

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Meantime, what charge has been made?

Mr. McDONALD: The old charge. As the Minister rightly stated, reserves to meet contingencies are now non-existent. What we want here is to control our own prices and our own profiteers, and we can do it; and, when our people want a regulation or a direction, they come to Perth and get it straight away and know where they are, and carry on their business. But under this scheme of centralisation and bureaucratic control, 2,000 miles away, we know from our experience during the last two years what occurs. If we give way on this paragraph, a large part of the local control of our trade and commerce will disappear. It would react disastrously to the progress of the State if every petty detail had to be referred to Canberra, and months had to elapse before anybody knew what he could do and how he could do it.

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

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Ayes | 17 |
| Noes | 16 |
| Majority for | 1 |

| AYES. | |
|---------------|--------------|
| Mr. Coverley | Mr. Nulsen |
| Mr. Cross | Mr. Panton |
| Mr. Fox | Mr. Sleeman |
| Mr. Hawke | Mr. Tonkin |
| Mr. J. Hegney | Mr. Triat |
| Mr. W. Hegney | Mr. Willcock |
| Mr. Johnson | Mr. Withers |
| Mr. Leahy | Mr. Wilsor |
| Mr. Needham | |

(Teller.)

| NOES. | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Mr. Boyle | Mr. Patrick |
| Mrs. Cardell-Oliver | Mr. Sampson |
| Mr. Hughes | Mr. Seward |
| Mr. Keenan | Mr. Thorn |
| Mr. Mann | Mr. Warner |
| Mr. McDonald | Mr. Watts |
| Mr. McLarty | Mr. Willmott |
| Mr. North | Mr. Doney |

(Teller.)

Question thus passed; the paragraph agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6.35 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 9th March, 1943.

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| Bills: Public Authorities (Retirement of Members), 2R. | 2713 |
| Coal Mine Workers (Pensions), 2R. Com. | 2713 |
| Motion: Youthful delinquents, detention conditions, to inquire by Select Committee | 2725 |
| Adjournment, special | 2733 |

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

BILL—PUBLIC AUTHORITIES (RETIREMENT OF MEMBERS).

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—COAL MINE WORKERS (PENSIONS).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 3rd March.

HON. F. E. GIBSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [2.19]: During the time this Bill has been before the House I have been much exercised in my mind as to the attitude I should adopt regarding it. For this reason I have hesitated to comment on it earlier, as I desired to hear or read the opinions and views of members whose experience in dealing with these matters has been greater than my own. I regret that what I have heard or read has not been very helpful. One member described the measure as "rotten and ill-conceived" and, while expressing his intention to vote for the second reading, stated that he would take every opportunity of chopping it about.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Have you seen his amendments?

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: From this I gather that while he was quite prepared to assist at the birth of this legislative infant, he was willing so to treat it that those responsible for its creation would not recognise it. Then Mr. Mann supplied us with columns of figures that were to me very confusing. Naturally, as I expected, the Chief Secretary and his colleagues strongly supported the Bill; and others, not associated with the Labour Party, offered congratulations to the member for Collie for the activity he had displayed in bringing forward the measure and then proceeded to damn it with faint praise. I would like to say here that I have always been sincerely in favour of

any legislation that would improve the conditions under which men worked and provide them—and those dependent on them—with a measure of social security in their declining years. I regretted that the legislation which some time ago was introduced in the Commonwealth Parliament was found not to be acceptable to the majority of members there. Had those measures been passed, we would have been saved a great deal of heart-burning in this State, and probably the necessity for bringing this Bill forward would have been obviated.

My greatest objection to the Bill is its sectional character. Under its provisions a certain body of workers who, during their working period have received good remuneration, are to receive benefits at a comparatively early age at the expense of the rest of the community, the greater proportion of which at no time has been in receipt of an income as large as that enjoyed by those they will have to assist financially if this Bill becomes law. Why should any Government give to its employees benefits it is not prepared to give to all sections of the community? We all know that once a man is accepted into the Government service he has security of employment for the rest of his life. He has no broken time; he has sick leave; he has long-service leave; he has superannuation. Should he be a railway employee, he has free travel, on occasions, throughout the Commonwealth. I am not cavilling at these privileges, but I think that like privileges should be made available to workers in other spheres of employment. Many companies do a great deal for their employees, but it is not possible for all employers to do so. Is there anything that a Government employee does which makes him a greater asset to the State than other men in other walks of life? I do not think so. I would urge the Government to ask its financial experts to prepare a scheme that would provide equal privileges for all workers in the State. I am sure that such a task is not beyond their capacity.

Some time ago I glanced through the pension lists of the State. I was surprised at what I saw and at the colossal sum this State is paying in pensions. Some men were drawing annually pensions which were two or three times greater than the annual income of the majority of our citizens. I am of the opinion that many of the pensions

are too high—although obligations entered into must be honoured—particularly in view of the large salaries earned prior to retirement. I would suggest that no pension should be more than £500 per annum, a very satisfactory sum to be assured of during the remaining years of one's life.

I was greatly interested in the remarks of Dr. Hislop, especially when he was speaking about the health of the men working in the Collie mines. Dr. Hislop is rightly regarded as an authority on these matters, and I place great value on his opinion. It has been my privilege to visit Collie on many occasions, and to be the recipient of great hospitality from its citizens. I believe the people of that town to be as healthy as those of any other centre in the State. To bear out that statement, I have known almost all the medical men who have practised in Collie during the last quarter of a century, and what they have told me has directly supported what Dr. Hislop informed the House. If any further proof of the conditions under which the men are working there were necessary, we have it in the statement made by the Honorary Minister last week. Members will recollect that he told us of his visit to the South-West, and how delighted and amazed he was to see men over 70 years of age who formerly had worked in the mines, doing a great job, as a war effort, in the timber industry. What better tribute could be paid to the men who had worked in the mines? What other industry, from a health point of view, would have treated men so that, after having passed the allotted span, they were still able to do a hard day's work?

I have visited the mines in Collie and have been underground. I admit that it is not a calling I would have chosen as a means of earning a livelihood, but the men looked healthy. Certainly their hands and faces were smeared with coal dust, but compared with what I have seen in the goldmines of the State, the conditions under which they work are fairly satisfactory. Again, the Honorary Minister in his remarks made reference to the small sum involved in the payment of the pensions—so much by the miners, so much by the industry and so much by the Government. It would have been much better to have said—so little by the miners and the balance by the people of the State, because he well knows that it is out of the pockets of the rest of the community that the money required must come. It is strange how pre-

valent is the idea that the Government is some mysterious fountain from which money can be drawn at will, and I think that if the word "people" were used more frequently instead of the word "Government" we would have a greater number of electors taking an interest in the financial activities of Parliament.

I wonder does the Honorary Minister think, if this Bill becomes law, that it will be the end of claims for pensions in industry. I know that, if I were a member of a trade union and some advantage was given to one section of workers, there would be a pretty bad time for the Government if the section to which I belonged did not get its share. The rates of pension proposed to be paid seem to me to be very generous and the conditions precedent to the paying of the pension very easy. A man who, on attaining 60 years of age, and who, in a certain period prior thereto, worked 300 days in or about a coal mine is entitled to a pension for himself and his wife of £3 per week. This means that the man who has earned £450, taking the wage of £1 10s. per shift, and lives to gain this measure of security—like those good men the Honorary Minister referred to—will receive from the community as a pension, the sum of £1,500, less the amount he contributed while he was earning the £450. This will make the price of a ton of coal to the consumer somewhat higher. Assuming that he breaks $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons of coal a shift, which will give him 750 tons for the 300 shifts, he will receive, for this service, from the people of this State the sum of £1,950, which, of course, includes his wages. Then there is the man who has put in 60 shifts in a certain period. He gets 30s. per week.

Then there is the "hard luck" case. What this means I do not know, but I can visualise Collie in the not distant future as a town with a greatly increased population. I can quite imagine that at some future date, if I pay a visit to Collie, I may be accosted in the street by some weather-worn individual who will say to me, "Do you not know me?" and I will say, "No," and he will say, "I was with you, Frank, in the Legislative Council a few years ago." Is there anything to prevent the pensioner from securing other employment? He must undergo a medical examination as the goldminer does today. Will he be debarred from taking employment elsewhere; or will this money that he gets be a subsidy to enable him to compete,

somewhat unfairly, with those who have to earn their living without any such subsidy? As I said before, I am particularly anxious to see the conditions of men in industry improved, but I feel compelled, on account of the sectional nature of this measure, to vote against the second reading of the Bill.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (in reply): Listening to the debate on this measure has been a very interesting experience and has indicated clearly to me that over the years there has been very little alteration in the viewpoint or outlook of many members of this House, notwithstanding the changes in its personnel. Much has been said that, in my opinion, is quite irrelevant to the Bill and could, or perhaps should, be dismissed without any consideration whatever. Some of the remarks made, however, although not strictly relevant, warrant a reply. The more conservative members have been swayed by blind prejudice, which to my way of thinking cannot be justified, to make observations which do them little credit, but which emphasise how hard it is for them to adjust their outlook from the past to the present.

