Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 31st October, 1950.

CONTENTS.

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

QUESTIONS.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

As to Additional Houses Connected and Extension to Hills District.

Mr. OWEN asked the Minister for Works:

(1) How many new or additional houses in the metropolitan area have been connected with electricity by the State Electricity Commission during the past three years?

(2) What is the estimated extra power required for domestic current used in these houses?

(3) How many additional transformers have been installed to supply these requirements?

(4) Is he aware that settlers at Wattle Grove and in the hills district have been refused electricity extensions on the grounds of the shortage of electric power and difficulty in obtaining materials?

(5) Will he have extensions in the district commenced as soon as possible?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Approximately 7,500.

(2) Not known. Many houses have been occupied by two and three families. When these go to new houses, very little, if any, additional current is used.

(3) One.

(4) Yes.

(5) Yes.

LICENSING ACT.

As to Permissible Alcoholic Content.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Police:

What is the amount of alcoholic content allowed in beer and wines in the respective States of Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

Customs (Excise) Regulations prohibit the fortifying of wines for consumption in Australia at a strength exceeding 40 per cent. proof spirit.

Section 31, Subsection (1) of the Licensing Act of Western Australia provides that wine sold from the premises of an Australian wine license shall not exceed 35 per cent. of proof spirit.

The Department has no knowledge of the provisions applying to other States.

I might add that if the hon. member cares to see me, and still requires the information from the other States, I will try to obtain it.

Mr. Styants: It is the comparison that I want.

RAILWAYS.

As to Water Haulage and Cost.

Mr. HILL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) How many trains carried water from—

(a) Elleker;

(b) Albany;

(c) elsewhere

to Great Southern centres Katanning southward, including spur lines from 1/10/47 to 1/10/50?

(2) To what centres was water carried?

(3) Approximately what was the cost of water and haulage?

(4) What was the approximate train mileage and ton mileage?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied—

(1) (a) 659.

(b) 138.

(c) 549.

(2) Katanning was the only centre to which water in considerable quantities was hauled during the period.

(3) This information is not available.

(4) 114,668 train miles and 8,123,245 ton miles. This information covers a period of two years from 1/10/48 to 30/9/50. Particulars in respect of 1/10/47 to 30/9/48 are not available.

HOUSING.

As to Midland Junction District Requirements.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Is it a fact that approximately 700 houses are still required in the Midland Junction district to cope—

(a) with railway employees' requirements;

(b) employees other than railway; and

(c) to replace sub-standard houses?

(2) If the answer to (1) is in the affirmative, will he state what progress has been made with a view to building homes at—

(i) Hazelmere Estate;

(ii) Greenmount;

(iii) East Midland;

(iv) Swan View areas,

to meet requirements of urgent cases?

(3) Is it intended to make special provision for railway employees' requirements to overcome the many difficulties these employees are experiencing at present?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) A recent survey indicated that—

(a) The Railway Department would require approximately 250 houses for additional employees to be brought from oversea and approximately 60 for tradesmen already employed in the Railway Workshops.

(b) Applications held by the Housing Commission total 175. Hardship had been established in connection with 50 of these applications.

(c) There are approximately 240 substandard and overcrowded homes in Midland Junction—100 of the substandard homes it is considered would be capable of restoration.

Applications held by the Commission may include some of the requirements under (a) and (c).

(2) (i) The Commission is not proceeding with the acquisition of land for home building in the Hazelmere Estate.

(ii) The Lands Department has been approached with a view to providing an area for housing at Greenmount.

(iii) One hundred and forty-three houses and flats have been erected and occupied and 49 are at present under construction at East Midland. Approval has been given for a further group of homes adjacent to the timber-framed flats.

(iv) Land acquired at Swan View has been re-subdivided and surveyed and necessary arrangements are now being made for provision of services in readiness for building operations.

(3) The housing programme for Midland Junction has been designed primarily for the housing of railway employees. Of the houses and flats erected to date, approximately 50 per cent. have been allocated to railway employees.

NORTH-WEST.

(a) As to Transport Service to Shark Bay

Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

Pursuant to his reply to a question on Thursday last, what services are duplicated by the new service of the Northern Supply Company operating from Perth to Shark Bay?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

Railway and road transport services operated by Midland Railway Company between Geraldton and Perth.

Fish transport service operated by Messrs. Taylor and Davis between Geraldton and Perth.

(b) As to School-Master's Transport.

Mr. RODOREDA asked the Minister for Education:

Will he state definitely who paid the return air fare from Roebourne to Geraldton, the subject matter of my question without notice on the 26th October?

The MINISTER replied:

The Department paid the fare in the first place. It is to be refunded by the Geraldton Centenary Committee.

HOSPITALS.

As to Authorisation and Building Programme.

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Health:

Will she lay upon the Table of the House a return showing—

(a) The new hospitals for the building of which provision has been made in the Estimates now before Parliament, the estimated cost of each building and the priority in which they will be erected;

(b) those hospitals for which authority has previously been obtained, but which have not so far been completed and the estimated cost of each;

(c) those hospitals which are to have repair work or enlargements done, the nature of such work, the estimated cost in each case and the priority in which the work is to be carried out;

(d) a priority list of any other hospitals which it is contemplated building in the future?

The MINISTER replied:

Information on these points will be supplied when dealing with the Estimates.

Except in special instances, a rigid priority list is not possible because of many factors, some of which change and must be met by special effort. Completion of plans, availability of tenderers and of materials are complicating factors.

MEAT.

As to Exports and Local Needs.

Mr. OLIVER (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Is he aware that the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture is reported in "The West Australian" of Saturday the 26th October, 1950, as having stated that Australia had good prospects of earning dollars by sending surplus meat to North America where the price of beef and lamb ranges from 6s. to 10s. per lb.?

(2) Is he aware that the Commonwealth Government is considering a 15-year meat agreement with Britain?

(3) Is he aware that the meat supply position is still very acute on the Goldfields?

(4) Will he give an assurance that before any meat is exported from this State, adequate supplies will be retained for the needs of the people?

