have to be placed in a better position. I support the motion.

**HON. E. H. H. HALL** (Central—in reply) [4.52]: Seemingly it does not matter very much whether one simply tries to do one's duty to the people in general and no matter how conciliatory one's language might be, it has been my experience that the Chief Secretary, when replying, tries to say something to discount what has been said. That might be politics, but there is no semblance of politics actuating me in this matter. The Chief Secretary would have members believe that I rushed wildly in to move this motion without making any inquiries, and though he did not say it in so many words, he implied that my chief object was to disparage the Government. I did not go into the matter at all until I was requested to do so, and I am not going to give the Chief Secretary, who happens to be the Minister for Police, the satisfaction of knowing the very reputable source from which I obtained my information.

Before moving this motion, I waited for some time; there were matters of greater moment confronting the State. I did make inquiries and I found that the Press paragraph was correct. The very nice speech made by the Chief Secretary did not deny the fact that members of the Police Force who meet with injury or death in the course of their duty are not entitled, by statutory authority, to receive a recognised amount of

compensation, though Parliament has seen fit to compel private employers to make provision in this direction. I know that the police are entitled to sick leave, but to produce that as an argument is merely begging the question. When an employee loses limb or life while carrying out his duties, he and his dependants should know exactly what compensation they are entitled to receive. I do not know how it strikes other members, but I think the action being taken in the case under notice is humiliating. I do not like saying this, but the Chief Secretary has forced me into doing so. The present appeal in aid of a widow of a man who died while bravely doing his duty is humiliating.

I am quite aware that the Chief Secretary does not like my talking in this strain, but I am not here to consider what he likes. Since I have occupied a seat in this Chamber, my attitude has been to do what I consider to be my duty, though to do so does not always pay. However, there is much in the old quotation that begins, "To thine own self be true." Even if I offend some people, I at least have the satisfaction of knowing that I have tried to do the right thing. The sooner the Government does the right thing by the members of the Police Force, the better it will be for the good name and fame of Western Australia. I have been told that this is the only State in the Commonwealth where such provision is not made for members of the Police Force who meet with injury or death in the course of their duties. I am pleased to find that the Chief Secretary does not intend to oppose this motion. I do not think he would or should. I couched the motion in carefully selected language. I do not accuse the Government of being actuated by any black heart; I merely expressed my surprise, as I was fully entitled to do.

Hon. G. Fraser: Why has not the hon. member moved to amend the Workers' Compensation Act? He has as much right as the Government to do that.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

### **MOTION—ROAD TRANSPORT RESTRICTIONS.**

*To Inquire by Select Committee.*

**HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH** (Metropolitan) [4.57]: I move—

That a Select Committee of five members be appointed to inquire into the question of transport facilities with special reference to—

1. The advisableness of modifying present restrictions on road traffic and, if so, to what extent and in what direction;
2. The extent to which private competition with State-owned undertakings should be permitted in—
  - (a) The metropolitan area,
  - (b) country districts.
3. Matters related thereto.

I am sure it is not necessary for me to speak at any great length in moving the motion. My desire is to set up a fact-finding body in the interests of the public. I believe there is a public demand for some such investigation, and that there is a strong and growing public feeling that the transport facilities in Western Australia are not as good as they might be and not nearly as good as are required in the interests of a young and developing country.

There is only one point upon which there might be room for difference of opinion and that is the question whether the investigation should be made by a board of government officers or by a body such as I suggest. Arguments could be advanced in both directions, but I think that a board of government officials, no matter how competent they might be, would necessarily have a certain outlook. They would undoubtedly be influenced by government policy, and I do not think the public would feel sure that all other interests were receiving the consideration that was their due. There are four distinct interests concerned whose desires might frequently conflict, and each is entitled to a hearing. Those four interests are—the State transport services; the commercial services catering for the public generally; the private owner who might well desire greater freedom in the use of his own transport facilities than he has at present; and finally, above all, there is the public.

Each of these interests is entitled to a hearing and could receive such a hearing from the Select Committee, the appointment of which I have suggested. We hear a good deal from time to time about monopolies. They have their good points and their evil points. I am rather inclined to think the evil points may outweigh the good ones. It is a fact that monopolies have been able to establish great concerns with consequent

advantage to the interests of the community. There may, of course, be cases in which they have retarded progress and brought a burden upon the people. When one comes to a government monopoly, there are two or three things to consider. First of all is the advantage that the profits of the monopoly go into the public purse. Against that we have as a set-off the fact that the losses become a burden on the taxpayer, and also there is not always the same inducement on the part of a government monopoly to make ends meet as is the case with a private undertaking.

Perhaps the greatest objection of all to Government monopolies is that they are so tremendously difficult to remove. They may and they do from time to time stand in the way of progress. I desire to make one or two comparisons between conditions in the Old Country and here. I am fully conscious of the entirely different conditions and do not wish to make these comparisons at all binding. There are certain facts that are worth taking into account. In Great Britain, the privately-owned railways have to stand up against road competition. They had and have had very little protection in the way of restrictions on road competition, and they had to fight their own battles, and did so. Nevertheless, the privately-owned railways of Great Britain were considered to be far better from the point of view of service to the public than were the State-owned railways on the Continent.

The immense developments that have taken place in British railways and the improvements therein since they were confronted with road competition have been amazing and marvellous. They have held their own to such an extent that now we see the British Labour Government is going to nationalise the railways. I am not saying whether that is good or bad, as that does not enter into the question I am now dealing with. The fact that the British Government is anxious to nationalise these undertakings indicates that, although facing almost unrestricted road competition, the British railways have held their own. This suggests two questions. One is, had the railways of Great Britain been State-owned and conducted against competition from the highest restrictions on road transport, would there have been the development in both forms of transport there has been since that form of

competition came in? The second question is, had the railways of Western Australia not been protected by the highest restrictions against road transport, is it not possible that both of them might have developed to a greater extent than they have done in recent years?

I think all members must have noticed the reference in the last two or three daily papers to the very enterprising departure on the part of the Midland Railway Company. It would be worth while if the Select Committee were to investigate and find out why it was that that company provided transport in opposition to its own railways, and how that competition is standing up. One thing I do not think we can overlook is that transport is of paramount importance. One writer recently put the matter in this way—

Whatever man does entails movement, mental or bodily. Movement is, in fact, the mainspring of his evolution and of the civilisation which this evolution engenders; consequently in the economic growth of movement must be sought the direction of all progress, physical and psychological.

That is very sound generalisation. All history shows that progress is practical only step by step, and depends upon the efficiency and constant development of transport facilities. Only by such means can a country be developed. The railway position in Western Australia is unique, and the facts must be fully considered. The mileage per ten thousand of population is seven times greater than the average mileage in Australia. It is about double that of any other country in the world, and is approximately ten times greater than the usual rail mileage in most of the great countries of the world. That casts upon the railways tremendous difficulties and responsibilities.

The services of the railways in providing cheap transport facilities for exporting industries must be taken into account. Whereas a good many people say that the aeroplane and the motorcar are putting the railways out of existence, I think there is no doubt that in Western Australia for a long time to come the railway policy ought to be one of improving that particular service. There is another point worthy of consideration. The railways, no doubt, have lost money by being brought into competition with road transport, which form of transport has made enormous contributions to the Commonwealth Government. I refer to the

duty on petrol and to the duty and sales tax on cars. I should think that, even apart from the road revenue that is obtained by the Commonwealth Government as a result of road transport, apart from any returns there may be from the Commonwealth to the State, the balance might be sufficient to pay off the railway deficit.

We have to look at this matter fairly and squarely and to take everything into account. We cannot overlook the fact that our transport services at present are not all they might be or all they ought to be. It is generally admitted that England made a wonderful recovery after the Napoleonic wars, a recovery which was maintained for many years, and was contributed to chiefly by Stevenson's adaptation of steam to the railways. So it is in other countries. Movement and the means of movement always have been the media that have created the greatest civilisation, and the lack of them has always retarded civilisation. The chief cause of the backward position of China to-day is its inferior transport facilities.

Can it be denied that our facilities are not what they should be? I travelled to Coolgardie in the first train that entered that Goldfields town over 50 years ago. The progress in railway transport from that day has not been what one would expect in half a century. In this House 34 years ago I opposed the purchase of the Perth trams. I do not think the development of our tramway service has been anything like what might have been expected in so long a period. If it is a fact that our present transport facilities are unsatisfactory, the question arises, how are they to be improved? The first step should be to establish some fact-finding body that, taking evidence from all interests and from the public, would be able to say, "This is wrong; this can be remedied; this should be remedied." I believe that an investigation of that kind could be better undertaken by an all-party Select Committee of members of this Chamber than by a board of public servants, no matter how competent they might be. I submit the motion.

**HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [5.13]:** I strongly support the motion for the appointment of a Select Committee to go into all questions of road transport. I am only sorry we cannot be the means of appointing a Royal Commission to inquire into this im-

portant question. The position in the country is desperately acute in the matter of transport of livestock, particularly fats. I will confine my remarks on this motion to events that have occurred recently in connection with the Midland Junction sale-yards, and generally speaking in connection with the supply of fatstock to the city. The railways definitely cannot handle that class of freight. I know what I am talking about. From September to December, the railways are unable to handle either the freight or the livestock that is offering. For the last three years, trucks have been rationed and apportioned amongst the four livestock brokers, the weekly number being 160 in all. That is the position for tomorrow's market. I understand that one firm which could take up to 160 trucks is being apportioned only 67, and that another firm which could handle 50 trucks has been given 23 for tomorrow's market. It can be seen, therefore, that the railways cannot handle this traffic.

**Hon. A. Thomson:** There will be serious losses for the producers.

**Hon. G. B. WOOD:** Yes, tremendous losses. For a long time people having fat lambs could not send them either to the freezer or to Midland Junction because of the lack of transport. That involved the producers in tremendous losses. They either had to face the economic loss due to their sheep going back in condition through having to be held, or they had to use up the peas they had been setting aside for feeding purposes in February or March. It is high time some investigation was made into the matter. I commend Sir Hal Colebatch for bringing down his motion. Last Wednesday we found that something like 13,000 sheep went to Midland Junction by rail and road. A good many more would have gone to market but for the fact that the farmers were afraid from what they read in the paper that the restrictions would be re-imposed. We know that in the previous week 19,000 sheep were taken to Midland Junction by road, whereas only 13,000 came in the following week.

**Hon. A. Thomson:** And the stock arrived in better condition when coming by road.

**Hon. G. B. WOOD:** How long are we to allow that state of affairs to continue without doing something about it or having some inquiry made? When the Government re-imposed these restrictions on road transport

it exercised indecent haste. This city was fed by road transport for two or three weeks, but the moment the strike was over the restrictions were again imposed. That was wrong. Many people believe that the incidence of road transport had some effect on the settlement of the strike. That is my opinion, too. I believe that it had something to do with making the enginemmen think a little. The people who brought sheep to the city rendered a great service to the community. I am not saying for one moment that they did it for the population of the metropolitan area; they did it for themselves, but they gave that service just the same.