What warrant is there for the statement made by Mr. Craig and referred to by Mr. Gibson, that this is a "rotten Bill, ill-conceived and ill-considered?" If the hon. member who made that assertion is genuine in his expression of opinion, surely he will give some credit to the people who have been responsible for the production of the Bill. While he may have objections to one or two points, that is no reason for using expressions of that kind. He ought to know, if he is not aware of the fact already, that legislation of this kind has been introduced and passed by other Parliaments throughout the Commonwealth, practically on all fours with this measure. In all essential points and for all practical purposes, there is little difference. If he says that this Bill is a rotten one, ill-conceived and ill-considered, he must say the same with regard to those Acts already in operation in three other States of the Commonwealth.

Hon. L. Craig: They are not the same.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: What warrant is there for saying that this Bill represents competition between Commonwealth and State in a bid for miners' votes? What an illogical statement that is. Can members imagine a miner voting for a Labour Gov-

ernment in the Commonwealth sphere and not for a Labour Government in the State sphere, more especially when both Governments have shown that they are prepared and desirous of doing something to improve the conditions not only of miners, but of all workers throughout Australia?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I did not say anything about competition for votes.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member's name has not been mentioned.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: There is no need to.

The PRESIDENT: I ask hon. members to hear the Chief Secretary in silence. I remind them that very rarely does the Minister interrupt other hon. members.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am anxious to keep personalities out of my reply. Some of the statements to which I shall have to refer have been made by more than one member and I wish to present a real justification for the Bill. Admittedly it will be very difficult to convince some of the "die-hards" in this Chamber that there is any justification whatever for the measure, but I hope there are enough members who will be sufficiently influenced by what I say to vote for and pass the second reading of the Bill.

It has been said that it is simple dishonesty for the Government to provide pensions for coalminers unless it is prepared to do so by obtaining all the money by direct taxation of the people. I cannot see that there is anything wrong in providing pensions for miners by the method laid down in this Bill. Mr. Gibson, in his remarks, spoke in a somewhat different strain, but I think that by the time I have finished my remarks, I will have convinced at least some members that the method proposed is as equitable as any that can be devised. Another remark made in criticism of the Bill was that the measure shows a reckless disregard for where the money is to come from. The Bill definitely provides where the money is to come from. While some members might put their own construction on that, I shall tell the House the actual facts.

Again I was surprised to hear the statement by the medical member of this House that there is no need for pensions for coalminers because they do not suffer from industrial disease such as silicosis. It may be true that they do not suffer from silicosis, but I am sure that the hon. member would not say that the coalminers of this State do

not suffer from the nature of their employment underground. If he is prepared to say that, he is prepared to say something that no other medical man has stated. It can be proved to the hilt that the coalminers of this State, the same as coalminers in other parts of the world, are affected, and seriously affected, by having to work underground for the greater part of their lives.

Hon. L. Craig: The same argument applies to nearly all industries.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It applies to the coalmining industry particularly. That fact cannot be denied. Then we were told that the wages paid to coalminers are so high that there is no need for pensions. That statement does not call for much comment. Certain figures have been quoted which are correct as far as they go, but they do not tell the whole story. We have been told that coalminers have refused to work all-out because of the higher taxation they would have to pay on increased wages. What is the inference behind that statement? If I take the only inference I can draw from those words and associate it with other remarks made by some members, it is that the coalminers of this State are sabotaging the war effort. I do not believe for a moment that that is so, and I do not think any member really believes it, either, although he may have given expression to that view.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It might apply to the miners of New South Wales.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member can leave out the miners of New South Wales for the time being. Let us deal with the Collic miners. By the time I have finished I shall show that the Collic coalminers have every justification for the demands they have made regarding industrial conditions, including pensions legislation.

Hon. T. Moore: The interjection was one appealing to prejudice and not to fact.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Some members seemed rather afraid that if this Bill becomes law, it will relieve the Commonwealth of some of its obligations in regard to the payment of old age pensions. To members who used that argument, I suggest that the only inference to be drawn from it is that in their opinion the reward of a coalminer when his working days are over should be the old age pension. I do not subscribe to that opinion. Another statement made by several members was that the Bill would affect

the payment of eight per cent. dividends to preference shareholders. What if it does? Should not we expect the coal companies to make some contribution to this pensions fund? If they make some contribution to the pensions, is it not just as well for that contribution to come from the eight per cent. preference dividends, if there is no other source from which the companies can obtain the money?

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It should not be done for a pensions scheme. It should be done through some other form of legislation.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is a very specious argument. There is nothing in the measure to compel the companies to pay that money out of the eight per cent. cumulative dividends.

Hon. L. Craig: Then where will it come from? The ordinary shareholders have had nothing in the last few years.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I will deal with that point later and deal with it more comprehensively than the hon. member has done. One member went so far as to say that the Collie miners are not doing their best to assist the war effort because they are not producing sufficient coal to meet war-time demands. The member who made that statement has no knowledge at all of the facts. Further, why all this argument about the seven hour bank-to-bank shift worked by the miners? What has that to do with the provision of pensions under this Bill? We have also been told that there has been collusion in the past between the miners and the coal companies. This statement has been used as an argument against the granting of pensions to the miners. Reviewing statements of that sort and others which I have not yet enumerated, I ask: Is it any wonder that doubts arise in the minds of the coalminers and other workers about the sincerity of our talk of social security and the new order we are to have after the war is over?

Is it any wonder that these workers are fortified in their opinion that this House, the Legislative Council of Western Australia, is still the citadel of vested interests and privileges? This House has been accused time after time on these lines. I say to this House that it is the attitude of some of its members that allows such a large section of the population of the State to continue to believe that the statement is perfectly true. One of the arguments advanced by

some of those who oppose this legislation is the fact that it is sectional in its incidence, that it applies only to coalminers and to no-one else. That is true; it is sectional! It applies only to those men who are qualified to be regarded as connected with the coalmining industry. May I put the position to members in this way: This is only one step towards that social security which some of us have been so pleased to talk about in recent months? If it is only one step towards that stage, it is a strong argument why this House should support the Bill rather than oppose it.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Do you suggest that social security in the future will be entirely sectional in this respect?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have not said anything about every person retiring at the age of 60, but I say that this is one measure that sooner or later will have to be applied, in so far as the coalmining industry is concerned. There are several very good reasons for that. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that this Bill, if agreed to, will complete pension legislation for the coalmining industry of the Commonwealth; not for Western Australia alone, but for the industry as a whole throughout the length and breadth of Australia. It is for that reason that it has been necessary to include in the Bill a number of clauses to which several members have taken strong exception. For instance it is essential that these pension provisions should be reciprocal, and that Western Australian coalminers, if engaged in the coalmining industry in other parts of the Commonwealth, should not be prejudiced and should not be at a disadvantage compared with the men they are working with.

The principle would apply also with respect to Eastern States coalminers coming to Western Australia and obtaining employment in the industry here. Is it not right that they should still be entitled to claim pensions here, as they would be in any other of the three States which have already passed legislation of this description? There is a particularly good reason why the clauses dealing with pensions should be kept in the Bill as they appear now and not be mutilated as has been suggested by one or two members. In Committee I shall be in a position, I think, to give members a little more detailed information than is possible in a reply of this kind. I have not been closely

associated with the coalmining industry of this State, although I know a little about it. I have been down the mines, and I know from personal observation something of the conditions which apply there. I also know a fairly large number of men who are engaged in the industry.

Many years ago when I was a young man, I was rather closely associated with at least two coalmining districts in the Old Country. That association gave me a pretty good knowledge of the conditions under which men worked there. We all have a fair knowledge, I should say, of the developments which have taken place in the last 30 or 40 years in the coalmining industry of the Old Country. Wherever there is a coalmining community, it is usually a community in the vicinity of the pit-head, and a community of its own. It is remarkable that very few men who are brought up in a coalmining district, working in or around the coal mines, seem to get employment in any other occupation. There is an old saying that wooden legs seem to run in families; there is no doubt that coalmining does run in families. Generation after generation of people have been employed in no other industry or avocation than coalmining. It is one of the peculiarities of the calling or, as I heard remarked this morning, of the profession. I am of opinion that coalmining is just as important a calling or profession as are some of the so-called professions about which we hear so much but associated with which are higher emoluments and better working conditions than are ever likely to be attached to the occupation of a coalminer.