The PREMIER replied:

I did not see the statement attributed to the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture. In regard to the export of meat, when I was at the last Premiers' Conference I asked the Prime Minister if he would consult the States before the export of meat was agreed to. I suggested at that conference that close collaboration between the Commonwealth Government and the States should take place in regard to any future export of meat.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Goldfields Summer Requirements.

Mr. OLIVER (without notice) asked the Minister for Water Supply:

Will he give an assurance that adequate supplies of water will be made available to the Goldfields during the summer months?

The MINISTER replied:

That is a delightfully vague question. Nevertheless I assure the hon. member that every effort will be made to give them adequate supplies. May I add that an officer of the department recently visited the Goldfields and conferred—I understand quite satisfactorily—with the local governing bodies concerned.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Wood Distillation and Charcoal Iron and Steel Industry Act Amendment. Transmitted to the Council.

2, Superannuation, Sick, Death, Insurance, Guarantee and Endowment (Local Governing Bodies' Employees) Funds Act Amendment.

Passed.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 26th October. Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Local Government in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister for Local Government had moved that a new clause be added as follows:—

8 The principal Act is amended by adding after Section 46 the following section:—

46A. No vehicle having a greater overall width, including the load, than eight feet, shall be licensed or driven on any road.

Provided that, with the permission of the Minister given on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Police, and under such special circumstances and conditions as may be set out in the permit, a vehicle having a greater overall width, including the load, than eight feet may be licensed and driven on any road.

And where, prior to the commencement of the Traffic Act Amendment Act, 1950, a permit has been given by the Minister authorising or purporting to authorise the licensing and driving on any road of a vehicle exceeding seven feet six inches in width, including the load, the authority so given, or purporting to have been so given, is hereby ratified and validated.

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—MEDICAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. A. F. G. Cardell-Oliver—Subiaco) [4.46] in moving the second reading said: This is

a simple Bill brought forward to adjust an anomaly which has arisen since the Medical Act was amended in 1945. Section 11 of the Act sets out that—

> A person shall be entitled to be registered as a medical practitioner if he proves to the satisfaction of the board that—
>
> (i) he is the holder of a degree (obtained after due examination) in medicine and surgery of any legally constituted and recognised university in the Commonwealth of Australia or the Dominion of New Zealand which is legally authorised to grant such degree; or
>
> (ii) he is registered or possesses a qualification entitling him to be registered under the Medical Acts of the Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland or any Act amending or substituted for those Acts or any of them.

When amended the Act will give the holder of a degree obtained after due examination in medicine and surgery of any legally constituted and recognised university in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Commonwealth of Australia, and the Dominion of New Zealand which is legally authorised to grant such degrees, the right to practise. These are not the only doctors who may practise in Western Australia; there are those who have been selected and become regional doctors. I will give figures relating to the numbers of such men.

The number of alien doctors practising in regions at present is eight; the number of former alien doctors who have served for seven years in regions and who have now been admitted to the medical register is four; the number of alien doctors whose services might be needed in the near future to practise in an auxiliary service, of which I will speak later, which might be declared under the amended Act, is about four. The number of alien doctors known to the department and at present in the State who would be eligible if suitable for appointment either to a region or an auxiliary service is over 20. The position regarding resident medical officers in Western Australian hospitals is as follows:—At the end of November, 1950, new graduates in medicine from universities in the Eastern States will be available in such numbers that all resident appointments in Western Australian hospitals will be filled. In fact all vacancies have been booked and there is a waiting list of surplus names.

I shall now inform the House why the amendment is necessary. During the war years, certain doctors with Eastern European medical qualifications rendered service in the British forces. After the end of the war, some of those men expressed a desire to remain in Britain as permanent residents. Although the nature of their medical qualifications was such that normally they would not be entitled to practise medicine in Great Britain, it was considered that their war service entitled them to special consideration.

Accordingly the British legislation was amended and they were admitted to the medical register in Great Britain if—and I stress the word "if"—they were resident there other than for a temporary purpose; that is, conditionally upon their remaining in Great Britain. The intention of this qualifying clause was to ensure that they should be registered to practise in Great Britain only, as it was realised that they did not have the recognised qualifications to practise in the dominions.

Under our Medical Act as it stands, a medical man is registered to practise in Western Australia automatically if he is registrable in the United Kingdom. With the inclusion in the register of the United Kingdom of this new group of men, it is considered by the Medical Board that they might not have achieved the standard of professional training considered to be necessary, and that the only reason why they were included in the register in England was because of their war service. A further consideration apparently was that they be allowed the right to practise in the United Kingdom only. This dilemma has been appreciated in the other States of Australia and these men are specifically excluded from practising there, because they did not obtain their qualifications at a university or a college in Great Britain, Australia or New Zealand. It is therefore desired to amend the Act accordingly.

The next part of the Bill deals with another matter. I might explain that a previous amendment to the Medical Act stipulated that, where any portion of the State was not sufficiently provided with the services of a medical practitioner and a practitioner qualified to be registered was not available, the Governor could declare the area to be a "region". The Medical Board could then appoint a person who held medical qualifications not registrable in Western Australia to practise within the boundaries of the region. A person who had served in a region for seven years could be granted full registration.

Some fields of medical practice have no definable boundaries. It has therefore been impossible to declare such fields to be a "region" when a vacancy occurred for which no registrable practitioner was available. An example of such a service is the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service, which uses rail cars and motor transport to cover all parts of the State. Therefore members will realise that it is not within a region. Previously this service had a permanent medical officer, but when he resigned, it was without a medi-

cal officer for some time, and the present appointee is regarded as being unlikely to remain in the position permanently.

A further example is the North-West Medical Service, which covers the whole of the northern portion of the State above Carnarvon. Medical practitioners engaged in that area are liable to be transferred to any part of the vast area involved and are required to make sudden plane flights over long distances to attend urgent medical cases. The amendment seeks to provide that, where any medical service is not limited by definable boundaries and is unable to avail itself of a registered medical practitioner, the service may be declared an auxilliary. Any appointment could then be made on similar terms to regional appointments.