The Chief Secretary: Could they have continued doing it?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Of course they could, but when they saw that the restrictions were to be re-imposed they ceased their activities. Only 13,000 sheep came down by rail and road last week. The railways could not do the job necessary for last week's market. They could not put trucks on to the spur lines, and yet the Government, in its wisdom, said that road transport was not to be permitted to operate. There were even inspectors on the roads taking the names of people contravening the regulations. Something like 20 names were taken by inspectors between Glen Forrest and Mundaring. The Government might have waited another week or two. The position is that farmers, and others, can get a permit if they ask for it, but it only operates from week to week. As a result, the farmers do not know where they are.

Many farmers and licensed carriers altered their trucks to carry sheep. In view of the fact that the railways are not likely to be able to do all that is required for some months to come, these people should be told that they can bring their sheep to Midland Junction. They would not bring too many, because they had a taste of doing that during the railway strike. Not everyone wants to bring sheep by road. People who live within a certain distance of Midland Junction should be allowed to do so, and the people living at greater distances could be served by the railways, with their limited capacity. It was implied by the Chief Secretary's answer to a question of mine that low freight did not come into the picture. Well, it does, because a certain amount of super was backloaded, and a lot of super would be

backloaded to the country if the farmers and licensed carriers were allowed to bring their sheep to Midland Junction. That would relieve the railways of a lot of responsibility.

I shudder to think of what is going to happen when the railways try to lift the super next year. They just will not be able to do it. I believe that they will have to work in with road transport just as road transport was called in a few months ago to bring wheat and chaff to the port. A Select Committee would bring to light all these things; it could make suggestions and help the Government, and the Government should welcome it. The State Transport Co-ordination Act gives certain powers to the board and amongst them is the duty to make investigations into transport matters and to give consideration to—

(i) The question of transport generally in the light of service to the community;

(ii) The needs of the State for economic development.

(iii) The industrial conditions under which all forms of transport are conducted;

(iv) The impartial and equitable treatment of all conflicting interests.

Did the Transport Board make any inquiries, in the last week or two, as to the requirements of the city and the position in the country? I do not believe it did. As soon as the strike was over, the restrictions were re-imposed.

Hon. A. Thomson: And inspectors were put out on the road.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Yes. I know one man who had his name taken, and he said, "I will get a permit when I arrive at Midland Junction." The inspector said to him, and rightly so, "Supposing you do not get a permit?" The position today is that a man can take his stock to Midland Junction and ask for a permit when he gets there. It is a most amazing state of affairs! Then we have chaotic conditions in the country. I have known sheep, while waiting for trucks, to be held for ten days in selling centres such as Katanning. I have, in a very slack time of the year, had sheep wait for ten days at Nurembeen. Then the railways, in their kindness and merey, took them the longest way round and charged me the freight for the longer distance. That, I think, was wrong, but I had to pay it.

The Midland Railway Co. is supplying 90 per cent. of what is required of it, whereas the Government is managing only 40 per cent. That should be inquired into. If a private firm can do that, then so should a Government institution. I hope the House will agree to the Select Committee, as I believe a lot of good would come of it. I have dealt principally with the question of stock transport, but there are other matters that could be mentioned. The Government railways have fallen down on their job twice in two years, to my knowledge, in the carrying of liquid fuel. Farmers have had to wait for their fuel, and, as a result, have had to ask the Transport Board—and I must say this for the board that it did agree to do certain things—to make other arrangements for them. I whole-heartedly support the motion.

**HON. H. TUCKEY** (South-West) [5.24]: I support the motion. This Select Committee could be of considerable assistance to the Government. Are we going to support the railways indefinitely, and retard the progress of the State? That is a matter for Parliament to decide, and I feel that sooner or later we shall have to revert, in some degree, to road transport, whatever may be the circumstances relating to our railway system. We must maintain our railways—we cannot do without them—but it is a step in the wrong direction to insist that they must carry all traffic, whether livestock or passengers. When the original transport Bill was introduced in this House members were given to understand that by putting the motortrucks off the road a better service and cheaper freights would be available through the railways, and I think members took the view that by handing over the monopoly of transport to the railways something of that kind would result. But that has not been the case.

We have found that the railways, instead of giving better and cheaper service, have done the opposite. It is not very long since freights were increased, but only outside the metropolitan area. Regulations were framed whereby freights were increased outside the metropolitan area. Some country members objected to that, and said the increases should be State-wide. We have a very large State, and fast transport is essential. Some

of our passenger trains leave Perth about 11 o'clock one night and, by 11 o'clock the following night, travel something like 250 miles. Such a journey could be accomplished by motorear in a few hours. People are not going to take 24 hours to travel a journey if they can do it in a quarter of the time. We will have to consider the whole question of transport, and a committee of this kind might well inquire into the merits of the whole business and so be of some assistance to the Government. I hope the motion will be agreed to.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

### **BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.**

- 1, Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act Amendment.
- 2, Coal Mines Regulation.
- 3, Marketing of Potatoes (No. 2).  
Received from the Assembly.

### **BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.**

- 1, Western Australian Trotting Association.  
Transmitted to the Assembly.
- 2, Cemeteries Act Amendment.  
*Passed.*

### **BILL—TIMBER INDUSTRY (HOUSING OF EMPLOYEES).**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 28th November.

**HON. W. J. MANN** (South-West) [5.33]: I followed with a great deal of interest the actions and sittings of the Royal Commission on the Timber Industry (Housing of Employees) Bill that was appointed in another place last year. I have read quite a lot of the commission's report, which is rather an extensive document. With some of its findings I am in accord, but with others I am at variance. I am afraid that the Government in bringing down this housing Bill has not done exactly what I anticipated. I expected that, having noted the findings of the Royal Commission, the Government would have proceeded to give effect to the essential matters by means of regulations under the Timber Industry Regulation Act.



If members go to the trouble of getting a copy of those regulations and perusing them carefully—I refer to those promulgated in 1936 and 1937—they will find that the district inspectors are charged with quite a number of duties on or about timber mills which are requisite and with which no-one could find any great fault. The question of housing is lightly dealt with in them, and I think it would have been quite sufficient on this occasion for the Government to have submitted additional regulations, which would have met the situation. I say that because I do not like the idea of a Bill being introduced to provide housing for any one industry. It could, and may be, accepted as a precedent, one that might spread throughout other industries to their detriment.

It would be disastrous for the primary producer if a Bill were introduced to insist that he provide a house for each of his employees on the scale envisaged in this measure. I am afraid that if that were done, the workmen would be found living in very much better houses than the producer himself. One could multiply that by quite a number of instances. It might be claimed later on that industries should provide houses for other forms of labour in areas close to the metropolis. I feel a mistake has been made and that the situation could have been met in quite another way. Listening to the Minister when he moved the second reading of the Bill, one could have been pardoned for coming to the conclusion that it was a small measure, that it did not contain anything very drastic, that it was in every respect desirable and that it would not affect anyone to any great extent.

Having enjoyed 43 years' residence in the South-West and having travelled around most of the timber districts of Western Australia, encountering at all times generous welcomes in very many homes of timber workers, particularly the old-time hands, naturally my experience vests this Bill with a great deal of interest to me. If I may digress for a moment, my mind goes back to the real heyday of the timber industry in the early years of this century when, in common with goldmining operations, timber brought millions of pounds of badly wanted money into this country, money that was turned over and assisted very greatly in the State's development. Western Australia has a lot to thank the timber industry for because

in the earlier days, long before my time and before the discovery of gold, our timber resources were the one means of production that could be depended upon to provide much needed wealth and credit for this country.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And wool, too.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I think that was a little later.

Hon. G. W. Miles: No, it was earlier.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I have been told that they were pit-sawing in the Sussex district in 1830, and if Mr. Miles can show that wool was produced and exported before that, I would like to know of it.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The wool people were the only ones who had money in the country when you were chasing boodie rats down your way.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I do not know that that is so.

The Chief Secretary: Mr. Miles is jealous!

Hon. W. J. MANN: Before Fremantle was an important factor in the timber shipping world, mills were operating in the South-West and I well recollect old Karridale, which was then a thriving community with upwards of 300 men employed there and living with their families right away from the other portions of the State. It was a self-contained community, even to their own shin plasters. They were a virile community; they worked hard; their production was high and they kept two ports—Hamelin and Flinders Bay—very busy shipping their products overseas.

The Chief Secretary: What do you mean by "shin plasters"?

Hon. W. J. MANN: They were not sovereigns but were, I understand, a substitute.

The Chief Secretary: Were they legal tender?

Hon. W. J. MANN: At any rate they were tender; whether legal or not, I am not in a position to say.

Hon. L. Craig: They were accepted as legal tender.

Hon. W. J. MANN: There were other mills. For instance, there was Jarrahwood where, I have been told, Mr. Miles used to make out dockets and lecture the boys, while at night he used to sit with bated

breath while the hard-boiled old bullock drivers, swamper and other timber men regaled him with tales in lurid language. I believe that is all on record, and that, I understand, is where he served his apprenticeship in a great many directions. In the circumstances, I am sure Mr. Miles will bear me out when I say that the timber industry has had a wonderful past. Then there was the old Yelverton mill that was established near Quindalup. Reverting for a moment to the Jarrahdale mill, I would point out that the output from that mill was shipped at a place, the name of which very few people will recollect or have heard—the old Ballarat jetty, just a mile or two from Wonnerup, from which thousands of loads of timber were sent away.

So one could go on and mention other mills—the Baxters, who were the pioneers of the Kirup district; Millars' Company, which opened up East Kirup. Then there was Newlands. Coming nearer to Perth, there were the mills at Jarrahdale, Wellington, Mornington and Lyalls. Big Brook, now Pemberton, was established in my time and has been responsible for wonderful production of timber. These thoughts lead me to the fact that our timber industry today is still of great importance.

Members might be surprised to learn that there are at present 125 mills operating in the State, the total output of which is 998 loads per day, a load being equal to 50 cubic feet. There are 55 mills with a capacity of five loads per day; 27 with a capacity of over five and up to 10 loads; 11 with a capacity over 10 and up in Perth and suburbs all with a capacity of over 20 loads per day, the aggregate loads reaching the figure I have just quoted. Then there are mills operating in and around Perth that could be brought within the scope of this Bill. There are 18 mills in Perth and suburbs all with a capacity of under 10 loads per day.

A mill with an output of 10 loads per day or less is looked upon as a small mill, and I have very grave fear that if this Bill becomes law much hardship may be inflicted upon the owners of small mills. This State cannot afford to have the small timbermillers pushed out of business. There is greater demand today for our hardwoods, I suppose, than ever before, a demand much greater, unfortunately, than we can

meet. It is therefore essential, in dealing with this measure, to take that fact into consideration and ensure that no action of ours shall do anything which will in any way tend to reduce output or diminish the industry.