May I refer to the comparison which has been made between goldmining and coalmining? If there is anything in the statements that have been made by some members, I submit it is a remarkable fact that although considerable numbers of goldminers have tried themselves out in the coalmining industry at Collie, very few have remained. I believe they could be counted on the fingers of two hands. There must be some reason for that. Many of the goldminers who went to Collie did so because the goldmines on which they had been working closed down. The fact is that the conditions are not the same. In coalmining they are entirely different and, so far as earning capacity is concerned, there is no comparison whatever. The coalminer earns a few shillings only compared with what the

goldminer of a similar classification earns in his industry. Sir Hal Colebatch in the course of his remarks made extended references to the Herman Royal Commission of 1933. The thought that went through my mind on listening to his remarks was that this was a very timely reminder of what can be accomplished in the realm of finance at the expense of the country. All that he had to say in that regard could be duplicated in other industries.

I remember that Royal Commission, and I recall being particularly interested in one or two phases of it. Over the week-end, I went to the trouble of reviving my memory of what took place. If any member has not read the evidence given before that Royal Commission, I suggest he do so. He will find it particularly interesting, and it will give him a good indication of the reason why coalminers in this State are determined to see that they have a fair go in regard to their working conditions. Although Sir Hal Colebatch was informative in his remarks, and of course critical at the same time in that he objected to the provision that preference shareholders entitled to 8 per cent. dividends should be called upon to contribute to the pensions fund which is to provide pensions for the men who earn the dividends which eventually are paid to the shareholders, he took an entirely different view from that held by most other members. He considered that the taxpayers alone should foot the bill, and that the companies which have reaped such a wonderful harvest over the years, and which the hon. member admitted was perfectly true, should be exempt from any contribution to the pensions fund. I do not think this House can subscribe to that. I cannot do so and the Government cannot do so.

The Government takes an entirely different view and considers that all parties should contribute to the pensions fund. It considers that the basis should be one-quarter to be paid by the Government, one-quarter by the companies, one-quarter by the men, and one-quarter by the consumers. I know the Bill does not set the matter out in that way, but that is the net result of the formula which does appear in the measure. The Bill sets out that the Government shall provide at least one-quarter, that two-thirds of the balance shall be provided by the companies, and one-third by the miners, and that the companies shall only be allowed to increase the

price of coal by 2d. per ton, which is equivalent to 50 per cent. of two-thirds of the contributions by the companies. The net result is a contribution by all parties, except that the Government itself purchases 85 to 90 per cent. of the total output of coal from Collieries, and to that extent will have to pay an amount in addition to the quarter I have mentioned.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The taxpayers pay about 50 per cent.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Approximately. I wish to deal a little more definitely with the question of the 8 per cent. The Bill does not say that the contribution to the pensions fund shall be paid out of the 8 per cent. dividend. It merely says that the contribution may be paid from those funds. There is nothing to prevent a company, if it so desires, from making its contributions before the dividends are paid from any other resources it may possess.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is where the money should come from.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: So far as I can ascertain, the companies are not without resources, although it is a fact that in recent years the ordinary shareholders have received no dividends. The preference shareholders have been receiving their cut and, under the articles of association, they are entitled to first preference on the so-called profits of the company before anything is paid to the ordinary shareholder. If, therefore, it should be that the profits of the company are not equivalent to 8 per cent., is there any reason why the amount to be paid to the pensions fund should not be paid out of the money that would otherwise go to the preference shareholders?

Hon. H. L. Roche: Was that 8 per cent reduced by the Financial Emergency Act?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. It is in the companies' articles of association. One Royal Commissioner who inquired into the Collieries coalmining industry suggested that 8 per cent. was rather high and that if necessary the Government should take some steps in order to see that that percentage was reduced. In the course of the debate one member asked what action the Government had taken in regard to the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner in 1933. The suggestion for a reduction below 8 per cent. was not Dr. Herman's recommendation. There was no need to put some of his recommendations into force because the companies did so

voluntarily. If I started to discuss the whole of the recommendations of that Royal Commissioner and what has transpired since, I am afraid I would have to take up far too much time. I want to make it clear, however, that this Bill does not say that this money shall come from that source, but makes it possible for the companies, if they so desire—and they can please themselves—to pay their contributions to the pensions fund out of the 8 per cent. dividend.

Hon. H. Tuckey: I understand that the Griffin company has never paid 8 per cent.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I believe that 8 per cent. does not apply to the whole of the companies. I think it was apparent from the comments made by Mr. Seddon that he at any rate has a sympathetic knowledge of the difficulties under which coalminers work. He certainly took a contrary view to that expressed by Sir Hal Colebatch who stated quite frankly that he was not satisfied that miners work under such conditions as to entitle them to the consideration to be extended to them under this Bill. I think it was Mr. Seddon who referred to the remarks of Dr. Hislop concerning the health of miners and emphasised a point which should remove the one barrier which apparently prevents the doctor from giving support to the Bill. Dr. Hislop opposed the Bill from health reasons on the ground that there was no industrial disease prevalent in Collieries comparable with silicosis, which is associated with the goldmining industry. It must be appreciated, however, that silicosis and allied diseases are not the only results of underground work which are detrimental to the health of miners. Mr. Seddon pointed out that without any specific disease at all, mining conditions in Collieries are extremely unhealthy and miners generally suffer from the effects of their employment and are worked-out sooner than the average worker. I do not think anybody would contradict that.

Hon. H. Seddon: Mr. Mann made those remarks.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am sorry if I attributed them to the wrong member, but probably Mr. Seddon will agree with the sentiments expressed. The conditions in the mines at Collieries are such that any person who is compelled to or does follow the occupation of coalminer for any length of time must necessarily be affected. As a result of the many statements made, I caused in-

quiries to be made in different quarters, and would like to give to the House the benefit of one or two reports I have received. The district inspector of mines at Collie has submitted a fairly lengthy report on different aspects of mining in that centre, in the course of which he states—

Underground work cannot be compared with other industries in Collie such as timber and farm work. According to the local doctors the average middle-aged miners working underground in the local mines have that sallow complexion which denotes an unhealthy condition as compared with workers on the surface, such as timber workers, etc.

Their opinion is that no one should work continuously underground for more than 20 years, and miners should be spelled by having a time working in the sunshine; but my experience of miners is that when taken out of the mines they are like fish out of water. At the Co-operative mine within recent months there have been three men who have had to receive medical attention due to working in bad air. Of course, these men might not be as robust as the majority of the workers. There is a practical demonstration of the action of miners being spelled in Collie today. Certain men have been given medical certificates to allow them to work outside the mines with the grain distilleries controlled by the C.S.R. Company. These few men have shown a marked improvement in health.

I think it was Mr. Seddon who said that if there was any disability arising from working in the mines the Workers' Compensation Act should be amended. As I have pointed out, while there may be no specific disease or diseases which can be enumerated, undoubtedly there is a disability arising from long periods of work underground in the Collie coalmines. There is no doubt in my mind that the community should afford relief to persons who are affected in that way, more particularly by way of pensions where pensions are on a contributory basis. I do not wish to deal at much greater length with some of the comments made in regard to the profits and the operations of the mining companies, but I think in fairness to the management I should state that not in any year since prices were first fixed by arbitration have the company's profits reached the figure which the arbitrators considered to be reasonable.

The altered method of price fixation and changes which the company has voluntarily effected in the conduct of its business disposed of the necessity for implementing many of Dr. Herman's recommendations. For instance, commissions on coal sales are no longer payable. The Occidental Insur-

ance Company has been wound up. The company's directorate has been reduced to five members. The businesses of Johnson & Lynn, Ltd., and the Collie Power Company have been dissociated from that of the collieries, and although certain officers of Amalgamated Collieries render service to the Collie Power Company, proper apportionment of salaries and facilities is made as between the two companies. A complete examination of the company's books is made twice yearly by officers of the Railway Department for the purpose of checking production and other costs, and full and free access to any relevant records is available to them. Leases have not been renewed recently and mining on leases that have expired is carried on under permits that may be withdrawn at any time.

In the supervision which it may exercise over the company's mining operations and in the facilities which it has for checking and verification of costs, the State has a very definite measure of control over the operations of Amalgamated Collieries and the exercise of that control has placed the industry, in so far as owners' profits are concerned, on an entirely different footing from that on which Dr. Herman reported. In his comparison of coalminers' wages with those of goldminers—a matter specifically referred to by Sir Hal Colebatch and others—Dr. Herman made no allowance for a very material difference in the conditions of the two industries, namely, the intermittency of employment in coalmines as compared with goldmines. That employment in the gold-mining industry is very regular, but, unfortunately, in the coalmining industry everything depends upon the demand at a given time. As Collie coal cannot be economically stored, there must be some arrangement whereby men can be available in times of heavy demand and the only alternatives when the demand is short are that there shall be a reduction either in the hours worked or in the number of men employed. Consequently, the industrial law which covers the coalminers of Collie, takes some of these circumstances into consideration.