Objections to this amendment would hardly be justified as a service would be so declared only after exhaustive and unsuccessful inquiries had been made for a registered practitioner. Registered practitioners would thus have no reasonable ground for objection. Where a service was of an essential nature, it would be in the public interest to make a auxilliary service appointment if a registered practitioner were not available. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. H. Panton, debate adjourned.

BILL—BULK HANDLING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 17th October.

HON. A. M. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [4.57]: The Leader of the Opposition had the adjournment of the debate, but he is out of the Chamber at the moment I shall therefore say a few words until he returns.

The Minister for Lands: The Bill deals with the toll on the wheat at Fremantle.

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY: Yes. I was about to say that I merely desired to keep the debate open until the Leader of the Opposition could be called back. As he has now returned to the Chamber, I shall give way to him.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [4.58]: I regret that I was called from the Chamber, but I thought that this Bill would not come on for consideration for some little time.

The Premier: The other Bill was postponed because copies of the measure had not arrived.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am anxious to speak on this Bill because it involves certain principles that were not explained by the Minister when moving the second reading. He told us that it was a simple little Bill designed to alter the method of collecting the toll due to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. for the service it renders. He said the Bill had been requested by Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. to facilitate the collecting of the toll due to it under Section 26 of the Act.

I think it is very necessary to look at the whole picture and appreciate what is involved in the collection of the toll. Because I felt concern from certain angles, I got into touch with Mr. Braine, general manager of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., and also with Mr. Shanahan, who explained to me the need for such legislation when, under the law as it stands, there is authority not only to charge for the service and collect the amounts disclosed by the toll register, but also for recourse to the law for the collection of any outstanding sums.

The Bill, if it passes, will give to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. a right in what might be termed a priority of lien which the Crown itself does not enjoy. In regard to the specific sums involved in the future and, because of the wheat delivered to the Australian Wheat Board, there is the question of arrears. In all I find from my inquiries that 4,500 growers are in arrears with their tolls, and of this number 81 owe amounts of more than £10, and the largest sum outstanding is £32. So, 4,119 growers owe £11,500 for arrears of tolls which they should be obliged to pay under the law as it stands. As I understand the position—and this is an important aspect—the Bill, to that extent, is retrospective legislation. It is not, therefore, quite the simple little Bill which went through the Legislative Council in a matter of minutes, and which was explained to us in a short while by the Minister.

Those members who are now in the House, and who were here when the Bulk Handling Act was first introduced, will remember the complete explanation that was given, as well as the general debate on such subjects as what were equitable sums to be charged by Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. for the services it was obliged to render. Under Section 24 of the Act, the company must take delivery of wheat which is offered to it, and it must give the services required of it by the law; and, in return for the passing of the warrant in the wheat, it has to pay a certain toll. The position today is very different from what it was when the Act was passed, because the wheat, under Commonwealth law, is vested in the Australian Wheat Board which, I suppose would be interpreted to be the warrant-holder under today's system.

The difficulty that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. finds itself in is that thousands of growers, as can be gauged by the figures I have quoted—and they were supplied to me by Co-operative Bulk Handling

Ltd.—are careless in the payment of small sums. In addition, there are others who owe very small sums amounting only to shillings, because, of the 4,200 growers involved, many owe more than £10 and the largest sum outstanding is £32. Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. would have the ordinary processes of the law to protect it under the existing statute, because Section 26, which was amended in 1943 and again in 1948, specifically provides for the levying of a toll for the services to be performed by the company; and it also makes clear that the wheatgrower owes to the company a toll for those services.

I have been at some pains to find out whether it is desirable to give to a private concern—although a co-operative company—the right of a priority of lien which the Crown itself does not possess. We can all remember the troubles in this Chamber in years gone by because of Section 51 of the Agricultural Bank Act which was frequently before us. It almost entered into the dreams of members because of their reactions to the annual legislation to abolish the priority which Section 51 gave to the bank. Whilst I am quite ready to admit that a priority charge against produce is contrary to the policy of the law, and whilst I am ready to admit that this is a different proposition from that contained in the old Agricultural Bank Act, inasmuch as it is a particular lien as against a general lien, there is, I think, a doubt as to whether this legislation is necessary to give effect to the desires of Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. All of the 4,200 growers concerned could be sued for the outstanding amounts, and Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. must get a verdict in each instance.

The reason, and the only reason, given for the introduction of the Bill is that some of the amounts outstanding are so small that the farmers forget they owe them, and are careless about payment, so that an amendment of the law is required to enable a prior collection to be made at the source. The purpose of the Bill is to authorise the Australian Wheat Board, prior to making payment for wheat received on its behalf by Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. to deduct the amount of the toll. In my conversations today with Mr. Braine, he fully appreciated my point of view, but he could not answer the question—I think the Minister should be able to—whether there is in the Commonwealth law any objection to the Commonwealth Wheat Board making the deduction without statutory authority.

The Minister for Lands: I would say, yes. I would say that without this authority being given the Australian Wheat Board could not make the deduction.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I think the Minister would be guessing, for this reason: That it is a fact that the Australian Wheat Board already makes deductions for cornsacks prior to proceeds being returned to the farmer.

The Minister for Lands: That would be for cornsacks that it purchased.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes.

The Minister for Lands: That is only ordinary business practice.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I ask the Minister if, under Commonwealth law there is authority for a deduction in respect of cornsacks, is there not, without statutory authority passing from the State to the Commonwealth, the right for the Australian Wheat Board, on behalf of Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. to make a deduction for the toll?

The Minister for Lands: That is a different matter altogether. After all, the Wheat Board purchases cornsacks for the grower to put his wheat in. This is a toll.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Of course it is, and it is a toll in respect of which there is statutory authority in the State law to make a deduction.

Mr. Ackland: It is necessary for this legislation to be enacted before the amount can be collected at the source.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am indebted to the hon. member for that explanation. It is what I expected from the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: It is what I am trying to convey to you.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Minister is trying to convey it in a very peculiar manner.