I notice in today's paper that Mr. Rodger, of South Australia, has returned to Western Australia. He was trained here, and he commented on the world scarcity of timber. Members are aware of that scarcity and I am assured that many years will pass before it is overtaken. Under our forests policy the timber production of this State is regimented, I think rightly so. We can increase production, and we hope to do so, by the installation of a number of large new mills, some of which are under way in the far South-West—south-east of Pemberton and around Northcliffe. The point I wish to make here is that we must be particularly careful not to do anything to the disadvantage of the industry.

To hear some people talk, one would think that all the timberworkers lived in houses—not exactly hovels, as stated in the Royal Commission's report—but houses so far below a decent standard that the position was really appalling. I differ very much from that statement. I agree, and any sensible person would agree, that in the older mills there are houses which have been in service for many years and many of them are in need of extensive repairs. But that does not apply only to timber mills; it applies to a tremendous number of houses throughout this State and in other parts of Australia.

Hon. G. B. Wood: It applies particularly to the railways.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am not talking so much about the Railway Department's houses as about the houses belonging to the ordinary man. The war years have made it almost impossible for many people to renovate their houses and keep them up to the standard they desire. The exigencies of war have had the same effect on the timber industry; much of the ordinary repair work has had to go by the board because the mills were working at high pressure in order to produce timber for war requirements. I suppose there are some instances in which the millowners have been negligent and have not done a fair thing by their employees; but that position is rapidly righting itself.

It must right itself, because unless a mill-owner provides decent accommodation for his workers he cannot expect to hold them.

The demand for labour is so great that men will not put up with poor accommodation; they will leave and find other work, and there is plenty of work for trained timbermen in every part of the forest areas. Many of the homes on the mills are delightful little places in which to live. I know of one mill where there is a row of cottages—perhaps a dozen of them—and nine have beautiful gardens. The houses were extended as the children came, in order to provide more space. In every way these are desirable homes. Perhaps the other two or three houses are a reflex of the tenants, as they have been neglected and knocked about. That happens everywhere, and it is wrong to decry the housing position on the mills because some of the buildings are not as good as they should be.

It has taken neither a Royal Commission nor this Bill to bring about very much better housing accommodation on the timber mills. One firm at least has set a standard which even this Bill does not transcend. We have today at Nyamup, roughly 20 miles east of Manjimup, probably the finest timbermill in the southern hemisphere. That probably sounds a fairly tall statement. I cannot claim to have travelled to the timber districts of all of the States, but I have seen mills in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, New Zealand and elsewhere, and I do not know of any other timbermill where the housing conditions are as good as they are at Nyamup. The homes there would readily bring rentals of 22s. 6d., 25s. and even 27s. 6d. a week in most country towns. Each house stands on a quarter acre block of land, or thereabouts. It is neatly fenced and has all the conveniences that are available in houses in ordinary country towns.

The Nyamup settlement was visualised and put into effect by Bunning Bros. long before the Royal Commission was thought of. In the near future, it is understood that, without the promptings of this Bill, the owners of the mills in the far South-West to which I referred propose to provide housing accommodation on the lines of the Nyamup settlement. So this new order of mill housing will be general. It must be so, because, as I said just now, if the millowners desire to retain the services of their competent

workers that fact must be recognised. From that point of view the Bill is superfluous, as it does not teach those millowners anything. It could have the effect in certain instances of bringing about an improvement at some of the older mills, but I would point out that the greater number of those mills are within measurable distance of being cut out.

Their days are numbered and they will have to be moved to other areas. That is exemplified by the fact that all of the companies are continually on the look-out for new areas in which to cut. The Forests Department could easily corroborate the statement that if further areas of bush were made available they would be promptly snapped up. To insist upon the observance of the provisions of this Bill in the old mills to which I have referred would spell plain ruin. I am not going to deny that regulations could be framed which would call upon the delinquent owners to put into effect such renovations as are required; but I do not think there is any necessity for a Bill of this kind and for the appointment of a housing inspector whose chief business it will be to—I was going to say harass the employers. I notice that the word is used in the regulations that I quoted earlier. It is stipulated that inspectors shall not harass employers. But the fact remains that to employ a man as a housing inspector, with nothing else to do, will mean that he is likely to be very active in flying around the mills and finding sufficient fault to justify his job and to indicate that he is not altogether asleep. I do not think there is any need for an appointment of this description.

There is provision in the Timber Industry Regulation Act for the appointment of district inspectors and special inspectors as well as workmen's inspectors, and I think that one of the district inspectors could do all that is essential in this regard. If the district inspectors were charged with paying the same attention to the housing position as they do to that of the mills and their appurtenances the position would be well met. An early application of the measure in its present form could, as has already been indicated, easily result in the shutting down of some of the mills and a consequent serious decrease in the amount of timber available to meet public demand, to say nothing of a decline in the production of railway sleepers.

Here I would interpose that most of the very small mills are cutting sleepers. They are not as well equipped as the bigger mills and consequently confine their activities largely to cutting that class of timber requiring employees trained to a lesser degree. I know that provision is made to exempt owners, under certain circumstances, from the operations of the Bill. I think it would be possible to secure an exemption and for the mill-owner then to find that his position was not improved very much. It would be better if the Bill provided that the measure would not apply to any mill with a lesser cutting life than ten years. That is not a very long period, and another ten years will see the closing of quite a number of older mills. Some have gone in the last year or two.

The Argyle mill, which had been cutting for almost half a century, is now silent. It would cost almost as much to bring the homes on old mills up to the required standard as it would cost to erect new houses, but it would not be very difficult to improve them, where required. I would mention the position of men who will, in the future, remove their plant from old areas to new ones. I refer chiefly to the small millowners. Their position will not be very rosy under this measure. I suppose that many of the small millers have to lay out something like a couple of thousand pounds to instal a sawmilling plant.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You would not get much of a plant for that amount, would you?

Hon. W. J. MANN: Perhaps it would cost £3,000. These mills are not exactly mobile, but they cut in an area for ten to 15 years at the most, and the mill-owners will have to build, say, a dozen cottages for their employees, costing £500 apiece, only to find later on, when the life of the mill is worked out, that they have to leave the cottages behind. They will not be very much enamoured of the prospect. If this Bill is permitted to operate in the direction indicated, it will prevent such men from embarking on the business. If I had £7,000 or £8,000 to invest, rather than put it into a small mill and build cottages on those lines, I would be inclined to spend it in erecting homes in some town where I

could let them and be assured of an income for a considerable time.

Do not forget that these cottages will have to be let for a figure that will probably represent half what they would fetch in any ordinary country town, so there is not much advantage to the millowner from the point of view of investment. I am not going to be a party to driving such men out of business, and for that reason I think it my duty to oppose the Bill. I did not expect it to come forward in this form and I do not want later on to feel that I had done anything for which I was likely to be sorry. This is a type of sectional legislation because it tends to penalise people finding work for men, to a much greater extent than obtains in any other industry, and there is always an element of considerable risk of loss in matters of this kind.

One does not want to make comparisons to any degree, but the Government itself has not been particularly energetic in improving the housing on its own mills. I was told by a mill manager recently, who was possibly a bit biassed, that he could conduct me to more hovels on State-owned timbermills than would be found in a given number of private mills in any part of the State. We might have expected better from the Government than that for, after all, the Government should be a model employer and should set a very high standard. Generally the Bill is full of extraordinary features. We find it provides that the housing inspector shall be an authority on sanitation and hygiene, on roads and bridges, on paint, and roofs, and walls, and Heaven only knows what! I do not know what sort of a man he is going to be, but he will have to be a bit of a superman if he is going to do the things this Bill calls upon him to undertake. Then there are some inconsistencies in the Bill. I notice it insists that buildings shall have walls 10 ft. high, yet quite recently we had the spectacle of the Minister—I am not quite sure of this, but the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—advocating a height of 9 ft. 6 in. as being ample for walls in any building.

Hon. A. Thomson: They are that height in all the workers' homes that are being built.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That shows how little regard is being paid to the millowner. He is being called upon to do things that even the Workers' Homes Board and the authorities administering the Commonwealth Housing Scheme say are unnecessary. The housing inspector is given most extraordinary power. It will be for him to say whether the roofing shall be standard or otherwise.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. W. J. MANN: Before tea I was endeavouring to point out what I thought were inconsistencies in the Bill. It would take a long time to deal with them all but one is, I think, extraordinary. Under the Road Districts Act it is an offence for a local governing body to have a roadway less than one chain in width, yet in the Bill we find provision that a roadway must not be less than 12 feet wide, or a footpath less than 5 feet wide. Assuming that there are two footpaths each 5 feet wide, and a roadway 12 feet wide, we have the extraordinary figure of 22 feet for the width of the entire road—one-third of a chain. I should think roadways on a mill would be within the jurisdiction of the local governing body. After all, the mills are prescribed areas and the millowners have to pay rates on them accordingly, usually much higher than those applying to the surrounding country. One wonders why that provision was placed in the Bill.

On the other hand, the Bill prescribes that no building blocks shall be of less than one-quarter of an acre. There is no objection to that, provided the country concerned is of a type that would allow one-quarter of an acre to be used profitably. The only objection I can see to that would be where the country was very steep and it might not be possible to get the depth required. I understand it is provided that the frontage to a road shall be not less than 50 feet, but I cannot reconcile the 50 feet frontage with a road that need only be 22 feet wide, including the footpaths. I hope that will be explained away. I wonder what the Town Planning Commissioner would think if an owner proposed to erect houses on those lines. The owner would be within his rights under the Bill in doing so, but I do not think members would agree that it was desirable.

Another objection is that the Bill contains no provision for the housing inspector to safeguard the interests of the millowners. Provision is made for a number of matters in respect of which the owner may be found guilty of an offence, but an employee may go into a new cottage and immediately begin knocking the property about, doing things that will depreciate its value. No provision is made for the inspector to take any action in such cases. Certainly there is a provision which states that the occupier shall not deface the property or destroy it, but no penalty is provided should he do so. The owner has no redress except, perhaps, through action at common law. If an inspector is to be provided to look after the homes and see that everything is as required in the interests of the tenant, he should at least be expected to share the work of policing the measure and seeing that the buildings are not unduly damaged.

For certain breaches the owner is liable to a penalty of up to £50, with a minimum of £5, and a continuing minimum penalty—in cases of continuing offences—of £2 per day. That is a severe penalty. Such is the treatment meted out under this Bill to the owner, while the occupier, on the other hand, can do as he likes, there being no provision in the Bill for any penalty in such cases. In that respect I think the provisions of the Bill are unreasonable.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Is not that provided for in Clause 9?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am astonished at the Government bringing down the Bill in this form. Provision is also made for a person whose employment is terminated to have 14 days' grace, in which to vacate the premises. If he so chooses he may make application to the housing inspector, who may grant an extension. No mention is made of what the extension is to be. It is quite possible that if the employee were feeling aggrieved because his employment had been terminated, he could go to the inspector, tell a good story and be left to occupy the premises for an extended period. There is no justice or equity in that.

For these and other reasons I am reluctantly compelled to oppose the Bill. I think the Government could have gone about the matter in a much better fashion and could have brought down a Bill that would be fairer to the owner than is this measure.