The law provides that companies must necessarily provide the men with nine days' work per fortnight, or 27 days in six weeks. That is a responsibility of the company, and if the company is not able to provide work to that extent, the award provides that it

must reduce its employees. So the industrial award takes into consideration that all working years are not war years, and it is a fact that prior to this war the Collie miners were producing more coal than was actually required. A big change has come over the scene since then. Today the Collie mines are not able to produce the quantity required. It is no use members placing the blame for that state of affairs on the coalminers. I learnt this morning that the Collie coalminers are producing more tons per year per man than any other set of men in the Commonwealth. That is rather interesting, especially when we take into consideration that a large number of the younger and more efficient coalminers have joined various branches of the Armed Forces, and their places have been taken in some instances by men who have had no experience of coalmining underground, and in other cases by men of advanced years who were referred to by the Honorary Minister. The average age of the miners engaged at Collie today is much higher than it was prior to this war.

Notwithstanding all these facts, and despite other disabilities that have been mentioned from time to time, we find that, according to a statement made a few months ago by the Commonwealth Minister for Supply and Development, Mr. Beasley, while the Commonwealth average output of coal per year per man employed in the industry was 686 tons—that covered all the employees on the coalmine and not only those engaged in getting the coal, so that it covered the men on the surface as well as those underground—the average output per man at Collie was 71½ tons per day. If we take the average of the men actually engaged in hewing the coal underground, the average at Collie would work out at something over 800 tons per year per man. That is a record that cannot be approached in a coalmine in any other part of the Commonwealth.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Are not the mining conditions here much more favourable than those obtaining in the Eastern States?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not think so. Another matter of interest, especially in view of an amendment appearing on the notice paper, is that the proportion of surface workers to those underground is, approximately, as 180 is to 900. Respecting the small proportion of surface workers, we must remember that they frequently include

young men commencing their employment with the company on the surface from which they gravitate to underground operations, while others are men who, on account of their years of work underground, have reached the stage at which, for various physical or medical reasons in most instances, they cannot continue work underground. Men of that type are transferred to surface work.

Hon. L. Craig: And they will have earned the right to a pension on account of their previous work underground.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If the hon. member agrees to that aspect, I think it will be acceptable to the miners. I have given the House an indication of the number of surface workers and the small bearing that phase has on the total working underground. As I have indicated, almost without exception the surface workers are either commencing their work in connection with the coalmine or have worked for very many years underground until they reached the stage of physical unfitness necessitating their transfer out of the mine. As to those who do not come within those categories—I refer to tradesmen such as fitters, carpenters and so on—I am told that even those surface workers spend a great deal of their time underground maintaining the machinery and equipment generally in the mine. Thus members will see that there is not that clear distinction between surface men and underground workers that some would have the House believe.

To carry my comparison regarding working conditions a little further, I have received a report concerning some statements that were made by members of this Chamber. I assume that those statements were made in all good faith. On that basis I have a few interesting comments to make to the House. I have just referred to the question of surface workers. I forget who it was, but possibly it was Mr. Craig who referred to the inclusion of check weighers under the provisions of the Bill. He considered those men were not entitled to the benefit of a pension. I am advised that all the check weighers employed at present have had upwards of 30 years' experience underground in the mines, and they are only engaged as check weighers because of the effects of sickness or accidents.

Hon. L. Craig: Those men will not be excluded from the right to pensions.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They will be if the hon. member's amendment is agreed to.

Hon. L. Craig: If they have had 30 years' experience underground they will not be excluded.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I referred to experience extending upwards of 30 years.

Hon. L. Craig: Even if they have experience up to 20 years or less.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member must not anticipate my remarks.

Hon. T. Moore: You are worrying Mr. Craig!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Conditions of employment in the coalmining industry are very different from those associated with most other industries, and the check weighers are only appointed to their positions for a quarter. They have no guarantee that they will continue on that job during the succeeding quarter. It may be that if their recovery in health or from the effects of accidents is sufficiently marked they will be restored to their original occupation at the end of the quarter. As a rule, only incapacitated men are appointed to those positions. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that they are so appointed by men who are on contract. Men working under contract do not usually choose able-bodied men for such positions, but only men who have suffered from illness or the effect of some accident. When men are restored to health they are transferred to more suitable positions elsewhere. So we can take it that those positions are availed of in order to provide one or more of the members of the miners' union with an opportunity to continue in the industry while in bad health or suffering from the effects of an injury. When they are recovered such men take their places once more among their fellow miners. In some instances it may be that on account of their advanced age the men are not physically strong enough to carry on as before. Three of those employed at present are in that position, while the other two are there on account of sickness incurred as a result of their heavy underground work.

There is another point apropos of this aspect applying more particularly to statements made regarding the high earnings of the Collie coalminers. I was supplied with information this morning that the House can accept as absolutely accurate. That information gives the lie direct to statements

made by some members. There is one mine on the Collie coalfield in which during the war period the wheelers and machine-men have not been able to earn the minimum wage prescribed in the award. It must be remembered that men on contract work cannot be employed on that type of job all the time and consequently it is provided that when they are not engaged on contract work they may be employed on shift work. More often than not that is what has happened. If men cannot be fully employed on contract work, the effect is to reduce the wages earned by those concerned. In regard to the particular mine to which I have referred, the men have not been able to earn the minimum wage prescribed by the award and the mining companies have had to make up their wages to the required amount.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What are the rates?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The rate for the wheelers is approximately 21s. 8d. per day and that for the machine-men 25s. 2d. per day. I will give the House the reason for that and indicate why it is not possible for some men to earn the prescribed rate of wages. The men are working under conditions that I should imagine are almost impossible and beyond men's ordinary physical capacity. When the award was issued the steepest grade in the mine was one in twelve; today the steepest grade is one in 5½ or one in six. To members who have no knowledge of coalmining that will not convey very much, but when I tell them that jig-ropes have to be employed to pull the empty skips up these steepest parts to where they have to be filled with coal, and that each skip weighs about 10 cwt. and requires three men to handle, they will agree that the conditions in that mine are not such as to encourage men voluntarily to look for employment there.

Hon. A. Thomson: Still they get their full rate of wages.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They get the amount of wage prescribed in the award, but these men are on contract work. That means they would expect to earn at least 20 per cent. above the minimum wage. Sometimes they look for 100 per cent. increase, but the usual thing is 20 per cent. above the minimum rates. The men are not working under conditions that will enable them to earn that extra margin. Naturally they would be more inclined to seek employ-

ment elsewhere where the conditions are more favourable. The question may be asked as to whose is the fault. It may be suggested that it can be attributed to the management or to some other consideration. I do not know anything about that. All I know is that those are the conditions under which these men are getting the coal. That reminds me that my attention was drawn to the report that appeared in "The West Australian" of the remarks of Sir Hal Colebatch regarding the management of the mines in which it was stated that Sir Hal had told the House that the "miners were not working in the best interests of this State."

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: That was a case of misreporting. I said "mines," not "miners."

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am making the position clear.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: I did not say that at all.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am sure the hon. member will not mind my telling him what appeared in the Press. Where "Hansard" stated the hon. member made use of the word "mines," "The West Australian" reported that he used the word "miners."

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: You cannot correct every mistake that is made in the Press!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The statement was noted by the men concerned and the position has been explained to them. They were told that Sir Hal Colebatch had been misreported. I think it only right that I should draw the hon. member's attention to that point. I am only doing so incidentally, and not with any intention of causing Sir Hal Colebatch any distress. To proceed with my remarks, exception was taken to the workmen's inspector being included under the provisions of the Bill. I am informed that the workmen's inspector is underground 90 per cent. of his time. If that is so, I fail to understand why that official should be excluded from the benefits of the measure. Then some members took exception to the provision for the elected union representative. Generally speaking, that would apply only to the general secretary of the Collie Miners' Union. The present occupant of the position has been employed underground for some 30 years and has only held his general secretaryship for

14 months, being subject to re-election every year.