The Minister for Lands: No, I am not.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: We have to be careful about this sort of legislation; and it is my duty to draw the attention of the House to what it involves as a practice. I have knowledge that in the 1943 legislation there was authority for the deduction of the toll by Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. as a charge against the commodity, but for some reason that provision was specifically excluded from the 1948 amendment. That has not been explained. As it was specifically excluded—and that was during the term of the Australian Wheat Board's life—I want to be quite sure that in passing this legislation, which will give authority to acquire arrears, we will not be giving to a private company something which the Crown itself has not the right to impose. The Crown has not the right to stop anyone's water rates, or payments of any other kind, from moneys which it holds on behalf of a person. If we pass the Bill we will be giving to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. the right, not only to collect at the source for current tolls but, to collect, in retrospect, a sum of £11,500.

The Minister for Lands: The grower never refused to pay this toll; he has just been careless.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I asked that question and was informed that there have been refusals. There have been objections to payment of the toll.

Mr. May: How many are there?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Some 4,200 growers owe £11,500.

Mr. May: Could they all be share farmers?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If they are share farmers, the possibility of collecting some of that debt has passed.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, if they are not share farmers today, that is so.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: There is not a chance of collecting from them, even with this authority. I would, in all earnestness, like to help Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. to collect these amounts under the law as it exists. I am wondering why it has not attempted to do so by one or two prosecutions, because I believe if that were done with the authority given by the law as it is today, there would very quickly be not 4,200 accounts outstanding. Section 26 of the parent Act authorises the company to make charges from time to time as approved by the Governor. Therefore I hope I can be satisfied by the Minister as to why this legislation is necessary, with the law, as it is at present, providing for the recovery of debts in the normal way. If we were to extend the practice, by law, of having a garnishee order against proceeds, we would be introducing something in a particular sense, rather than a general sense, equally as bad as was Section 51 of the old Agricultural Bank Act. I would like the Minister, in his reply, to say whether the Government has given consideration to that point, and as to how wide we would be opening the door if we provided, statutorily, for a prior charge to be made against proceeds.

MR. MAY (Collie) [5.15]: I can remember the Minister, when introducing the measure, stating that it was quite a small and harmless Bill but, though it may be a small Bill, to my mind it contains a very vital principle.

The Minister for Lands: That is correct; it does.

Mr. MAY: From the point of view of the farmers, Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. are doing a very good job, and in that I can speak from experience. It is the responsibility of the farmer to pay for the convenience that is afforded him so efficiently by this organisation, particularly at harvest time, and I am surprised to learn that there are in this State 4,000 farmers who have failed to meet their responsibility in this direction and have omitted to pay the small charges due in connection with the delivery of their wheat at sidings.

Although I have not been in touch with Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd., it is obvious that they are desirous of collecting these outstanding amounts, and that is where we come to the vital principle contained in this measure. The Bill asks that Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. be authorised to collect these charges from the proceeds of the wheat. In time to come it may well be that the charges in this regard will not be so small. At present I understand that Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. are allowed to charge up to ¾d., though I believe that, because of the conditions obtaining, the charge so far has been only 3/8ths of a penny.

Mr. Hearman: That is per bushel!

Mr. MAY: If the Bill becomes law—and I have no very serious objection to it—at some time in the future the position of the wheat industry may not be as good as it is now and in that case Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. may have to increase these charges.

Mr. Ackland: They cannot increase any charges.

Mr. MAY: I know that, but there will be nothing to prevent them, in such an event, approaching the Minister or the Government with a request that the charges be increased by regulation, and then many farmers would not be aware of what amount was to be deducted from their wheat returns.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The charge cannot exceed 1½d. per bushel.

Mr. MAY: Not by regulation?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: No, that is the limit under Section 26.

Mr. MAY: Even if the charge went only to 1½d. and that had to be met from the source, I do not see anything to prevent the butcher, baker, grocer or others similarly placed from asking the Government to do the selfsame thing in their case.

The Minister for Lands: Those are not comparable industries.

Mr. MAY: I am speaking of the principle contained in the measure, and that is the principle involved. I cannot understand why Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. have not already taken action in regard to some of those who have failed to meet their obligations. In the case of some farmers, the amount involved may be very small, but in some of the instances quoted by the Leader of the Opposition, the amount owing is large enough for action to have been taken for the recovery of the debt. I would have liked to see the effect of action taken by Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. to recover such amounts. The idea

of many people nowadays seems to be to collect sums owing from the source of revenue, and in this regard I would instance the action proposed by the Commonwealth Government for the collection of the 20 per cent. from woolgrowers.

Where an industry is in a flourishing condition, the tendency now seems to be for monies owing by the industry to be paid from the source. I do not know whether or not Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. got the idea from the Taxation Department or from the Commonwealth Government's action with regard to wool, but it appears to me that there is collusion somewhere. I agree that the charges being made at present by Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. against farmers in connection with the delivery of their wheat, should be met, but I am against the principle contained in the Bill, that Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. should be authorised to deduct those charges from the farmer's wages—which is what it would amount to in the long run. I am also against the proposed 20 per cent. levy on wool.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: So is the Premier.

Mr. MAY: So are many farmers. Over the week-end I do not think I met a single sheep farmer who did not object to the 20 per cent. levy. That is a sectional levy, and this would be sectional also.

The Premier: You cannot describe this as sectional, surely?

Mr. MAY: Why not?

Mr. Ackland: This is actually a charge that the farmers make against themselves.

Mr. MAY: It is sectional, because it deals only with the wheat industry.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: But there is a statutory right for this charge; the money must be paid.

Mr. MAY: I agree, and the reason why in so many cases it has not been paid is that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. have failed to take action against those who owe the money. Rather than that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. should have come along with this method for the collection of these charges, I would have preferred to see action taken by means of prosecution, and we would then have seen the reaction of the farmers concerned. I have no doubt that had action been taken to prosecute farmers who owe fairly large amounts, it would have brought home to the smaller farmers their responsibility in regard to the smaller amounts owed by them. I do not intend however, to raise any serious objection to the Bill, because I appreciate the good work Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. are doing with regard to the reception of wheat at sidings. I still object to the principle of collecting an amount from the wages of the farmer when he may not be in a position to know what sum is being deducted.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [5.25]: I may be one of the culprits who owe Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. a few shillings for tolls.