In the Bill provision is made for prosecuting the unfortunate person who happens to be finding employment for men in the industry. While I have no brief for timber-millers or anyone else in industry, I think, in common fairness, they should be protected as far as possible, and that there should be justice available to both sides.

**HON. L. CRAIG** (South-West) [7.40]: I find myself reluctantly compelled to oppose the second reading of the Bill. Although its objective is a good one, that employees in the timber industry should be properly housed, the method of accomplishing that end is, to my mind, most inequitable. The housing provided for employees today is much better than it was in the past, and it will continue to improve. Houses being built on mills today are much better than those erected some years ago. Perhaps the greatest offender is the State Saw Mills Department which has some very bad houses. Some of the single men's quarters provided at the State mills are of a most undesirable character.

The Bill seeks to impose on the industry a penalty which, in some cases, it is unable to bear. I do not doubt that large companies, such as Millars and Bunnings, have the money required, but it would be a bad investment. With modern forms of transport it is unlikely that all employees will continue to live at the mills, some of which are close to big towns. Very fine houses are being erected at Nyamup, but to say that such houses should be erected is, I think, unfair. Such houses as are contemplated under the Bill will cost about £500 each.

**Hon. G. B. Wood:** Do many employees build their own houses?

**Hon. L. CRAIG:** No. An employee would be foolish to build his own house on a mill site.

**Hon. G. B. Wood:** In the towns?

**Hon. L. CRAIG:** Certainly some employees have their own houses in the towns. The practice of living away from one's work is becoming more common. At the superphosphate works at Pieton Junction it was estimated that it would be necessary to build many houses for employees, but it was found that none was necessary. With the exception of the manager, I do not think

any of the workers at Pieton are living at the works. They live in Bunbury and go to work either by car or bicycle. I think Nyamup is 15 miles from Manjimup, and I feel sure that many of the employees will live in that town. If a company is compelled to build many houses, reticulate them and provide electric light, etc., there is some doubt that it will be able to let them but there is no obligation on the employee to use them. No depreciation on the buildings is allowed under the Commonwealth taxation laws.

**Hon. W. J. Mann:** That is most important.

**Hon. L. CRAIG:** To build perhaps 60 or 100 houses at a cost of £500 each would require a great deal of capital. Wooden houses depreciate rapidly, but no allowance is made for that in the taxation law. The rent received would be taxable at the property rate on income, which is very much higher than the personal exertion rate. No such imposition is placed on the mining industry to provide houses for its employees, and nobody can say that that industry is not prosperous. I understand the Workers' Homes Board is at present erecting homes at the Big Bell mine. If it is desirable for the board to erect homes for employees in the mining industry, which is a depreciating asset just as much as the timber industry is, surely it would be right for the board to erect houses in the vicinity of a timber mill. Licenses to mill timber are not granted for an extended term; they are granted only from year to year, and the millowners would be compelled to erect houses on land for which they had no tenure beyond one year. Of course it is not anticipated that licenses would be cancelled, but the fact remains that the license is only a yearly one, and yet a company might be compelled to spend £30,000, £40,000 or £50,000 to provide accommodation for its employees.

I do not think there is any great demand for this Bill. Another important point to bear in mind is that, unless an employer provides proper accommodation for workers nowadays, he will not get the labour he requires. The obligation is on the industry to provide adequate housing; otherwise it will not get decent employees. The millowners recognise this. A mill might be started on a holding with a long life or on a lease of private land—there are such blocks

—and the owner might have only a small amount of capital to work it. The outlay for machinery and equipment is not tremendous, but it might be necessary to erect 20 or 30 houses costing £500 each, and such an outlay might easily cripple the company.

The timber industry is located, climatically speaking, in the most equable part of the State. Not one of our timbermills is located in an undesirable climate; it is not like the climate where the mining industry is carried on. In the timber areas, a house needs to be water-proof and the site well drained. In all the circumstances I consider that the Bill is not justified. To sum up the points I have made, the requirements of the measure would place an unfair imposition on employers so great that many would not be able to bear it; labour today demands decent accommodation and the industry is doing its best as money and material permit to provide habitable houses. For these reasons I propose to vote against the second reading.

**HON. H. S. W. PARKER** (Metropolitan-Suburban) [7.48]: No-one objects to the provision of proper and reasonable housing with a view to increasing the standard of living. We have to determine what is meant by the standard of living, and in using that term, I mean a proper standard to ensure that people are healthy and happy. I cannot see how the Bill will assist to that end in any way. The Minister has not shown that the timber workers are unhappy or that they are unhealthily housed; nor has he shown any other condition prevailing to justify the owner of a timber holding being forced to erect houses for his employees.

Members may not realise what a timber holding means. The Bill provides that on every timber holding to which the measure applies, the owner shall, at his own expense, build these houses. A timber holding means and includes the area of any timber concession, timber mill, sawmill permit or any land of freehold or other tenure used for like purposes. A sawmill means a place within a timber holding where any operation for the purpose of preparing or treating timber is carried on. So the interpretation is extremely broad; in fact, if a man engages in anything dealing with timber, he must build houses for his employees.

Nothing has been said to show that the health of the timberworkers is being impaired by reason of the houses in which they have to live. Obviously the Minister cannot say that that is happening. If he could, the Minister for Health would have fallen down on his job. Under the Health Act, the Minister is vested with extraordinary power in that it is his duty to ensure, through health inspectors, local boards of health and so forth that people are properly housed. The Minister thus has absolute and complete power. Yet nothing has been said to show that there is anything unhealthy about the housing provided in the timber country. Why should the Minister divest himself of his responsibility by handing the matter over to a housing inspector? That inspector would take over responsibility from the health authorities. Dr. Hislop spoke the other day about divesting the health authorities of their job. The timberworkers are known to be happy and contented people living under more or less ideal conditions. True, the houses in which they live are not of the same type as those found in the suburbs, but they are infinitely better than the houses of the workers on the Goldfields, in outback towns and even in many parts of the metropolitan area.

Hon. W. J. Mann: And the rent is infinitely lower.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: A person, to be happy, must have something more than a house. He must have congenial surroundings, and the houses and surroundings of some of the workers in the metropolitan area are far worse than those enjoyed by the timberworkers. It may be said that material is not available to house adequately the industrial workers living in the metropolitan area. There is a shortage of timber and other material and requisites. If these requirements cannot be supplied in the metropolitan area, how can they be supplied in the timber areas where the timber is to be had on the spot? Is the building of homes in the metropolitan area to be held up while these houses are being provided for the timberworkers? Incidentally, the timberworkers themselves are not to be permitted to build houses; expert tradesmen have to be employed. Consequently, tradesmen will have to be taken from the metropolitan area where houses are so urgently needed in order

to erect homes where they are not so badly needed.

On farms, on the coalmines, on many stations and in other places, employees are not housed anything like so well as are those on the sawmills, even at the present time. If the Government is going to introduce the policy of requiring an industry to house its employees, why not start on some industry that is permanent in its location and nature? It is a well recognised fact that every year a goldmine become less valuable and nearer to the end of its workable life, because, year by year, so much less gold remains in the ground to be taken out. The same applies to a coalmine. But is it not infinitely more so with timber? We can leave out of consideration for the moment the short tenure mentioned by Mr. Craig. The timber is being cut out and the mills have to move from place to place.

Yet this is the industry first to be selected and required to provide for the housing of its employees. That is quite wrong. If the Government really desires that employers in industry should house their employees, why not start on some more permanently located industry? Why not require the Fremantle Harbour Trust to house the waterside workers, who are always on the spot? The coalmines, like the goldmines, are less permanent, though I am not sure that the coalmines have not just started their career, but it could be said that the coalmines should provide houses of this standard. The standard laid down in the Bill is very high.

The Chief Secretary: Do you think so?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It is so high that a place like this Chamber would not be permitted under the Bill to be used for the housing of a timberworker. The Bill provides that the walls and ceilings of all rooms shall be lined in a manner satisfactory to the housing inspector with asbestos, plasterboard or other similar material. A millowner would not be permitted to use a beautiful jarrah lining in a house where a worker was going to live.

The Chief Secretary: What interpretation do you put on the words "other suitable material"?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Bill refers to other similar material, not other suitable material. We may be told that

that is not the intention, but it is certainly the interpretation. The Minister is to be given various powers to exempt owners from observing the requirements of the Act. If the Bill is really necessary, no millowner should be exempt. Why is the measure to be considered all right for those in permanent jobs while those in temporary jobs, have to put up with anything? When I refer to temporary jobs, I do not mean a matter of a few days. I repeat that if the Bill is necessary, why should anyone be exempt? The expense of providing these houses would be disproportionate to the good achieved. It would have the effect of throwing out of business all the small people engaged in the timber industry. If a mill were situated close to a township, the millowner would still be compelled to provide houses on his concession. He would not be permitted to provide them anywhere else. Such a provision is entirely wrong.

I could understand that, if no houses were available, the owners should be required to provide proper and adequate accommodation, but that is unnecessary because obviously a timberworker will not accept employment from an employer who does not properly provide for him if he can get work with an employer who does. The State Saw Mills and the Railway Department have big mills, and if they house their employees properly they will surely get the pick of the workmen. If they provide housing in accordance with the standards mentioned here, with running water, quarter-acre blocks, electric light, back and front verandahs—not closed in as in the metropolitan area—and other amenities, then surely they will be able to get all the workmen they require, and that will be proof that the employees themselves want these houses. There are many people, unfortunately, who do not wish to have houses any larger than are absolutely necessary because they entail so much more work for the housewife.

Hon. L. Craig: I am one of them.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If the State sets the example it will get the pick of the men who require to live in houses of the sort described here. The timbermills at present are providing reasonable and proper housing for their employees, other-



wise they would not get people to work for them. I trust I have made clear why I cannot vote for the second reading of the Bill.

**HON. E. M. HEENAN** (North-East) [8.2]: I thought that this Bill would have received almost unanimous support, but after listening to the last three speakers I find that my opinion is sadly astray.

The Chief Secretary: You are a very poor judge!

**Hon. E. M. HEENAN**: It would appear from the speeches just made that the standard of house proposed by the Bill is something altogether too extravagant for the workers in the timber industry. It is my opinion, after reading the specifications of the proposed buildings, that they will fulfil the bare requirements of decent housing for workers. Surely in this young country we have to continue to raise our standards of living, and the first step is to provide decent homes for the working population.

Without proper housing, family life suffers, workers in industry cannot give of their best, standards of life are impaired and, generally, the community is the poorer. It seems that from now on every industry in Australia will have to play its part in providing the first essential—decent housing requirements—for the people who work in industries. One would also judge from the remarks made that the capital outlay for this scheme would be a total loss to the owners of the timber concessions. But surely if a timber company invests £10,000 in providing houses it will only be adding to its capital.

**Hon. L. Craig**: Its realisable capital?

**Hon. E. M. HEENAN**: It will receive rents for the houses. The Bill contains adequate provision to ensure that the houses will be properly cared for, and they will represent an asset just as much as does the machinery.