Hon. L. Craig: He would have earned his right to a pension by virtue of his work as a miner.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think members will agree that that official by virtue of his record should be entitled to benefits in the same way as his colleagues who are still working underground. There are only one or two other points with which I shall deal. The first is that some members think the qualification for a pension that provides for 60 days' work in any one year is too low. A similar provision appears in other Acts throughout the Commonwealth. This will not apply to many cases but nevertheless probably some workers will be covered by that provision. It is quite easy to see how they would reach that position. A discussion on that point, however, lends itself more to the Committee stage than to a speech in reply to the debate. We can take it for granted, at any rate, that no employer in normal circumstances would introduce a man 58 or 59 years of age into the coalmining industry of Western Australia, knowing full well that at 60 years of age he would be retired.

And perhaps this may be my final point—the question of the effect which the Bill will have on the payment of Commonwealth old age pensions. In this regard numerous contradictory statements have been made by members who spoke on the measure. I desire to point out that this legislation is already operating in the Eastern States. When it first came into operation there, a difficulty arose in this regard. Fortunately, the Deputy Director of Pensions in Queensland at that time is now Deputy Director of Pensions in Western Australia; and from him I am aware of the negotiations which took place on the subject. I have received from the Eastern States a report as to what is the actual position, but I am also informed that negotiations are still proceeding, and that the position now is considered hopeful from the standpoint of reaching a complete solution of the problem. The report I have here I feel disposed to quote in full, if only for record purposes. It is rather lengthy, but sufficiently important to be included in "Hansard," for it may give some members a different idea of the effect the payment of these pensions will have from the aspect

of Commonwealth old age pensions. The report reads—

DEDUCTION OF COMMONWEALTH PENSIONS FROM AMOUNTS PAYABLE UNDER THE COAL AND OIL SHALE MINE WORKERS' (PENSIONS) ACTS, 1941 TO 1942.

As suggested in the attached letter from the Crown Solicitor, Perth, difficulties have arisen in the above regard. The result is that the Coal Mine Workers' Pensions Fund is bearing an unexpected burden which would ordinarily have been borne by the Commonwealth Government. Although representations have been made, no assistance is forthcoming from the Commonwealth to date.

When the payment of pensions under the Act commenced, it was quickly discovered that the method of assessment of Commonwealth pensions was debarring certain mine workers and their dependants from receiving the full Commonwealth benefits to which they would ordinarily be entitled if there were no Miners' Pensions Scheme. Many applications were affected by this position, and it was only after entering into a working arrangement with the then local Deputy Commissioner of Pensions that they could be finalised. Incidentally, the local deputy at that time was Mr. C. R. Burdue, who is now stationed at Perth. His co-operation was most helpful.

The working arrangement referred to was made possible, after the Chairman's representations, by a letter from the Prime Minister in February, 1942. The Prime Minister's letter intimated, inter alia, that his Government could not agree to exempt amounts payable as miners' pensions from the income provisions of the Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act, but would be prepared to approve of the assessment of invalid and old age pensions in the usual manner, without first having regard to any benefits which may be payable under the Mine Workers' Pensions Act.

Following this letter, the working arrangement was concluded with the local deputy. This arrangement still operates but only remains effective by reason of close co-operation between officers of the Commonwealth Department and the Registrar of the Miners' Pensions Tribunal.

On the basis of the existing rate of Commonwealth pensions, viz., £1 6s. per week, the arrangement has the following effect:—

- (a) Single person (including widow or widower) entitled to £1 10s. per week miners' pension, and otherwise eligible for the Commonwealth pension is paid the full rate of Commonwealth pension and the balance is made up as miners' pension. No loss to Miners' Pension Fund.
- (b) Single person (including widower) entitled to £2 per week miners' pension, and otherwise eligible for the Commonwealth pension receives nothing from the Commonwealth and the full amount as miners' pension. In each case the Fund bears £1 6s.

per week which would ordinarily be paid by the Commonwealth.

- (c) Husband and wife entitled to £2 10s. per week miners' pension, and one only otherwise eligible for Commonwealth pension—the maximum rate of Commonwealth pension is paid to the one so eligible and the balance is made up as miners' pension. No loss to the Fund.
- (d) Husband and wife entitled to miners' pension of £3 per week, and one only otherwise eligible for the Commonwealth pension—17s. per week Commonwealth pension is paid to the one so eligible and the balance is made up as miners' pension. A loss of 9s. per week in each case to the Fund.
- (e) Husband and wife entitled to miners' pension of £2 10s. per week, and both otherwise eligible for the Commonwealth pension—the maximum rate of Commonwealth pension is paid to each. No loss to the Fund.
- (f) Husband and wife entitled to £3 per week miners' pension, and both otherwise eligible for Commonwealth pension—the maximum rate of Commonwealth pension is paid to each. No loss to the Fund.
- (g) Where other income or property exists, the payment of Commonwealth pension, if any, is subject to a calculation based on the facts of each case. The result is that many persons who would ordinarily receive reduced Commonwealth pensions are excluded from such benefits when their miners' pensions are taken into account, and again the Pensions Fund bears the whole burden.

No legislative action has been taken, nor does it appear that any such action could be taken by the State, to counteract the position. However, the potential eligibility for Commonwealth pensions is being continually examined in respect to recipients of miners' pensions and their dependants. As the occasions arise, the persons concerned are notified of the necessity for making applications for Commonwealth pensions, and relative adjustments are made in the amounts payable as miners' pensions. If necessary, the rates of Commonwealth pensions are estimated pending finalisation.

This constant review of cases represents the only available means for protecting the Fund in the existing circumstances.

As I have already intimated, the matter is receiving constant attention from our Crown Law Department and the Minister and other parties concerned. I have been advised that there are considerable hopes of an amendment being submitted in the Committee stage which will probably cover the position better than is the case now.

I believe I have covered fairly fully the main objections raised to the Bill. In my con-

cluding remarks I wish to submit to members that the Collie miners who have to toil and sweat in conditions under which none of us would care to work, are surely entitled to the same consideration as coalminers already have obtained in other parts of the Commonwealth. I do not consider it too much to ask this Parliament to give to the coalminers of Western Australia the social security, such as it is, that is provided by the Bill. The miners themselves are contributors to the fund, the companies are to be contributors, and the Government is to be a contributor.

In my opinion there is no necessity for my covering some of the ground which various members have traversed in regard to the Bill. Mr. Mann, for instance, in my opinion conclusively showed that we were quite prepared to go a long way further than this Bill asks us to do, and, in fact, we did do far more in the interests of certain employees who assuredly did not claim to have to contend with conditions anything like those applying to the Collie miners. Mr. Gibson this afternoon referred to the large amount of money paid out each year to pensioners under the 1871 Act, and he also drew attention to the fact that this House, in years gone by, was prepared to grant very substantial pensions to persons holding privileged positions in this State. I could go on and enumerate such persons, but I shall not do so. I hope this House will agree to the second reading, and will not mutilate the measure in Committee, and that finally the coalminers of Western Australia will find themselves in a position similar to that of other coalminers in the Commonwealth, and be entitled to the proposed pensions, small as they are.

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

| | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|
| Ayes | .. | .. | .. | 14 |
| Noes | .. | .. | .. | 11 |

Majority for 3

AYES.

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| Hon. L. Craig | Hon. J. G. Hislop |
| Hon. J. M. Drew | Hon. W. H. Kitson |
| Hon. G. Fraser | Hon. W. J. Mann |
| Hon. E. H. Gray | Hon. T. Moore |
| Hon. E. H. H. Hall | Hon. H. L. Roche |
| Hon. W. K. Hall | Hon. H. Seddon |
| Hon. E. M. Heenan | Hon. C. B. Williams |

(Teller.)

NOES.

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Hon. L. B. Bolton | Hon. H. S. W. Parker |
| Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch | Hon. A. Thompson |
| Hon. J. A. Dimmitt | Hon. F. R. Welsh |
| Hon. F. E. Gibson | Hon. G. B. Wood |
| Hon. V. Hamersley | Hon. H. Tuckey |
| Hon. G. W. Miles | |

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

| AYES. | NOES. |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Hon. C. R. Cornish | Hon. C. F. Baxter |
| Hon. J. Cornell | Hon. H. V. Plesse |

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. V. Hamersley in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Interpretations:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have already informed the House that I am expecting one or more amendments which might deal with the question of interpretations. I therefore think it desirable that we should now report progress.

Progress reported.

MOTION—YOUTHFUL DELINQUENTS, DETENTION CONDITIONS.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 2nd March on the following motion by Hon. E. H. H. Hall:—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon—

- What provision should be made by the State for the care and reform of youthful delinquents;
- the conditions of Barton's Mill prison as a place of detention for male youthful delinquents, and of York for females, and whether improvements can be effected at such places for such purpose; and
- the results that were achieved by the investigation which on or about the 23rd June, 1937 (according to a statement of the Minister controlling the Child Welfare Department), had been in progress for 12 months prior to a deputation to that Minister at that time.