Mr. May: Then you should have been prosecuted.

Mr. PERKINS: I would like the Minister to clear up the position of members of this House who are wheatfarmers, and who may not be sure whether they are in debt to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. on account of such charges.

Mr. May: Did you not receive an account from them?

Mr. PERKINS: One cannot answer offhand in such a matter. I think the Minister should tell wheatfarmer members what their legal position is, if they cannot be sure whether they owe anything to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. in this regard.

The Minister for Lands: You should know whether or not you have paid your toll.

The Minister for Education: I should think you are perfectly safe.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You will be pecuniarily interested, at all events.

The Minister for Lands: You could consult the Crown Solicitor.

Mr. PERKINS: The position is brought about to a degree by reason of the procedure adopted by Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. in dealing with the credits that are established by the deduction of tolls on wheat delivered. Members—whether wheat farmers or not—may be aware that no interest is allowed to be charged on the sums that are deducted by way of toll.

Mr. May: We know they are not allowed to make any profit on those charges.

Mr. PERKINS: It is not a question of profit at all. Soon after Co-operative Bulk Handling Itd. was established, certain people who had very definite ideas about the charging of interest as a principle, carried a resolution that no interest should be allowed to be charged on monies collected by way of toll. That has brought about an anomalous position in that if anyone does not pay his toll charges, unless the company proceeds against him through the courts, no penal charge can be levied on the overdue amount of toll, and hence there is little incentive for individuals to pay their tolls

I realise that it would make things much simpler for the manager of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. in keeping the accountancy position in check, if he could deduct these toll charges at the source in the same way as he can deduct other handling charges, because that would give an incentive for people, against whom toll charges are raised, to pay up. I doubt whether the Leader of the Opposition views the principle involved as seriously

as he led the House to believe, because obviously the amounts involved are comparatively small, and I doubt whether his analogy with Section 51 of the old Agriculture Bank Act is a true one.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I pointed out that that was a general lien, as against a specific lien in this case.

Mr. PERKINS: Obviously other factors enter into this question. However, the Minister may agree to reassure members on the legal question that I have raised.

MR. NALDER (Katanning) [5.30]: I can probably be termed one of the culprits, too. The member for Roe has mentioned that a number of wheatfarmers have overlooked meeting their payments, but I think I can give one reason for that. For several years some of the wheatfarmers have received a debit for the amount owing and then, later on in the year, have received a credit and in some instances the credit has almost overtaken the debit. Many farmers have been under the impression that this amount could go on, and that perhaps the following year the credit would overtake the debit. I am only a small wheatfarmer, and in my case the amount is only a few pence and therefore the suggestion put forward in the Bill will overcome the difficulty with a minimum of effort. The general opinion is that wheatfarmers throughout the State will favour this Bill, and I think the House could be guided by that.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [5.32]: I agree with the Minister that this is a very simple amendment. The idea is to make the payments easier, less costly and more satisfactory both to the grower and the bulk handling company and it has the full approval of the Australian Wheat Board. Recently, when members of the board were in Western Australia they were asked to agree to a debit being placed on their "claim for payment" form to meet this amount and they were amazed at the manner in which this company operated and financed itself. Paragraph (1) of Section 26 of the Bulk Handling Act, from which the Leader of the Opposition has quoted, reads as follows:—

> Every holder of a warrant on surrendering the same to the company shall pay to the company a toll of five-eighths of a penny per bushel or such lesser toll as the Governor may from time to time fix by Order in Council. The amount of the toll shall be considered as an advance and shall be repayable by the company at the time and in the manner provided in the deed of trust.

This amount, whether it be ⅝d. or ½d. is spent by the company to meet its depreciation and replacements. After 15 years, which is the length of each cycle of the company, those men who have paid their tolls during that period or any part of it, are repaid the total amount by the company from collections of tolls from the shareholders of the second period. This is a company which is unique in this respect. It is one which has fostered itself, financed itself and is operated by the growers to their benefit inasmuch as all the money they have paid is repaid to them at a later date. It might be of interest to know that over 9,000 farmers deliver wheat each year, but that number is constantly changing because between 500 and 600 are entering and leaving the company every year.

A man who fails to deliver wheat for two succeeding seasons is no longer a shareholder of the company and his £1 share is purchased by the company and re-issued to someone else. It is quite true, as the member for Katanning states, that he does not know from year to year what he owes the company because of the debits and the credits. Although a man delivers wheat between December and January, his account is not made up until the following October and he only knows that he has a debit in his account when he receives a debit note or, if there is a credit, he occasionally receives a cheque. I will now quote the evidence given by Mr. G. H. Jones from the Co-op. Bulk Handling Ltd. in the basic wage inquiry held on the 19th June, 1950, in the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, Melbourne. It reads—

> The Company is the sole licensed receiver in Western Australia for the Australian Wheat Board under the Wheat Industries Stabilisation Act, 1948, of Western Australia, which continues the powers and duties laid on the company by the Bulk Handling Act, 1935-1948. Shareholding is confined to active growers of wheat who numbered 9,009 in October, 1949. Each grower held one fully-paid up £1 share, making the paid up capital £9,009. No dividends have been paid on shares to date as the company is not a profit-making organisation. We, and the growers, regard the company as an undertaking to handle wheat for them at cost and if our revenue exceeds our expenditure, the surplus should be returnable to those growers who actively use the facilities provided. This is achieved by a system of rebates. Since the year ended 31st October, 1944, annual rebates have been made to shareholders of £20,000, £40,000, £35,000, £32,000, £32,000 and £35,000. By comparison, the annual wages bill for the year ended October 31st, 1949, was £248,996.

So, from that, it can be seen that although a grower delivers his wheat and creates a debit in the summer months, it is not until the 31st October of the same year that the amount, which each grower may owe

the company, is compiled. As there are between 500 and 600 growers joining and leaving the company every year, some of them are lost sight of before there is any opportunity, under the present system, of collecting the money that they owe.

Mr. May: How do you explain the collection of the toll? The company would not enter into that.