**Hon. C. F. Baxter**: What about the life of the concession?

**Hon. E. M. HEENAN**: If a concession is of a temporary nature the more stringent provisions will not apply. We can take it for granted that the measure will be administered in a reasonable manner in that regard. I find small consolation in the fact that people in Perth and on the Goldfields are not living in houses up to the standard proposed in the Bill. I point out that many

of our mining companies have long since realised the necessity, the equity and the humanity of providing decent housing for their employees, including amenities such as hot and running water.

One member mentioned hot water in such a way that I gathered it was something beyond the reach of the timberworker. That is an attitude that we will have to lay aside in Australia, and this Bill gives us an opportunity to start doing so. I hope that the principle embodied in it will be applied to other industries because the first charge on any industry should be, either directly or indirectly, to provide proper housing for its workers. I do not know of any industry which should be better suited or placed to make a start in this way than the timber industry. The timber owners have many facilities and materials for the building of homes that would not be available to, say, the mining companies. The fact that the houses are to be erected by expert tradesmen seems to me to be a very wise provision.

**Hon. A. Thomson**: Where are you going to get the tradesmen?

**Hon. E. M. HEENAN**: I do not know. Tradesmen are being trained, and I suppose, there are some thousands of them in Western Australia. They will come to light somehow. I hope that the measure will receive more support than has been indicated. It will be a useful experiment and will set an example that should be applied more widely.

**HON. G. BENNETTS** (South) [8.11]: I support the Bill, and I would like to see it go a little further. I can quote one or two places where these homes are an asset to the companies. In one way I do not approve of employees living in homes provided by the companies because the employer then gets a certain hold over the men. I thought that some members would support that aspect. I made an inspection of the homes in Broken Hill. A big company is operating there and it provides these homes at a nominal rent, and even makes available orchards to its employees. If any of those workers take sick the wives go down and get fruit and vegetables, and everything else that is required. If a person could find a discontented worker in the employ of the Zinc Corporation mines at Broken Hill the management would, I think, make him a present of £100. That mine gives every facility.

Hon. L. Craig: Should the timbermills do the same?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes. If they carry out what is asked in this Bill they will gain an asset. The same thing is provided at Whyalla. The Lakeside Woodline Company on the Eastern Goldfields of this State, provides its men with homes and gives them free water and wood, the latter being carted free. Beautiful gardens are grown as a result of the water. I do not think that even on the coast better fruit and vegetables are produced than are to be found in the gardens at Lakeside.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That company also provided homes at Kurrawang.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, the houses were shifted from Kurrawang to Lakeside. I think there are about 100 homes at Lakeside. Those people are all contented; they have their school and recreation hall. We will get nowhere if we do not provide amenities in the back country for the people who are producing the wealth of the State. It is only when we have a strike that we find out what those people suffer. They are crucified. The Commonwealth railways have gone one better than is suggested here by providing a kelinator in every one of their homes, and I would like to see that principle extended to every dwelling in Australia. A charge of 1s. per week is made for those refrigerators, which are kerosene operated. Once they are installed they are checked up occasionally by an inspector.

I see that in the Bill an inspector is to have the right, on behalf of the companies, to take action against any person damaging any part of the property. I trust members will support the proposal in the interests of the families of workers, who should be provided with better homes. They should be more in conformity with the health regulations. They should comply with modern requirements regarding the heights of ceilings, ventilation and so on. The health of the community is a matter of first importance in Australia. If we have a healthy race, we have a contented race; if the race is unhealthy, it is of little good to the country. One has merely to look at some foreign countries to realise that that is true.

Hon. C. B. Williams: And they are mostly Australians and Britishers down in the timber areas.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That is so. I urge members to support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [8.16]: Like Mr. Heenan, I have been surprised at the opposition to this Bill. Listening to Mr. Parker, one would think that the employers in the timbermilling industry were being asked to do something they had never undertaken before in the way of providing houses for their employees. That is a job the employers have attended to all down the years.

Hon. L. Craig: Then why not leave them alone?

Hon. G. FRASER: All the Bill seeks to do is to direct that in future a better class of house will be erected. I defy any member to say that in the past timberworkers have resided in respectable and healthy conditions.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is nonsense.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The hon. member is a builder, and would he take credit for some of the houses down there?

Hon. A. Thomson: The statement was a reflection on the people.

Hon. G. FRASER: I admit that I have not been through the timbermills in later years, but in the past I lived and worked there. I say definitely that the housing conditions in the mills at that time constituted an absolute disgrace. My only regret is that this legislation has been brought forward 30 years too late.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I wonder if there is any fire insurance on them. I doubt it.

Hon. G. FRASER: When we sum up the position, who is more entitled to decent housing conditions than timberworkers?

The Chief Secretary: The men who produce the timber.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What about the railway workers?

Hon. G. FRASER: It is peculiar that we have to pass legislation to provide the men who produce the timber with a decent type of home. If what some members have said tonight is correct and the employers are building decent homes, then they have nothing to fear from the Bill. Any member who examines the Bill must admit that

all that is provided for is just a house. There is nothing elaborate stipulated.

Hon. A. L. Loton: What about the fettlers' shacks? Are they houses?

Hon. G. FRASER: Because some workers are not housed decently is no reason why a Bill should not be introduced to provide decent housing for others. There must be a start somewhere.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Why not put your own house in order first?

Hon. G. FRASER: This is a start.

Hon. A. Thomson: It is always easier to start on someone else.

Hon. G. FRASER: If Mr. Loton knows something about the conditions of the housing of fettlers and has done nothing about it, he has neglected his duty.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. C. B. Williams: He has been here for a long time, and has done nothing about it at all.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Mr. Fraser will proceed.

Hon. G. FRASER: Whether we shall deal with other sections later on, I cannot say, but we must make a start somewhere. Under the Bill we propose to make a start with a section of the people whose homes have throughout the years been provided by the employers. True, in most instances it was necessary for them to do so because the workers had to operate many miles from established townships. As I remarked earlier, the Bill contains nothing to indicate that elaborate houses are to be provided, and nothing is to be installed in those homes to which anyone should take exception.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Except that it may be the means of providing more voters in the election.

Hon. G. FRASER: Surely members will not say that the workers are not entitled to these ordinary amenities. If there were some provision in the Bill requiring employers to erect brick homes, I could understand objection being taken on that score. The Bill does not seek to do anything of the kind, but merely provides for the erection of a type of home to which the workers are entitled. I can see no objection that can reasonably be taken to the Bill, and I support the second reading.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [8.21]: I am in grave doubt as to what action I should take in respect of the Bill and how my vote should be cast. Frankly, anything that can improve the standard of housing of workers should meet with one's approval.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Hear, hear!

The Chief Secretary: But!

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: If I attempt to debate the second reading and then, during the Committee stage, move to amend some of the clauses, I realise that on one hand I may do an injustice to a large number of people by doing some justice to a small number. I am wondering what the impact of the Bill will be, and whether it will increase or diminish the supply of timber to meet the requirements of people generally.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Or whether the Bill will increase the voting strength of Labour in this Chamber.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: That does not worry me.

Hon. C. B. Williams: No, but I want you to be honest, and I know you are.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I am wondering whether the measure will achieve the objective sought or whether if we pass it the Bill will have a detrimental impact on the industry itself. I have passed timbermills on many occasions and have wondered at the type of people that would agree to live in such a place and in the type of house provided. If there are men living with their wives and children in some of these houses who are content with them, then I say frankly I consider the influence upon the children cannot be good.

Hon. L. Craig: In many instances, they have not made much effort to maintain them.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I realise that many of the individuals living in such houses candidly regard them as places to stay in and not as homes. Seldom were there to be seen any flowers or a cultivated area of any sort. Possibly the temporary nature of their employment destroyed in the men themselves any idea of making the places into homes. Then again, one must realise that most of us would be tempted to regard such places as merely dwellings to stay in and not as homes if we were confronted with the same condi-

tious. Holding that point of view, there would be no encouragement to the individual to beautify the surroundings or to improve the house. It is merely a matter of human nature that what is not one's own is not worth caring for.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That applies in the metropolitan area.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: The whole position regarding the occupancy of houses which do not belong to one raises many problems regarding human reactions to property.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That applies to about seven-tenths, if not eight-tenths, of the places in the metropolitan area.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I have always endeavoured to encourage the idea that the individual should attempt to purchase his own home. However, the modern idea of housing, from the Commonwealth Government's point of view, does not lead us towards that point of view. Here is an industry in which the individual is not encouraged to try to own the house in which he lives.

Hon. C. B. Williams: For what reason?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Possibly because of the temporary nature of the industry, which moves from place to place. I am aware that some of the mills have operated in one area for many years, but the small undertakings do move on. Even where the mills have been located in one spot over the years, the position is not altogether satisfactory. Very little civic pride is indicated amongst the residents of such districts. I would like to know quite a lot more about the workings of the industry and the impact of this measure upon it. I would like to know whether the passage of the Bill would tend to lessen the amount of timber available for other people and whether the measures sought to be adopted under its provisions will call for a considerable increase in the cost of timber and therefore of the homes to be erected. That is particularly important in these days when people are in urgent need of even roofs over their heads.

In the course of my professional activities, people daily tell me of the most extraordinary conditions under which they are living today. If I thought that by a vote of mine in support of this Bill I would do any-

thing that would, simply to improve the conditions of a comparatively few workers, deprive many more times the number of people who are urgently in need of homes of requisite supplies of timber for houses, I think I would be doing an injustice to the majority. I feel there must come a time when some measure of this description will have to be placed on the statute-book unless the owners of the mill at that stage have raised the standard of accommodation for their workers. I have made it my business in the last few days to inquire as to what has actually happened—not within the last few years, because nothing could be done at all during the war period—in the direction of providing a type of house superior to those seen on the mills in the past. I have ascertained what has been done and it would appear therefore that where the employers and the employees have by common agreement provided a better standard of accommodation than the mill workers obtained in the past, that should be encouraged.

My view of the situation at the moment is that I will do nothing to disturb the flow of timber which a large number of people are so in need of at present, but if within a few years when the supply of timber has met the requirements the millowners have not done anything at all towards improving the general standard of housing accommodation, I shall favour a Bill of this nature in order to see that all sections of the community share in the better housing conditions which we as citizens of the State desire to see. It is my intention to vote against the second reading of the Bill at the moment, making this statement quite frankly that if within the short period that I envisage—possible three or four years—no improvement has been effected in the housing conditions at the mills a Bill of this description will meet with my approval. That is as clearly stated as I can make my position at the moment.

**HON. C. B. WILLIAMS** (South) [8.29]: I would not have taken part in the debate had I not listened to the speeches that have been just delivered. Dr. Hislop did not know where he was from when he started till the time he finished his remarks. More or less he is desirous of carrying on along the road to prosperity and hygiene, but the comfort of the people does not matter. How-

ever, I will not go into that. Those of us that have had an opportunity to see the workers' cottages in the timber areas, those of us who have seen the tents in which the workers are forced to live where there are no cottages, those of us who wish to see this House remodelled—I do not want you to interrupt me, Sir—should not oppose this Bill. I cannot understand the opposition to it. I do not mean any disrespect, but some members of this Chamber will not be here if this Bill is passed.