THE HONORARY MINISTER [3.50]:

I am extremely interested in the subject of child delinquency and have been so for several years past. I have made a close examination of the records of the 15 uncontrollable boys, some of whom were mentioned by the Chief Secretary, and I have made a classification which should prove highly informative. It is as follows:—

| | |
|--|---|
| Number of boys with good parents and homes | 7 |
| Orphan boy | 1 |
| Father and mother divorced | 1 |
| Home conditions poor to bad | 5 |
| One whose early history is unknown | 1 |

15

I made an interesting discovery when investigating the history of these boys; it was that in no case was any of these boys the son of a widowed mother. When one realises that there are 2,635 widows in this State receiving widows' pensions, in addition to the comparatively large number of widows engaged on war work and in other industries and earning their own and their children's living and therefore not eligible to receive a widow's pension, I think it is a remarkable testimony to the widowed women of Western Australia, who, bereft of their husbands, have carried on a terrific struggle against adverse circumstances with such a wonderful result. All things considered, it is a matter of some surprise that child delinquency has not increased more rapidly than it has. As a matter of fact, it is remarkable that the figure, especially with regard to boys, is not very much higher. There are four major factors that must have an adverse effect upon the character-building of children:—

(1) War conditions, where the husband is in the Fighting Forces and the wife and mother is without the father's assistance, guidance and control of their children.

(2) Soldiers' wives with families who have accepted employment in munition and other war work.

In my view, the soldier's wife with a family is making a serious mistake in enlisting for war work, which in the long run must adversely affect the future of her children, with consequent serious loss and expense to the State. All other sources of female labour should be used and availed of first, and only when things get desperate should married women with families be called upon for war work.

(3) The type of movie pictures being shown, particularly at children's sessions, which is definitely inimical to child life.

All kinds of rubbishy sensational films are being shown including serials containing hair-raising scenes of violence that upset the nervous and emotional equilibrium of youngsters, fix a standard of wrong values and generally do serious harm to the children.

(4) Bad housing accommodation, to which is closely allied lax health administration.

It is a well-known fact to those who have taken the trouble to make an investigation, that there are hundreds of cottages or alleged cottages in the metropolitan area, chiefly in Perth and Fremantle, that are judged by modern standards to be totally unfit for

human habitation. When the present Post-war Construction Housing Committee, under the chairmanship of the Town Planning Commissioner, Mr. Davidson, completes its investigations on present housing conditions, its report will startle the community. Bad housing, especially in the hot summer months, drives young people into the streets. Many of these so-called homes would not be used in a modern piggery, much less as shelters for human beings. Home life in such places is impossible.

It is a strange commentary that in this discussion on child delinquency the local authorities have recently taken a leading part. I would suggest that they put their house in order first. Health administration in the metropolitan area is extremely lethargic. The work of competent health inspectors is slowed down by their superior officers, who, in turn, are too much influenced by private interests and property owners. Over the years in the metropolitan area, grasping money-bags have by-passed the health and local authorities and erected hundreds of hovels that were never, even when built, suitable for their purpose. The activities of certain people in the erection of flats which are potential slums of the future must be carefully watched. Health administration has been sleepy, inefficient and ineffective. The local authorities have made the pace very slow and health inspectors have been made to obey this policy. No wonder then that rats—that evil menace to public health—abound in countless thousands in the metropolitan district and that the standard of cleanliness is so low in too many homes, shops, factories, etc. I venture to assert that our communal standard of hygiene is 50 years behind the times, and for this local authorities are mainly responsible. This state of affairs very definitely has an important bearing on child delinquency.

No one will dispute the assertion that Government-controlled industrial schools for both boys and girls are required, and the Chief Secretary has made it quite clear that the war effectively prevented the Government from achieving its objective in this regard. The question to be decided is: Would the Government be justified at this stage in proceeding with the scheme? In the light of obvious facts, the answer must be an emphatic "No," because—

(1) The Home of the Good Shepherd (Roman Catholic Industrial School for Girls) is able to deal adequately with present requirements.

(2) The Salvation Army Boys' School at Gosnells is not at present fully manned.

(3) The Roman Catholic St. Joseph's Farm School for Delinquent Boys at Bindoon is not full and has accommodation for a still further number of boys.

Brother Kearney, who is in charge of Bindoon, is a remarkable man. He is doing splendid work and is most anxious to take any delinquent boy and try to make a man of him. To those interested in this farm for delinquent boys, a visit to Bindoon, which is about 60 miles from Perth, would be highly informative. The Lotteries Commission, recognising the need for such an industrial school, made a liberal grant to the authorities for building operations at Bindoon and is most anxious that it be used to its fullest capacity. What I want to stress is that this institution can still take a number of boys.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It would be better if the institution were half empty.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The argument is that there is no institution available for these boys to be sent to. I am showing that there is an institution. It is true that neither at Gosnells nor at Bindoon is there a compound, and therefore the cases now in Fremantle and Barton's Mill cannot be sent to those institutions.

Surely no one will argue that the Government would be justified in building an industrial school to accommodate six boys who are really criminals, and, at the most, a total of 15 boys. My argument is that it would not be suitable to put these boys, now at Barton's Mill and confined in the Fremantle gaol, in a school with other boys. To build such an institution and compound would cost at least from £7,000 to £10,000. In view of the serious shortage of carpenters, plumbers, builders and other artisans, could we with justice withdraw skilled men from vital war work to build such a place? Can we afford at this juncture to withdraw men from industry in order to staff such an institution? The answer is an emphatic "No."

In the course of his speech, the Chief Secretary quite rightly stressed the criminal nature of the half-dozen boys whose proper place is in prison. They should not be at Barton's Mill—not because of their association with older men, but because they are likely to have a detrimental effect upon the most hardened criminals there. I have spoken to these lads and therefore have had an opportunity of assessing their character

and behaviour. These boys are bad eggs! It is doubtful whether an industrial school is the proper place for the type of boy at present in Fremantle and Barton's Mill. I think a better scheme would be for all the States, after the war, to forward contributions to the Commonwealth in order that a training ship could be built for this worst class of boy-delinquent in Australia. Hard work and hard discipline are what these youthful criminals need.

In the terms of his motion Mr. Hall has included the Barton's Mill prison. The Chief Secretary has given to this House a very full and complete account of the difficulties experienced and overcome when at such short notice the whole prison organisation, inmates and personnel, had to be transferred from the Fremantle prison. The site selected, in my opinion, is very suitable, comparatively close to Perth but possessing all the necessary qualifications of seclusion and country atmosphere so essential for success. I visited Barton's Mill several weeks ago and closely inspected its activities. The authorities did wisely in selecting this site, and, from the Chief Secretary down, deserve the highest commendation for what has been accomplished.

Barton's Mill presents wonderful possibilities for prison reform. What must be stressed is that the opportunity has been taken to embark upon a scheme which, commenced in a few short months through military necessity, would have taken in the piping times of peace a generation to perform. There is no need, as suggested by Mr. Hall, to send to the Eastern States for prison reform experts. This State is fortunate inasmuch as the Present Acting Controller of Prisons (Mr. Wilson) possesses brains, initiative, and courage. He is a keen student of the many and complex problems associated with prison administration. He is a man with strength of character indispensable for a job of this description, and most important of all, Mr. Wilson possesses deep humanitarian instincts. He is able to dig away the dross and weaknesses all humans possess to a greater or lesser degree and find beneath the priceless streak of good which is hidden somewhere in everyone.

It is a common saying that, "the times always produce the man." Barton's Mill is the symbol of a crisis in prison reform in this State that required a leader able to cope

with the position. It is my considered opinion that the present Acting Controller General of Prisons is the man for this responsible position. I can speak with some knowledge of the problems associated with prison administration and reformative treatment for those men who have trespassed against the law and established standards of rectitude and conduct, as I was for six years a member of the Prisons Board and took an active interest in its administration.

The appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into Barton's Mill at the present juncture would be a hindrance rather than a help. What is wanted now is the backing of all organisations interested in breaking away from the old standards and traditions which confined evildoers between the four walls of a prison, and the pressing forward to an objective where men and women can see hope for the future and be provided with suitable work, the effect of which will be to instil independence into the individual and build up his or her character. The knowledge that they are engaged in useful production must be beneficial to the inmates. At the present time the opportunity to work and thus assist in the war effort must be productive of good in the individual. We must always remember that if we were unfortunate enough to have been placed in the same environment with the same hereditary weaknesses and the same temptations, each one of us might be as bad or worse than the very worst cases that are at present incarcerated in the Fremantle and Barton's Mill prisons.