Mr. ACKLAND: That would be very simple. The charge would be made at the source.

Mr. May: You say that the toll is fixed on the 31st October, before the company knows what it is going to charge.

Mr. ACKLAND: The charge is fixed by the Government at ¾d. or ⅞d. as the case may be, but the company does not know how much the debit will be because it does not know the respective debit or credit for each grower until after the 31st October in each year. Therefore, there is a reason why there are so many outstanding accounts. It is interesting to give some consideration as to how toll payments have been collected in the past. The legislation was enacted in 1935 and at that time the toll payments were made by the wheat merchants. The wheat was delivered to the company on their behalf. They deducted ¾d. from every grower and paid that amount direct to the company. Provision was made for that. We are now asking for a return to that system.

Mr. May: Do you know whether the wheat merchants had any bad debts in those days?

Mr. ACKLAND: I do not think that is of any interest on this Bill. They did not owe the company anything because—

The Minister for Lands: It was collected at the source.

Mr. ACKLAND: Yes. The wheat was acquired by the Commonwealth Government through the Australian Wheat Board and we want to revert to that system which existed from 1935-1940-1941. From 1940-41 to 1942-44, the Australian Wheat Board operated. During that period no tolls at all were collected, but the toll was included in the costs paid back to the company. Then, in 1944-45, another scheme of dealing with the wheat was inaugurated, namely, the cost plus system. As most members will agree, that system has many imperfections because there is no incentive whatever to show any economy.

I am firmly of the opinion that we, in Western Australia, suffered considerably because our handling costs were the most economical in Australia and the world for handling bulk wheat. As no provision was made for payment of tolls under the cost plus system, the company had to approach the grower to obtain his payment. What the Leader of the Opposition has said is perfectly true, that even since the first year, 1945-46, there have been some outstanding accounts. In most instances they are the accounts of people who have left the industry.

Mr. Marshall: Under this Bill how do you propose to deal with the many farmers who have paid in, but who cannot be paid by the company until after the 31st October of each year?

Mr. ACKLAND: The company is now in the second 15-year period. I think it started in 1945. The company had paid off all its indebtedness five years before there was any necessity for it to do so and since it did that, the new list of shareholders came into existence—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I was present and handed over all the documents.

Mr. ACKLAND: —and it immediately started to repay those first period growers. The company repays approximately £32,000 on such accounts every year. Up to date there has been no difficulty in finding either the men who have delivered the wheat nor those who received it on behalf of the grower if he has died in the meantime.

The Minister for Lands: That is right; it would be paid into the deceased's estate.

Mr. ACKLAND: Yes, and no further trouble is anticipated in that regard.

Mr. Marshall: But you made a statement that you could not find these people in order to collect the toll that they owed.

Mr. ACKLAND: When I said that, I really meant that it would be too costly to chase them for the amount which, in some instances, would be only two or three shillings. As the Leader of the Opposition has mentioned, the company has outstanding accounts from a few shillings up to £32.

The Minister for Lands: They would not come under the 15-year period.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: They still owe the money.

Mr. ACKLAND: That would apply to those who came in before 1945. The company is of the opinion that the present system is entirely unsatisfactory and is very costly.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I think you will agree that you would not want this if the Australian Wheat Board were not receivers and handlers. If Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. had handled the wheat, it could have deducted the amount legally.

Mr. ACKLAND: According to legal advice received, unless this legislation is passed the Australian Wheat Board will not be empowered to make provision for the collection of this money at the source.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That replies to only half my interjection. The other part was that if Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. had handled the wheat, it could have made the deductions.

Mr. ACKLAND: That is true. The company handles the wheat only as agents for the Australian Wheat Board, and

legislation is necessary to make it legal for the deductions to be made at the source. When a man delivers his wheat he is issued with a form for compensation payment. At present that form includes a column where provision is made for the payment of any money that may be outstanding for cornsacks. The Australian Wheat Board is the only body that is purchasing cornsacks, and the growers have to procure their requirements from the board.

The practice usually followed is that they are not paid for until the wheat is delivered. Therefore on the form there is a column making provision for those payments. Now it has been agreed that there shall be a second column, should this legislation be passed, whereby the company will also collect the toll charge. As I previously mentioned, the company paid off its first tolls due for repayment five years before the due date, and that caused members to smile. That situation arose through abnormal circumstances. Under the provisions of the Bulk Handling Act the company is a handling concern and not a storage company. Provision was made so that it would be uneconomical for anyone to store with the company.

During the war years the Commonwealth Government, despite advice to the contrary, took advantage of the company's silos to store wheat. That proved very costly to the Commonwealth Government. It was only after the company had proved over and over again just what a costly job it was that the Commonwealth Government agreed to a change in the storage of wheat to silos built for the Australian Wheat Board. At the end of the war the Australian Wheat Board sold the material that had been used in making provision for the storage at a good profit. However, that sort of thing is not likely to happen again. The 15-year period will run its full course when payments will be due. I do not think it necessary to labour the question any further. At present it is particularly difficult to collect this money, and that is very unfair to those who have paid their dues regularly. Some of them have simply failed to meet their commitments, possibly because the amount in some instances is so small. The company may have acted wrongly inasmuch as it might have taken legal proceedings against those in default, but the fact remains that it has not done so. When members consider the service the company is rendering and the fact that the Australian Wheat Board is in favour of this collection being made, I think they will be well advised to pass the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay—in reply) [5.50]: Undoubtedly a principle is involved in this legislation in connection with the collection of tolls, but many other industries are levied in a similar manner.

Mr. May: What are they?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Each year a levy is paid by those engaged in the dried fruits industry to both the Commonwealth and State boards, and moreover they have power to fix their own levies each year. A levy may be increased or decreased.