Hon. L. Craig: That is wrong.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I expected the hon. member to say I was wrong. I am quite pleased he said that I was wrong. He should be the last to interject.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member will keep to the Bill.

Hon. L. Craig: I tell you they would return us.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. Mr. Williams!

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: The hon. member would have lost his seat by 1,000 votes if the timberworkers in his province had had a vote. The hon. member brought up the matter; I did not. If the timberworkers secure what this Bill proposes they shall get, I wonder what will happen to the State. I have travelled through the timber districts and have seen the little shanties in which the workers live. Most of the men grow vegetables. They all live, so to speak, within themselves, except for what they must procure from outside the district. They grow most of their own requirements.

If we provide these workers with the type of house proposed in the Bill, we shall enfranchise some thousands of voters. The timber companies will be forced to ask for more rent. If you will tolerate me, Sir, I shall link up my remarks with the measure. There are about five provinces in this State that have an opportunity to elect representatives in this House, even on the franchise granted by the Constitution. If we pass this Bill, which I hope we shall, we shall have another province that can vote three Labour men to this Chamber. Then, on the pledge which we have taken, we will abolish this House. I know members are smiling. But I am expressing my views. We can win the West Province at all times. We shall win the South Province from now on, if we pass this Bill.

The PRESIDENT: I would remind the hon. member that we are discussing the Timber Industry (Housing of Employees) Bill.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I am discussing the opposition to it. I bow to your ruling, Sir, but am I not entitled to express my opinion on the opposition to the Bill? If the timberworkers are provided with better class houses, naturally the rents will be raised and the number of voters for this House increased. I do not say that members opposing the measure are doing so from ulterior motives. I would not mention that for a moment, whatever I may think. The fettlers' homes have been mentioned. I quite agree with what a member who interjected said about the accommodation for fettlers on the railways and water supply workers along the main tracks. They should have good homes, the best of homes, because after all they keep the railways running and keep up the supply of water to the Goldfields. The timberworkers are the lowest paid men in the State. I am not saying that their housing accommodation is as bad as that of the fettlers and the water supply workers. There are some thousands of these timberworkers, and except for a few of them who may be termed miniature capitalists and who own their home in Perth, Boulder, Kalgoorlie or Guildford, they have no vote for this House. I shall probably be out of order again in a moment, but does this House ever take into consideration where Australia, where the world, is heading?

Hon. W. J. Mann: Heading where?

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: When the hon. member retires from his province, some Labour candidate will get it and then he will understand. It is only personal popularity that keeps him in his seat. The world is definitely turning to the Left. This House represents the Left. This House makes Communists, and if it turns down the Bill it will make more Communists. All this Bill asks is that a decent home shall be provided for people engaged in producing the timber to build homes for other people in this State and elsewhere in the world. I do not agree that our timber should be exported at the moment, but I doubt whether I would get much support in that respect from the members opposing the Bill. I know what will happen to the Bill; but I would say to Dr. Hislop, who tries to take us along the track of progress in some way that he understands, that he should not vote against a measure

which provides a decent home for people who produce timber for other people's houses.

I can mention mansions in Dalkeith, Mt. Lawley and elsewhere; but the men producing the timber, from the man whose photograph we see chopping down trees, have to live with their families in shacks. Their children have to attend a little bush school. They are the poorest paid workers, so far as I can gather, in Western Australia and they generally have more children than do the workers living in the more civilised communities. I think Dr. Hislop knows all about that. The worker has little chance of getting to the metropolitan area so long as he is employed cutting timber at £5 a week. There was an English king who tried to keep the waves back, King Canute. The people of Australia think they can postpone the evil day; this House thinks it can postpone the evil day; but every time progressive legislation is voted against, the Communist is brought in. In New Zealand, according to today's paper, only 1,300 people voted in favour of the Communists. In Perth alone 6,000 voted for the Communists at the last Federal elections. I appeal to members, particularly Dr. Hislop, to support the Bill. Do not give the Communists any aid!

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

*[The Deputy President took the Chair.]*

## BILL—BREAD ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

**THE HONORARY MINISTER** (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [8.42] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is introduced for the purpose of increasing the efficiency of the manufacture and distribution of bread, particularly in the metropolitan area. The importance of the bread industry and its effect upon the health and general well-being of the people are being increasingly recognised in all the States of the Commonwealth. New Zealand leads the way, as in that country a Wheat, Flour and Bread Institute has been in operation for over 16 years. Every wheatgrower, miller and baker in New Zealand makes a contribution to the cost of the research institute, which is subsidised pound for pound by the New Zealand Government. A team of experts, comprising scientists and specialists in wheat, flour and bread, is working in

this wonderful organisation which, according to all authoritative visitors to New Zealand, has been an outstanding success. The result is that the bread supply to the public in New Zealand is far superior to that manufactured in any State in Australia.

In New South Wales the State Government is committed to the establishment of a bread research institute, and the bread manufacturers of Sydney have agreed to pay a levy based on the tonnage of flour used. They have also financed and arranged for a visit to New South Wales in February next of Dr. Kent Jones, a recognised outstanding international authority on wheat, flour and bread. His special mission will be to advise on the proposed New South Wales bread research institute. Dr. Kent Jones will be for a short while in Perth and every endeavour will be made to utilise the limited time available for the purpose of seeking advice on local problems of the bread industry from so eminent an authority.

It can be said with truth that in every country there is an awakening to the urgent necessity of improving the quality of bread, improving its balanced food value and increasing its consumption to the advantage of the public and those engaged in the bread industry. In Western Australia there is a unique opportunity waiting to be availed of. The South-West will develop tremendously and the dairying industry will expand with it. Huge quantities of milk, much of it wasted under old methods, can be saved and processed. A minimum of six per cent. dried milk added to bread will provide an appetising well-balanced product—the cheapest food available. A start has been made in this State in organising a campaign for better bread. I hope this Bill will mark the commencement of such a campaign.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: The agitation for better bread has already commenced.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER:** The major proportion of the trouble in Perth has been caused by the failure of the employers and the operative bakers to come to an agreement with regard to hours of baking. The employers aim at pushing the hours of baking back as far as possible to a midnight start. The employees have been striving for day baking or, "bake today and deliver tomorrow." New South Wales, South Australia and Tas-

mania are working a five-day week for operative bakers. The bread deliveries finish at 11 a.m. on Saturday. In Victoria, similar action is pending. Queensland has a day baking system with Sunday as a working day. This was adversely criticised by Judge Kinsella, the New South Wales Royal Commissioner, in his report on the bread industry in 1945. The Operative Bakers' Union in this State is pressing for a five-day week, which I believe will eventually be conceded. It will have to come through the State Arbitration Court, of course, but I cannot conceive of the application of the men being refused when each State is gradually introducing a five-day working week.

There is therefore urgent necessity for the keeping qualities of bread to be improved so as to stand up to the long week-ends and holiday periods. Despite years of propaganda by doctors, food specialists, etc., the public in the main demand fresh bread served before lunch. Much of the trouble is caused by the rushing of the first batch straight out of the oven to the cart. Hot bread, whether confined in a cart or a bread box, deteriorates rapidly owing to the imprisoned steam. This adversely affects flavour, cutting, and keeping qualities. Present methods definitely bar the introduction of the wrapping of bread, a reform which all progressive health authorities desire to make compulsory. It takes from 1½ to two hours in a modern bread factory with the latest cooling facilities for bread to cool after leaving the oven before it is safe for wrapping.

No wonder our American friends look askance at our ancient methods of making and delivering bread! Sliced and wrapped loaves of bread have been as long as nine months in the refrigerator of an American submarine. Such bread was opened and eaten in an Australian port and was stated by Australian experts to be as appetising as good bread baked ten hours before. From 10 to 12 hours after baking is the ideal time for good quality bread to be consumed. I suppose that for 30 to 40 years the big problem facing bakers everywhere has been to overcome the staling of bread, no matter how fine the quality, after 12 to 14 hours, irrespective of how well it is looked after. That problem has not been

overcome here; but in America and in the Old Country quick refrigeration processes have solved it as they have solved many other problems relating to food. It is marvellous that bread can be kept nine months in a refrigerator, cut and wrapped, and be as good to eat as bread only 12 hours old.

The trade in this State has a lot to learn. The zoning of bread deliveries during the war under National Security Regulations, in order to save manpower, taught the employers a very useful lesson. Despite the withdrawal of the regulations many months ago, in every State of the Commonwealth voluntary zoning of bread deliveries is being maintained. Progressive bakers in every State support a system of rationalised deliveries with, say, two or three bakers in one zone. I am strongly in favour of this proposal. It is essential, however, that good quality bread should be supplied.

This Bill provides for the appointment of a bread industry advisory officer whose duty it will be to insist upon the manufacture and distribution of high quality bread. One of his duties will be, with the approval of the Minister, to instruct a baker to deliver in a district or part of a district, and if the order is disobeyed, to deprive the baker of his license. The latter has the right of appeal to a magistrate against the decision. The bread industry advisory officer will make necessary investigations into the problems of the industry and explore ways and means of bringing the farmer, the miller and the baker closer together, with the object of improving the baking quality of flour.

Hon. L. Craig: Where does the farmer come into it?

The HONORARY MINISTER: He is the wheatgrower.

Hon. L. Craig: He has nothing to do with the bread.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The wheatgrower has a lot to do with the bread. If the wheatgrower, the miller and the baker were brought closer together, and understood one another's problems the quality of bread would be vastly improved within a few months.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: And the yeast man.

The HONORARY MINISTER: He is part of the technical process. A close liaison will be established with the Agricultural Department and its laboratory and every possible use will be made of the services of Dr. Samuel, the cereal chemist of the department, and his staff. It is a recognised axiom that good bread is impossible without high quality flour. Flour varies, and it is considered a reasonable proposition that with every consignment of flour the baker should be supplied with a certificate giving its protein content. This implies the necessity of the increased technical training of the operative baker. Judge Kinsella in his report stressed the necessity of increased technical training of operative bakers and master bakers, and recommended that everyone in charge of a bakehouse or working in one should be trained and should receive a diploma from the technical college signifying him to be a man who not only understood ordinary baking, but the scientific and technical part of the industry. He also recommended that bakers at present employed in New South Wales should receive that diploma without examination. I think that eventually that system will be adopted throughout the Commonwealth; and that, as a result, the status of the men in the industry will be raised and, provided that the other improvements I have referred to are made, we shall see a tremendous increase in the quality of bread and, naturally, a big increase in consumption.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Why does not the Labour Party put its socialisation policy into effect?