The institution at Barton's Mill is the beginning of great things in prison reform. The task is tremendous and well organised support from all sections of the community is required. No Government can progress in its policy very far in advance of public opinion and education in this matter, because if progress in prison reform is desired a continuous flow of financial support must be provided from public funds. This will be impossible unless enthusiastically supported by a well-informed community backing. It must be stressed again that the proposed inquiry for a Select Committee from the House at this juncture would be a grave mistake.

In view of the known facts, namely, the comparatively ample accommodation now available for delinquent boys and girls, the

difficult manpower position, and the necessity for conserving men and money for concentrated war work, I oppose the motion for a Select Committee as no member of this Chamber can afford the time to do the job seeing that his services are in demand for prosecuting the war effort to the fullest possible extent of his brains and energy.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Metropolitan-Suburban): This motion, to my mind, starts at the end of the question. We want to get down to bedrock. A great deal of youth delinquency has been caused through what is known as the Child Welfare Act. At the present time parents who are content to be careless with their children can be careless with impunity. No names are published, and therefore no responsibility rests on the careless parent. Personally I would like to see the Child Welfare Act considerably amended. I would like no person to be dealt with in the Children's Court over the age of 14 years. Furthermore I would like to see every name published for this reason: If a child is a bit wayward, the parents do not care two straws because no one knows the child who has been charged before the court. If names were published parents would very soon see that their children were not always in trouble.

I well remember, some years ago in Kalgoorlie, a lad who used to steal bicycles. I think this was before the present Child Welfare Act was passed. This boy brooked no discipline and had no respect for the police. However, a detective—a very fine fellow—told me how he cured the lad. He ran him in on one occasion for stealing a bicycle and broke the boy's spirit by putting him in a tin shed on a warm night and getting someone to run a stick along it until he got the youth frightened, with the result that he eventually implored the detective not to take him before the Police Court. The detective said he did not think he could agree to the request, but would do his best. Finally he said to the boy, "If you promise me to be good we will let you go." The youth was then 15 years old. Some years afterwards the detective was in the street when a young man came up to him and introduced himself, saying that he was the boy the detective had put into the shed. He said, "I never went wrong again after that."

But what do we find now? A delinquent youth goes into the Children's Court—and

I have been there myself when a boy has turned round to the magistrate and said, "Shut up" and the magistrate could do nothing. That boy's name cannot be published and when he is 18 it does not matter what crime he has committed, we must never refer to the fact that he has previously committed a crime. He has a clean sheet and can go for his life. The trouble is not so much the delinquency of youth, but of parenthood! If the parents were made to assume a little more responsibility, and if their names appeared in the paper, instead of a great many of these cases going before the court as they do now, they would be dealt with by the boy getting a good hiding at home, and that would be the end of it. I have a vivid recollection, in my very young days, of the son of a member of this Chamber being run in by the police in Perth. I can assure members that we boys around the place were in terrific consternation. Strings, I expect, were pulled so that the boy did not appear in the Police Court. He was a lad of 12. That stopped a lot of the disappearance of grapes along the river front for that season. The fact that a policeman has the power to run a boy in and take him before the Police Court is an infinitely greater deterrent against delinquency than the present idea of taking him into a room where, we are told, flowers are arranged on the table and everything is done in a nice friendly way, and where the person presiding has no power, even when the youth turns round and says, "Shut up!"

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: It is a big deterrent, I agree.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The police have told me that the Child Welfare Act is breeding criminals. The delinquents are entirely protected from anyone knowing that they are delinquent. Who would have sympathy with me if I allowed my boy to run around the street and break windows and steal fruit, as I suppose every boy wants to do? And when he is dealt with, no name appears. I then walk down the street with a friend and say, "This is a fine lad, and he has spirit. In fact, he told the magistrate to go somewhere the other day." That is what is happening. But if the name of my boy was published I would take very good care that he never offended again. Would it not be far better for people to be educated to save their children instead of allowing them to become criminals? Take a

child who goes beyond that stage. Perhaps his mother is a widow and he does not care. The way to bring that boy around is to make the punishment light, but it will not be light if the fact is known that he has been offending. If it is known that Willie Jones has been breaking windows down the street, other people will see that he does not break any more windows, but when his name is not published, nobody knows who the offender is. What happens is that the parent is fined 5s. and ordered to pay the cost of the window. That is what is breeding all this juvenile delinquency.

While I was Crown Prosecutor, the boys got very much out of hand. Two youths of about 15 were brought before the court on a charge of breaking and entering, which is by no means an uncommon crime amongst these boys. The authorities wanted an example made of them, and the two were committed for trial. I interviewed the judge to ensure that he understood the position and asked him whether he could help the department by imposing a severe sentence. I said, "If you can, the Government has been approached and arrangements will be made for these boys to be kept apart from other prisoners in the gaol and jobs will be found for them almost immediately and they will be released to take them." The judge awarded each boy five years imprisonment with hard labour. Then followed a tremendous outcry in the newspapers. The names of these boys were published and other delinquent boys became extremely well-behaved, as Mr. Bulley can tell us, after that incident. One boy was kept in gaol for a fortnight and the other for three weeks. Then they were released to go to work, and to my knowledge neither of those boys came before the court again. The only way to punish very bad boys is to make an example of them.

As the Honorary Minister pointed out, many of these boys are really bad eggs. As soon as they reach the age of 18 they are set free amongst the public, and, regardless of what crimes they have committed, no reference may be made to the fact that they have been bad eggs for years. If they are brought up again, they are probably released as first offenders. For this to be possible is quite wrong, but that is the present law—no reference may be made to the fact that they are bad eggs and have been convicted as juveniles. In fact,

one cannot be a bad egg in Western Australia until after he has reached the age of 18.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: And no reference to it may be made even by the Minister.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: No, not to the extent of naming the boy. I was surprised to hear the Minister say that these delinquent youths were kept by charity. Surely the first duty of the Government is to look after the youth of the State! The future of the State is represented in our youths and it is essential that we protect them in the way I have suggested. This might be done at the cost of suffering by one or two of them, but the treatment I have suggested would have the effect of saving many others. When these delinquents are committed to some sort of reformatory, surely it is the duty of the Government to see that the institution is run in a proper way! It should not be left to charity or to some religious organisation, however good it might be. Generally speaking, a well-behaved boy of respectable parents has an extreme antipathy between the ages of 14 to 18 to any religious teaching or organisation. Therefore, why send him to a religious institution? It might be that he is sent to an institution conducted by a religious body to which his parents do not belong. To whatever religious institution such boys might be sent, the people running it would probably bear in mind that the parents were not of that persuasion. That, however, is not the point. Why send delinquent youths to charitable organisations? It is essentially the duty of the Government to provide a proper reformatory prison.

As far back as 1893 I can remember a reformatory prison for youths. Have we fallen back in the last 50 years that we cannot now run a reformatory prison? The Minister said that the present is not the time to establish such an institution because it would take manpower from the war effort. In what greater war effort could we engage than in looking after the future of our youths. It is essential to have a reformatory prison at once, and I sincerely trust that in the near future the Government will take steps to amend the Child Welfare Act in the manner I have suggested.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan): I propose to submit an amendment to the motion. I regret that I was prevented from hearing the speech of the Chief Secre-

tary, but I have since read it with great interest and general approval. We must recognise that in having to move the prisoners from Fremantle to Barton's Mill, the Government was compelled to act hurriedly and with very little warning of what was required. In such circumstances difficulties were bound to arise, and I am quite prepared to believe that the Government is meeting those difficulties in the best possible way. There is no doubt that Barton's Mill offers better opportunity for reforming prisoners than does the Fremantle gaol. I was extremely pleased at the statement of the Chief Secretary that it was intended to make the institution at Barton's Mill self-supporting.

The Chief Secretary: That is not quite what I said.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I am not so much concerned about its being made self-supporting from the taxpayers' point of view; I am more concerned about it from the point of view of the prisoners. People can never be brought to take an interest in unproductive labour, and if prisoners are engaged in something merely to keep them occupied, they will not be interested in it.

Personal Explanation.

The Chief Secretary: By way of personal explanation, I should like to correct a remark made by the hon. member. I did not say it was our intention to make Barton's Mill self-supporting. I have been accused of having said that on numerous occasions. What I said was that if Barton's Mill developed in the way we are developing it now, there was every prospect that it would be self-supporting within 12 months. The question of making it self-supporting as an institution never entered our minds.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It would be against Government policy to do so?