Mr. May: Is that levy collected at the source?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. The dried fruitgrower never sees the money. It is the most satisfactory and businesslike method of collecting a toll or levy. Then again the Egg Board collects so much a dozen on eggs that are handled. Furthermore, a toll is collected on fruit that passes through the Metropolitan Markets, and that is deducted at the source as well.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is quite different.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It may be different, but the same principle applies. In fact, it is the only satisfactory method of collecting a toll or levy. We all appreciate human nature. In some instances it does not matter what may be the financial circumstances of the individuals concerned. It is always necessary absolutely to squeeze money out of them. Such people are very good at collecting but do not like paying out. We know people of that type. Wheatgrowers are no exception to the rule. Although their organisation agrees with the principle, individual members of the organisation overlook the necessity to make these payments. They may be neglectful, or they may simply forget their obligation. It is desirable that Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. shall be able to have this money collected at the source, and I am convinced that members will agree that that is the only satisfactory system.

Mr. May: It is an easy way out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is not a matter of having an easy way out; it is just a matter of collecting a toll that the growers themselves have already agreed to. Some are quite willing to allow their fellow wheatgrowers to pay the toll while not paying it themselves.

Mr. W. Hegney: Compulsory unionism!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think that is desirable. I know members opposite pay compulsorily the 25s. per head per annum, or whatever the amount may be. I think all members will agree on the principle involved in the Bill. In collecting the toll at the source, quite a lot of money will be saved to the wheatgrower himself. I have a list of the various charges involved in the many transactions. All that expenditure will be saved. As the

member for Moore mentioned, the final amounts cannot be determined until the pool itself is finalised. The same situation arises in connection with the industry in which I am interested. In that instance the levy is deducted at the source and the grower has his credit with the company. Those credits cannot be placed on the grower's account in his favour until the pool is finally wound up.

In view of these facts, members will readily agree that the adoption of the principle involved in the collection of the toll at the source is the most satisfactory method by which a position like this can be dealt with. The Leader of the Opposition pointed out that 4,200 growers owed £11,500. It should not be so. After all, the organisation concerned is a co-operative body, the members of which are engaged in the same industry. Some of the growers meet their obligations in full and some do not. It will help all concerned if the levy is collected at the source.

Mr. J. Hegney: Cannot you refuse the benefits to them until they pay up?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am afraid I cannot hear the hon. member's interjection. The member for Roe appeared to be a little concerned about his own position, but I do not think he was as concerned as he made out. I suggest that if his legal position is worrying him, he should consult his solicitor.

Members: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Personally I found my position doubtful at one stage.

Mr. Perkins: Do you intend to put the second reading through tonight?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

The Premier: Yes, we do.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If I did not answer the member for Roe's criticism, he would be critical of me. At one time I was a client of the Agricultural Bank, and when I entered Parliament I was in some doubt as to my position. The doubt arose in connection with my borrowing money from a Government instrumentality and accepting money from the Crown in the nature of a profit. At any rate, I took the risk.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And 80 per cent. of the members of the Country Party are in that position.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. Marshall: But the Minister took the risk.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And it is not the only risk I have taken. In that instance, it worked out all right. I believe the House would do a good job for a most important industry if members agreed that the money in question should be collected from the wheatgrowers at the source.

Point of Order.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Before you state the question, Mr. Speaker, I ask for your ruling. I draw your attention to Standing Order No. 196 which reads—

> No Member shall be entitled to vote in any Division upon a Question in which he has a direct pecuniary interest; and the vote of any Member so interested shall be disallowed.

In addition to the Standing Order I have quoted I would refer you to page 412 of the Fourteenth Edition of May's Parliamentary Practice in which, under the heading, "Personal Interest in Votes on Questions of Public Policy" the following appears:—

> The only instance to be found in the Journals in which the vote of a Member has been disallowed upon a question of public policy is the case of the votes of three Members given in session 1892 in favour of the grant in aid of a preliminary survey for a railway from the coast to Lake Victoria Nyanza, which had been undertaken on behalf of the Government by the British East Africa Company, of which two of the Members in question were directors and shareholders and the third was a shareholder.

In view of the fact that we have had it from a director and shareholder in one instance, and from shareholders in others, that they are interested, I would like to know whether you will rule on the matter or will leave it to some individual member to move, after the division is taken, that the votes of certain members shall be disallowed? I have looked up authorities and that is one way in which it can be done. Members can be advised not to record their votes. The other way is for some individual member to move that a member's vote shall be disallowed.

Mr. Speaker: There is an old Latin tag "De minimis non curat lex," which means: The law does not take notice of trifles. In this case, the amount involved is so small.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: But one member is a director!

Mr. Speaker: There is no reference in the Bill to a director. A certain amount of money is to be collected at the source instead of being paid individually. I rule that any member in the House who desires to do so can vote on this question.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I shall not move to disagree with your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but I suggest to any member who may be in doubt as to his position that he refrains from voting. If it will help to reassure any such member, I shall tell him that I intend to vote for the Bill.

Debate Resumed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILLS (3)—RETURNED.

1, Transfer of Land Act Amendment.

2, State Housing Act Amendment.
With an amendment.

3, Inspection of Scaffolding Act Amendment.
Without amendment.

BILL—THE KAURI TIMBER COMPANY LIMITED AGREEMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR FORESTS (Hon. G. P. Wild—Dale) [6.3] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill embodying an agreement which the Government wants Parliament to sanction between the Kauri Timber Co. Ltd. and the State of Western Australia, and is the most forward and positive move yet made towards getting more timber for Western Australia. It is my intention to outline what led up to the agreement.

About five months ago, when I first became Honorary Minister for Housing, I travelled in the South-West of the State and a little later went to Geraldton, moving around through the towns over to Mullewa and back via Perenjori. A little later I made a trip to Kalgoorlie and later again another trip to Kellerberrin and Wyalkatchem. Subsequently I made two further visits to the South-West. Everywhere I went I was confronted with the one problem, stressed by builders engaged in the industry and private persons who wanted to build, namely, that there was an insufficiency of timber and, more particularly, dried timber such as flooring boards and joinery.

When I returned after some of the earlier trips, I was approached by the representatives of the Kauri Timber Co. with a request that the company be granted some timber rights. After discussion, and realising the necessity for having more timber remain in Western Australia, I thought that here was a very grand opportunity to endeavour to strike a bargain. Consequently, I put what limited knowledge I have of the business world to the forefront and tried to hold out for the best possible terms with the company which stated that, subject to its being given further timber rights, it was prepared largely to alter its system of trading in that, whereas in the past it had entirely operated in the export of timber, it would open up in Western Australia in a substantial way.