The HONORARY MINISTER: In New Zealand the authorities use with great advantage the portable oven in the charge of expert bakers for the purpose of increasing the efficiency and knowledge of the operative bakers throughout the Dominion. This, it is stated, has been a great success. Brewers of beer, brandy and wines found out years ago that the specially trained industrial chemist was essential for success in those industries.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Who gets good bread? I do not. I have to carry it.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member lives next door to a good baker.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Do I?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate a little later.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I am sorry, Sir.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Successful fermentation, which means so much in the production of good bread, is a major job for the specialist both in the making of yeast and the manufacture of bread. The licensing clause in the Bill provides for the issue of licenses on a graduated scale. The licensing fees will be paid into a trust fund, less ten per cent. for inspection and used for research and other work for the betterment of the industry. This proposal has received the approval of the Bread Manufacturers' Union. Another important proposal in the Bill, which necessitates major amendments, is the bringing of all bread bakers, cake and pastry cooks, whether employers of labour or not, into line with regard to the starting and finishing time of baking operations. For some considerable period, unscrupulous employers have, by faked partnership and other devious means, defied the authorities successfully evaded both the employers, and the employees, and made serious inroads in the business of their competitors. These men are mainly of alien origin.

Hon. C. B. Williams: They would not be returned soldiers, would they?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No.

Hon. C. B. Williams: No, of course not!

[The President resumed the Chair.]

The HONORARY MINISTER: These methods are unjust and dishonest, hence the urgent need of the amendments that will give the Arbitration Court power to issue awards covering all people in the industry. These amendments have been requested by the unions concerned and the employers in the industry. The necessity for this legislation is strengthened by the decision of a local magistrate who, in a recent case, declared that the hours of baking as set out in the Bread Act took precedence over the Arbitration Court award. If the amendments are agreed to, all references to the starting and finishing time of baking operations will be removed from the Bread Act.



Hon. C. B. Williams: Mr. President, is the Honorary Minister making a speech or reading it?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The HONORARY MINISTER: I referred earlier to the present system of the bread manufacturers in maintaining voluntary zoning of bread deliveries. This policy is supported by the bread carters, whose work is more straightforward and condensed. Unnecessary travelling is dispensed with and the day's work is accomplished much quicker and easier than under the old competitive system.

Women's organisations particularly are against the zoning of bread deliveries, claiming that it creates monopolies, has resulted in inferior bread being manufactured and delivered, and in the main encourages carelessness and callous indifference to the legitimate needs of the consumers. A public meeting has been held and a resolution carried condemning zoning, and a deputation of women, consisting of a special committee of representatives appointed by women's organisations, presented a petition requesting that legislative action be taken to abolish zoning as quickly as possible. I am of the opinion that the public are entitled to a reasonable choice of bakers, and therefore provision is in the Bill to instruct a licensed baker, where necessary, to deliver in a district or part of a district when required. This new clause, giving power to suspend or revoke licenses, will be invoked if a careless bread manufacturer refuses to take notice of the advice and recommendation which may be tendered by an inspector or the bread industry advisory officer for the improvement of his bread and delivery service to the public.

This amendment is necessary in order to deal with abuses of the zoning system, and will have a salutary effect upon careless and unhygienic bakers. In order to give the bread industry advisory officer adequate administrative authority, the Bill provides that he shall have all the powers of a Royal Commissioner. This is considered necessary for the purpose of carrying out all inquiries with regard to the improvement of the quality of bread, and also its effective distribution. A further amendment gives the Minister power to deal with any emergency or exceptional unforeseen cir-

cumstances, such as a fire, break-down of machinery or major happenings in a bake-house. Under such circumstances, permission can be given to carry out baking operations outside the hours prescribed by the award.

#### *Point of Order.*

Hon. C. B. Williams: I must object, Mr. President, on a point of order. I am tired of people reading speeches. I must ask you, Sir, to see that the Honorary Minister makes his speech, instead of reading it.

The President: Considerable latitude is extended to Ministers when dealing with the second readings of Bills.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Then I will walk out while he reads the rest of it.

#### *Debate Resumed.*

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am sorry that Mr. Williams has raised that objection, but it is impossible for any Minister to take his share in dealing with Bills in this House without making fairly extensive notes. To proceed with the point I was making, for example, permission can be given under this amendment for a baker to bake his bread in another bake-house, outside the prescribed hours, in order to deal with an emergency. Finally, I desire to endeavour to clear up the misconception in the public mind that the bread industry in the metropolitan area, owing to the voluntary continuation of zoning, is building up monopolies for a comparatively small number of master bakers. There are at present 105 bread manufacturers operating bake-houses in the metropolitan district within a 25 miles radius of the G.P.O. Perth. The average weekly tonnage of flour used is 325 tons. There are more bakeries operating in the metropolitan area here than in any other capital city in the Commonwealth, with the exception of Hobart. The position is as follows:—

#### *Ratio of Bakeries to Population.*

City.	Bakeries.	Population.	Ratio of bakeries to population.
Hobart	.. 32	69,000	1 to 2,156
Perth	.. 105	230,000	1 to 2,190
Adelaide	.. 96	350,000	1 to 3,643
Melbourne	.. 241	1,000,000	1 to 4,149
Brisbane	.. 80	349,680	1 to 4,371
Sydney	.. 312	1,500,000	1 to 4,840

So there are twice as many bakeries, per head of population, in Perth as in Melbourne, Sydney or Brisbane. Of the 105

bakeries in operation in the metropolitan area, 11 were baking less than one ton of flour per week, 30 between one ton and two tons, 21 between two and three tons, 12 between three and four tons, six between four and five tons, 10 between five and seven tons, five between seven and nine tons, two between 10 and 11 tons, and two between 17 and 19 tons per week. Actually, from an economic point of view, there are too many small bakeries in the metropolitan area. If it is acknowledged that the health and well-being of the people as a whole are the first consideration, there must be established a minimum output below which it is impossible to take advantage of the latest machinery and equipment available for use in the bread industry. The Bill is a genuine attempt to place the bread industry on a better footing.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You are talking nonsense! I have carried bread for three years, and I have told you this repeatedly.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It gives protection to the public against any baker who fails to supply bread of good quality to his customers. It protects both the employer and the operative baker and bread carter against unscrupulous competitors, by laying down uniform starting and finishing times for baking operations and, finally, by a system of graduated license fees to be prescribed, it lays the foundation for the formation of a bread research institute, which is urgently needed for improving the quality of bread and making it a well-balanced protein and vitamin food and, in every sense of the words, "the staff of life." I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon J. G. Hislop, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—COMPREHENSIVE AGRICULTURAL AREAS AND GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from 28th November.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [9.5]: I will not have much to say on the measure, which is principally a Committee Bill. It has far-reaching effects and I wish members to know that not everyone in the country is

happy about it. Many country people have installed their own water supplies, but they are now to be brought within the ambit of the measure. Of course, some of them will be subject to a reduction in the cost.

Hon. L. Craig: Only for seven years.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: That is so. I know of one man in the Quairading district who has attached to his farm a large tract of very light country, which does not carry much stock, though it is heavily watered. If that man has to pay the water rate to which he will be subject it will mean the abandonment of that piece of land. He does not think it would be worth his while to pay the extra rates on it. I think such people should receive some consideration, and there are amendments on the notice paper that I hope will receive close attention when the Bill is in the Committee stage. I received a letter from the Brookton Road Board, which expresses the opinion of people in the Great Southern regarding this matter.

Hon. C. B. Williams: How much did it cost last year to send them water by rail?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The letter reads—

At a public meeting convened by this board and held in the Brookton hall on the 30th ult., when a very representative gathering of farmers and townspeople attended, a lengthy discussion on the Great Southern water supply comprehensive scheme took place. The whole trend of the country people was that they objected to the scheme as it is proposed, being foisted upon the farmers without the farmers having been consulted on the matter. The urgent need for water—supply for the Great Southern towns was voiced, and the effect the present lack of water for the towns will have on the economical position of the country towns stressed. After considerable debate the following motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting requests that you do your utmost to have the desires of the farmers and townspeople given effect. Motion: "That this meeting of townspeople and farmers resident in the Brookton district register its opinion—

(a) That a water supply scheme to serve the towns is an urgent necessity and should be established without further delay; and (b) That any scheme to serve the farming community should not be started until the farming community has had the opportunity to express its opinion on such scheme." Carried unanimously.

I think that it sums up the position in the country areas generally. The towns want the scheme but there are many groups of farmers who have already conserved water,

and who do not want the scheme. I hope the Bill will be given close scrutiny when in Committee, as I think this House has a very important part to play in the matter. I support the second reading.

**HON. A. L. LOTON** (South-East) [9.10]: I intend to refer to both the Comprehensive Agricultural Areas and Goldfields Water Supply Bill and the Country Areas Water Supply Bill, because they are closely interlocked and the water schemes for both areas are interwoven. If the water scheme at present proposed is carried into operation, I am afraid many farmers will incur a debt that the third and fourth generations will still have round their necks, and it is possible that eventually the land will revert back to the Crown because the farmers will be unable to meet their yearly commitments. With all due respect to the engineer responsible for drawing up the plan, I claim that before it was presented to Parliament some other engineer from outside the State should have had the chance of touring the country areas, making inspections and taking evidence from residents in certain areas where there are more or less adequate water supplies, and where the people are opposed to any water scheme being thrust upon them.

Much play has been made on the similarity between this scheme and the Goldfields water scheme. When the water was taken from Mundaring to the fields it passed through towns such as Northam, Meckering and so on. The water had to be got to Kalgoorlie. Then the agricultural areas came into being and instead of the farmers having individual water catchments, they found it easier to be connected to the pipe-line in order to have an assured water supply. Conditions in the Great Southern areas in 1946 are totally different from those on the Eastern Goldfields in 1900. In the Great Southern districts, with which I am particularly concerned, knowing them so well, many farmers have spent thousands of pounds in providing either wells or dams, and they have sufficient water to meet all their requirements for the next 20 or 30 years unless some revolution takes place in farming methods.

In introducing the Bill, the Chief Secretary said that if water is provided the population of the towns will increase 100 per cent., and the Minister for Works, Mr.

Hawke, also made that statement. That has not been the case in Beverley, York and Northam, which have had plenty of water for as long as I have been on this earth. The population of those towns has not increased to anything like that extent and I feel certain that the population of the rural towns will not increase to the extent envisaged by the Minister. If it does come about, the story of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp will pale into insignificance. Not that I wish to put a damper on the proposed scheme, because it is essential that all towns such as Brookton, Pingelly, Narrogin, Wagin, Katanning, Broome Hill and Tambellup be supplied with adequate water, and at short notice.

Not one of those towns has an adequate water supply if we have two dry seasons. The last two winters have been favourable with a big run-off and the local catchments have been filled, but by the end of the summer, at Narrogin in particular, the catchment of 77,000,000 gallons becomes so salty as to render the water almost unfit for human consumption. There is some talk of pumping water there from Wellington Dam, but I think it will be found that the dam is unsuitable for holding the water unless it is treated with concrete or bituminised. The Government put down an experimental dam at Lake Pingrup last year, using bulldozers for the work. Concrete was used to save soakage but was not carried sufficiently high up the sides and the water ran away as fast as it ran in. It is now proposed to cover that catchment with galvanised iron to prevent evaporation.