Debate Resumed.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I am not concerned about the institution being made self-supporting. The only way in which we shall do any good will be by engaging the prisoners in productive labour in which they will take an interest. I believe that is the policy of the Government. Before coming directly to the motion, I wish to make passing reference to the question of the reformation of prisoners. It seems to me that in establishing a prison for the reformation of

criminals, two things must be definitely kept in mind. One is that the possibility of escape should be eliminated as far as possible and should be entirely eliminated in the case of sex offenders. The penalty for escape ought to be made to fit the crime. I notice by this morning's paper that three young fellows have escaped from Barton's Mill. They ought to be made to understand that they have no chance of getting away, that they will be recaptured, and that when they are, the conditions will be made very much more unpleasant than those from which they endeavoured to escape.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: The second point I wish to make is that the prisoners to be reformed must be selected. There is very little chance of doing any reformatory work if the prisoners regarded as having a chance of reforming are associated with criminals of a more hardened type. I do not suggest that even the most hardened criminal cannot be reformed. I hope and believe he can be, but we must tackle these things step by step, and the best course at the outset would be to keep the hardened criminals away from those who have not indulged in crime to the same extent and for whose reform there is much greater hope. These matters are in the mind of the Minister, and I am quite content to leave them to him.

The Chief Secretary: I referred to them in my speech.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: That is so. Coming to the motion, I should be sorry if the Chief Secretary pressed his opposition to the appointment of a Select Committee. I believe that the position is such that some investigation should be made into these matters. I remind the Minister that the Commonwealth Government has set up a number of committees composed of members of different parties to inquire into all sorts of matters, and I believe that the investigations by those committees have been productive of some good. The public is dissatisfied; it expects some inquiry to be made into the question of juvenile delinquency. I do not say that the people are dissatisfied with the Government. I for one am not going to cast any blame on the Government regarding this matter. I should like to see an alteration made to paragraph (c). It is not a matter of inquiring into results that were achieved by an investigation in 1937. I cannot see how

any profit could result from diving into a matter of that kind. I should like to see paragraph (c) deleted and the following inserted in lieu:—

(c) The problem of juvenile delinquency generally.

As the motion stands the committee would be restricted to inquiring into the treatment of juveniles convicted of some offence or other. If a committee is appointed, as I hope it will be, I believe it should have the widest scope to inquire into the subject of juvenile delinquency. Various points have been raised that might well be investigated by a Select Committee. A few months ago this House struck out a section from the Child Welfare Act under which a magistrate could, in extreme cases, order a whipping. Since then I have noticed that the magistrate, who is desirous of treating children in the kindest possible fashion, has expressed regret that he was not empowered to order a whipping in a particular case in which he said he thought it was the only remedy likely to have any effect. There is another point. About a fortnight or three weeks ago a case was transferred from the Criminal Court to the Children's Court, a case in which a man of mature years was charged with the abominable offence of keeping a brothel. That case was transferred from the Criminal Court to the Children's Court—

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: From the Police Court.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Yes, from the Police Court, for no other reason than that one or two of the witnesses were a little under the age of 18 years. Surely that was not the intention when the Act was passed. Surely it does not mean that in every case in which a witness happens to be under the age of 18 a case, no matter how serious it may be, must be transferred to the Children's Court. I believe that the matter has not ended there. I understand that further action is to be taken. I am not discussing the matter from the legal point of view but I think we should consider whether—if the Act does make it essential, that in all cases where a witness is under 18 years of age a case must be transferred to the Children's Court—the Act should be altered. A Select Committee, if appointed, should go much further than merely to consider the methods of treat-

ing delinquents. It is a far better thing to prevent than to cure.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: The Minister spoke of the war as one of the causes of the growth of juvenile delinquency. But I remember that before the war the Commissioner of Police reported that more than half the crimes in the metropolitan area were committed by children and I do not think any of us can disregard the fact that child delinquency has been increasing over a long period of years. Why is it that young people of today are less amenable to the rules of ordinary decent conduct than were children in days gone by? I do not think the girls and boys are to blame. I am not inclined to go so far as Mr. Parker in casting the blame on the parents. I think the blame is ours. I refer to Ministers of the Crown and members of Parliament who during the last three or four decades have had something to do with the shaping of public policy. We have not kept abreast of the times. Let those of us who reached years of discretion before the end of last century cast our minds back to the conditions of our childhood. There were no picture shows to inspire those of exuberant spirits with the possibility of exciting, if illicit, adventure. There were no motor cars to steal. As a matter of fact, there was very little for a boy of that age to do except to be good. The only outlet for a particularly adventurous spirit was to run away to sea and that very quickly brought its own correction in a healthy—probably excessive—discipline.

Now all is changed. There are temptations on every hand. The temptations before the young today are enormous compared with what they were in our boyhood days. And it is not an easy matter for parents to face up to the new conditions and equip the children in such a way as to make them capable of resisting the temptations with which they are faced. Scientists and philosophers have said—and I have not heard their conclusion disputed—that the most serious feature of world conditions today is that mental and moral development has not kept pace with progress in material things. That lack of balance between the mental, moral and material has twice during the known history of the world led to the complete collapse of civilisation, and many deep thinkers fear that we are heading in the same direction.

What have we done to enable children to build up character and to resist the new temptations that arise out of mechanical progress?

My own view—and it is nothing new to what I have expressed many times over the years—is that we neglect the child in the two most important periods of his life, that is, the period before school and the period after the completion of the compulsory educational standard at 14 years of age. I think the more important of those two periods is the pre-school period and I believe the opinion is growing so strongly that it may now be said to be general that it is in the pre-school period, and in that period only, that the character of a child can be formed. There is an almost complete failure to recognise the value and importance of kindergarten teaching. Our kindergartens are supported in a haphazard manner and meet the requirements of only a trifling percentage of all those who should have the advantage of the training they provide. Some people oppose the kindergarten system, but I think that can only be from complete ignorance of its value. The basis of the kindergarten system is that it is impossible to separate the association between man and nature and that just as in nature the young plant demands the most careful, meticulous attention, so does the young child need the greatest possible care.

I am very glad to notice that the Commonwealth Government has now provided money towards the support of kindergarten schools. But after all what does it amount to? It will meet the needs of only a fraction of the people. What we require—and a Select Committee if appointed could go more deeply into the matter—is a general public appreciation of the fact that it is a responsibility of the State and a duty of the State to the children to see to it that every child has an opportunity of kindergarten education before going to school. Probably at some future date it might be made compulsory, but at the outset I think it would be found that however generous was the establishment of kindergarten schools there would be an abundance of students for them. Then we come to the period after 14 years of age. This is the second most important and perhaps the most dangerous period in a child's life. I have long advocated the extension of the compulsory school age which stands now at 14 years

at which it was placed in our Education Act in this State more than 70 years ago. Even from the lowest point of view it must be recognised that the extension of mechanical devices has cut down opportunities of employment for the unskilled worker. Greater skill is required for everyone and therefore a higher education is more necessary now than previously. It has happened more than once not only in this country but also in England that one of the greatest difficulties in meeting the unemployment problem was lack of skilled labour.

Under modern conditions, having to face world competition as we shall have to do after the war, we cannot afford not to give our young men and women the best possible chance of learning trades and generally developing their minds. Then there is the combination of training with teaching. I think that one of the greatest disservices done to the youth of Australia was the non-operation of the sections of the Defence Act of 1904 which provided for the military training of all boys from the ages of 12 to 19. A Labour Government suspended that portion of the Act, and successive Nationalist Governments lacked the courage to reintroduce it. I do not think any greater disservice was done to the youth of Australia than the stoppage of that compulsory training between the ages I have mentioned. There are many other angles from which a Select Committee might investigate this question of juvenile delinquency aiming, on the one hand, to secure for offenders treatment better calculated to be of a reformatory character and, on the other, to protect society and to inquire as to the methods that might be adopted in the education and bringing-up of children which will remove as far as possible juvenile delinquency. It is only by improving the general mental, physical and moral standard of youth that there is a certain hope of decreasing juvenile delinquency, and I repeat that I believe the best way of doing that is to reform our methods and to recognise the obligation there is upon the State to see that children in the most critical period of their lives before school and after the compulsory leaving age has been reached, have an opportunity to improve themselves. Children of well-to-do parents may be said already to have that opportunity, but what I want is that the children of all parents shall have it, and that can only be done by a State activity.

I trust the Chief Secretary will not oppose the appointment of a Select Committee, and that the mover of the motion will agree to the amendment I propose to move. I move an amendment—

That paragraph (c) be struck out with a view to inserting a new paragraph.

The PRESIDENT: I would ask hon. members now to confine themselves to the amendment, and for the simplification of the debate suggest that the amendment be dealt with one way or the other as early as possible.

Amendment put and passed.

HON. SIE HAL COLEBATCH: I move an amendment—

That the following new paragraph be inserted in lieu of the paragraph struck out:—“(c) The problem of juvenile delinquency generally.”

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.47 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 9th March, 1943.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (2).

RAILWAY POLICY.

As to Effect of Road Competition.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Has the competition between