The Great Southern towns ought to be given an adequate supply, but people on the farming lands should not be forced into paying a rate of 5d. per acre when they do not need the water. Under the plan outlined by the Minister, on a 1,000-acre farm, 5d. per acre would represent a payment of £20 16s. 8d. a year for 200,900 gallons. This is the quantity estimated as required for 300 sheep, 10 cattle and domestic purposes. The maximum supply any one holding may get is 328,500 gallons. Therefore, if the number of sheep were increased by 150—a total of 450 is not a great number to have on a 1,000-acre farm—the farmer would be on the maximum quantity of water he was entitled to draw from the scheme.

On a Great Southern farm, where the farmer has gone in for clover, 450 sheep would not enable him to pay his way, and if the farmer has to pay £20 odd a year after seven years, he is not going to be in a very happy position. Mr. Roche asked the Minister a series of questions relating to the four main towns in the rural districts. The country areas are carrying the towns to the extent of nine to one in the matter of finance. This being so, the majority should rule. The water should not be thrust upon farmers simply to enable the requirements of the townspeople to be met. I repeat that the towns are entitled to all the water they need, but they should not get it at the expense of the people on the farms. Notice has been given of several amendments, and I hope that when the Bill reaches the Committee stage, they will be accepted.

**HON. L. CRAIG** (South-West) [9.20]: It is hardly possible to discuss one of these Bills without dealing with the other. The comprehensive Bill deals with the approval of the scheme as set out in the Bill and demonstrated on the map exhibited in the Chamber. Under the measure, a permit may be given by the Minister to exempt certain areas on receipt of a petition, but the permit will be granted at the absolute discretion of the Minister. I have discussed this matter with farmers in the outer wheat areas. The leader in one area, a well-known farmer, told me that certain areas will definitely petition for exemption. The proposed amendment by Mr. Roche to make it incumbent on the Minister to grant exemption where farmers representing an area of 50,000 acres petition against the scheme will be discussed in Committee.

It is inconceivable that the House should turn down a Bill of this sort. It is the greatest measure of its kind that has ever been introduced and will have as far-reaching effects on the country eventually as had the introduction of the railway system. A supply of water, as envisaged by the scheme, will make all the difference to the Great Southern and eastward areas. There is bound to be tremendous opposition at the outset from certain areas, and with good reason. I was in the South-West when the irrigation scheme was introduced, and that aroused bitter opposition. I at-

tended the first meeting at which 100 were present, and another man and myself were the only two who supported the scheme. I did not want it because I had probably one of the best places, and did not need the water, but when a scheme of this sort is offered to a district, it should not be discarded and one should not be selfish. One should appreciate the ultimate good that will arise from it. I understand that no irrigation scheme ever installed in the world has been a failure in the end.

**Hon. H. L. Roche:** This is not an irrigation scheme.

**Hon. L. CRAIG:** Quite so. The amenities and improvement in living conditions that will follow the installation of the scheme will be tremendous. I do not think it would be possible to give the towns a water scheme and provide that the country area shall not be liable. People cannot have it both ways. The scheme is going to cost 9½ millions and will involve the taxpayers in a heavy capital liability and heavy annual commitments. I feel that those people who have provided themselves with an adequate water scheme for domestic and stock purposes have good reason to fear the levying of a rate of 5d. per acre, particularly where the property is a large one and a considerable portion of it is poor country. It is not only the rate that will be burdensome; it is also the capital expenditure which those people must incur to make use of the water. Some of the large properties will require many miles of piping to make use of the supply. Consequently, the owners have reason to be cautious.

The proposed charge in townsites will be 3s. on the annual value. To my mind, however, the farming land is the important part, and there the basis is to be a maximum charge of 5d. per acre. This provision for a charge of 5d. per acre is really the only portion of the Bill that needs to be closely watched. Let us consider a 2,500-acre block of an unimproved value of £1 per acre, which would be medium-quality land. First-class wheat land in the 14-17 inch rainfall area is worth as much as £2 per acre unimproved. The average first-class wheat land in that rainfall is worth, say, 30s. and in the 17 or 18-inch rainfall it is worth £2 or £3 an acre. Taking an average at 5d. per acre, it would represent

2 per cent. on £1 per acre land and, for one who could make use of the water, that would not be a high charge, but most of the farms have a large proportion of very light land and the charge on the light land is to be the same as on the heavy land.

Through the Williams area, the Great Southern, Quairading and Narrogin districts and eastward again, there are vast areas of very light land, largely sandplain or with a little clay in it, ranging from 3s. 6d. to 12s. 6d. or 15s. an acre. Such land is to be rated at 5d. per acre, the maximum rate. Much of it is unimproved and the cost to those owners is going to be very heavy. The light land is the place where water can be obtained and the scheme supply will not be needed; it is on the heavy land where water is difficult to get. Consequently, the light land is less likely to want the water than is the heavy land and is less able to pay for the water.

Taking a farm of 1,500 acres of good croppable land and 3,000 or 4,000 acres of sandplain, all of which will be rated at 5d., I say the scheme warrants a changing rate, according to the quality of the land. To charge 5d. per acre on first-class wheat land would not be heavy. I pay a drainage rate of £24 a year on 400 acres and receive no benefit whatever. There is no drain within a mile of my property, but I am within the drainage area. The light land has a very low sheep-carrying capacity and is of low cropping value. Sandplain will give a return of 12 bushels an acre in the first year, 10 bushels in the second, and eight in the third year. After that, it will not stand cropping much except periodically. It is possible to carry only as many sheep on six to 10 acres of sandplain as on one acre of first-class land, and yet the sandplain would be paying five times the amount of water rates. I have an amendment to propose in Committee, in which I hope members will concur. We may assume that 5d. per acre represents 2 per cent. on fair average farming land, but we have hundreds of thousands of acres worth 5s., 7s. 6d. or 10s. an acre.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Down to 1s. 9d. an acre.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes. My amendment, I consider, will not cost the scheme much, but will make all the difference to its acceptance or rejection by many of the

farmers. The object is to provide for a maximum charge of 5d. or 3 per cent. of the unimproved value of the land, whichever is the less. The 3 per cent. would apply to blocks of a very poor character. On 5s. land, which would be partly improved sandplain, the 3 per cent. would amount to 1s. 8d. as against the 5d. set out in the Bill. That is on the worst land. On 10s. country, which is the average second-class land it would be 3s. 6d. instead of 5d., and on 15s. land, the 3 per cent. would not apply because it would be 5s. 4d. so the rate there would come back to 5d. My amendment would only benefit people who had very inferior land. It is well worth giving consideration to such an amendment because the scheme is going into the outer areas where the bulk of our wheat is grown.

Hon. H. L. Roche: It does not go into those areas.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It goes to Bilbarin.

Hon. A. L. Loton: It does not go up Pingrup.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I did not say it did.

The Chief Secretary: It will go to Kulin.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes. A tremendous proportion of the land is second and third class country, on which this rate would be a burden. The rate is no trouble to first-class country. I pay rates of 30s. per acre and spend £12 an acre in getting the land ready.

Hon. W. J. Mann: There is a lot of difference between your country and sandplain.

Hon. L. CRAIG: First-class land can, properly handled, stand these rates. On a 1,000-acre farm, such as mentioned by Mr. Loton, the rate would be £20. Well, less than 20 ewes would pay that amount, and it is a poor farm that, with the added supply of water, could not carry 20 extra breeding ewes. In the big areas of poor country more piping and equipment would have to be supplied. The poor land is being penalised in every way—not only in the rate but in the use of the water because the area is so big. I hope the House will give consideration to easing the position of the people on the light country.

The scheme is going to cost the State enough as it is, because there will be tremendous opposition in various parts of the country, and there will be great difficulty

in policing and financing it in the first few years, just as there was with our irrigation scheme. In the first few years of that undertaking people were getting angry and doing everything they could to resist the scheme. That outlook has gradually changed because they have been able to make use of the water. Early in a scheme such as this people refer to it as "this blasted scheme" because the rates are mounting, they have to buy equipment and pipes, and they get no benefit. It takes some years to get over that stage, but when the benefits start to accrue the views of the people change. We should ease the position of the people on the poor land because as a rule they are not very well off. To my mind poor land is always expensive. I support the second reading.

**HON. G. BENNETTS** (South) [9.35]:

I have heard the country members speak on this Bill, and I am going to speak on behalf of the Goldfields. At the opening of Parliament what appealed to me in the Speech of the Lieut.-Governor, read by the Chief Justice, were the references to the railways and our water supplies. These public utilities guarantee the existence of the people in the outback. I was on the Goldfields long before the water supply was brought there, and I can remember getting water from the condensers and paying 10s. or £1 for 100 gallons. On the day of the opening of the Goldfields water supply at Kalgoorlie, I was standing on the side of a hill with my father and mother, and it was about 110 degrees in the shade.

We find that at present, we in Kalgoorlie, are the producers of practically two-thirds of the wealth of this State, and we are saddled with a rather expensive water rate. We are of the opinion that something should be done to lessen the impost, and we consider that a flat water rate should apply throughout the State. About 3,000,000 gallons of water a day are consumed on the Goldfields as against 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 in Perth. Our rainfall is very small compared to what it is here, and the people in the metropolitan area have water at from 3 feet to 6 feet from the surface. The enlargement of the Mundaring Weir will be a great thing for the State. Throughout the country in the last few years there have been water restrictions. At Port Augusta the water had to be turned off, and was

available only during certain hours, with the result that the people lost their gardens.

Because of the increase in the mining industry at Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie and Norseman, we feel that we are going to suffer a shortage of water. With the Mundaring Weir extension we should have a guaranteed supply of water for the increased population that we expect, and for the extra mines that are likely to open. A ten-inch main runs from Kalgoorlie to Spargoville, and an eight-inch main from there to Norseman. I am told that the people at Norseman will have to let their gardens go this year because of shortage of water, and no extra mines will be able to start because the pipes have been down for a long time and will not stand boosters to boost up the water supply to any extent. We want a bigger main into Norseman and it looks as though we will also have to extend it into the mallee district and through to Salmon Gums. Last year water was carted by motor transport through that area.

Last night I received a report from the chairman of the Coolgardie Road Board that they are suffering badly through shortage of water because the weir there is cracked and can be filled only to one-third of its capacity. As a consequence they do not get the proper pressure. With the increase in mining and a brickworks opening at Coolgardie a lot of water will be required in that town. We think the time is ripe for a Bill to be passed to authorise an increase in the water supply of the Goldfields. I suggested at a conference in Perth that we should have a better and cheaper supply of water, and one person told me that we on the Goldfields should not be allowed to grow lawns and gardens which cause a shortage of water. Because of the amount of gold produced and of the tax the Commonwealth is collecting from that gold, the people on the fields are entitled to have cheap water, compared with what operates in the metropolitan area. If a flat rate for water were struck it would mean only an extra 3d. per 1,000 gallons here. I hope that the enlargement of the Mundaring Weir will mean more production on the Goldfields and a decent water charge to the people in the outback.

On motion by Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.13 p.m.*