To me, looking to the building of houses and for much-needed timber, this was like lolly to a child. Accordingly, after due consideration, I issued instructions to the Conservator of Forests to call tenders for country south of Nannup known as the Milyeanup area. Here is the minute that I passed on to the Conservator—

> Will you please call tenders immediately for the Milyeanup area on the following conditions:—
>
> 1. That a mill be erected in Nannup for an intake of 25 loads in the square per day.
>
> 2. Such mill to be erected and be producing 12 loads in the square per day within three months of the granting of the permit.
>
> 3. Mill to be in full production of 25 loads in the square per day within nine months of the granting of the permit.
>
> 4. Tenderer to supply the whole of the output of the mill to the metropolitan area.
>
> On receipt of these tenders will you please bring them to me, when they can be reviewed and a decision arrived at.

These tenders were duly called and they closed on the 30th August of this year. There were eight in all. The lowest tenderers' were Kensington Saw Mills Ltd. (10s.), and the State Sawmills (10s.). Other tenders received were The Kauri Timber Co. Ltd. (11s.), the East Perth Milling Co. (12s 6d.), Whittaker Bros. (12s. 6d.), J. E. Antonovich (14s. 3d.), Bunning Bros. Pty. Ltd. (14s. 8d.) and Coli Sawmills (15s. 6d.).

Hon F. J. S. Wise: Would you read the advertised terms in the calling of tenders? Have you the advertisement?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I am not certain that I have the advertisement here, but I will ascertain the terms for the Leader of the Opposition and in my reply will give that information. One point I want members clearly to understand is that before I issued instructions for tenders to be called for this country, I discussed with the Conservator of Forests and the Co-ordinator of Timber Supplies what would be a fair and equitable price. I said to the Conservator, "There is a company which is prepared to enter the retail business in Western Australia and I am prepared, if possible, to strike a bargain with it. It must be willing to pay a fair and equitable price. I therefore want you to give full consideration to what you think would be a fair price." As a result, when tenders were called the upset royalty for this country was established at 10s.

When the tenders were brought to me I found them a little disappointing, in that there was a big disparity between the lowest and the highest. At that stage I took the matter to Cabinet, as I was not

prepared to make a decision myself. Though I knew that this company, which was prepared to enter into an agreement with us, would do a lot of very desirable things for Western Australia, I was not going to make any determination on my own. It was ultimately decided by Cabinet that three members of the Cabinet, including myself, should confer with the Solicitor General and secure his opinion as to whether a tender lower than the highest tender could be accepted.

Mr. Totterdell: Was there not a provision that no tender need necessarily be accepted?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Actually it is provided in the Forests Act that neither the highest nor the lowest tender need be accepted, but looking back through the annals of the Forests Department one finds that on many ocasions the highest tender has not been accepted. However, that was something which I did not wish to determine myself. Even though I wanted, in the interests of the State, to accept a tender somewhat lower than the highest, I felt that there should be some very justifiable grounds for taking that action.

The Solicitor General advised us that it would be dangerous for the State Government or the Forests Department to accept a tender lower than the highest. As a result, the sub-committee of Cabinet, of which I was a member, decided to reject all the tenders, to present the whole matter to Parliament, and to let Parliament in its wisdom say whether it thought that the course I hoped we could take should be put into operation.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Have you any idea of the royalty obtaining in other areas in that district?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yes, I shall speak at some length on that point later on. At the moment I can say that the country in the immediate vicinity of the Milyeanup area is returning a royalty of 7s. The Kauri Timber Co. has a small concession at Nannup, which is fast cutting out and for which it pays 8s. 6d. To the east of this country is the Donnelly River mill which pays 7s. The State Saw Mills has a large area of country immediately to the south, the price for which is 8s. 6d.

Mr. Graham: When were these permits issued?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Some of them were issued in 1944 and some in 1946. But there was a re-appraisement in 1949, raising the royalties, of which I shall speak later. I want to refer now to some of the objections raised by one of the tenderers.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Prior to the tea adjournment, I was about to discuss the objections raised by one of the tenderers when submitting his tender. That particular tenderer considered he was entitled to the country on the ground that he had one mill that would be cutting out of timber in the near future and a second would be cutting out in a matter of two or three years' time. I want firstly to deal with the country that this tenderer already possesses, the amount of timber on it and the price being paid for it. Immediately to the east of this country, which is the subject of discussion this evening—the Milyeanup country—two permits are held by Bunning Bros. to feed their Donnelly River and Yornup mills. The first one to feed the Donnelly River and Yornup mills has a total area of 77,536 acres, and in a re-assessment made of this country in 1945 it was found to contain—and I understand this is a conservative estimate—480,000 loads of jarrah and 100,000 loads of karri, with an estimated life of 25 years. The country carries 100 loads of karri to the acre and 12 loads of jarrah.

The royalty for this country, prior to April, 1949—this area is divided into two parts—was 4s. 2d. for part 1 and 5s. for part 2. Sir Ross McDonald, when Minister for Forests, ordered that there should be a re-assessment, and the royalty, on the 1st April, 1949, was increased to 7s. per load. That country is to the right of the area for which the same person tendered 14s. 8d.

Mr. Oliver: Is that 14s. 8d. per load?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: A royalty of 14s. 8d. The same company holds a sawmill permit No. 1328, granted on the 1st January, 1946, to erect a mill to be known as Tone River. This country is slightly south and to the east of that about which I have already spoken. It is an area of 77,000 acres and an assessment was made of this country at the same time as the assessment was made for the other permit—in 1945. It was estimated that there were 550,000 loads of jarrah, but very little karri. The original royalty on this permit, when it was granted in 1946, was 5s. 1d., and on the 1st April, 1949, it was raised to 5s. 6d. The estimated life of this country is 30 years. Bunning Bros. considered that with the cutting out of the Muchea country they would have no timber reserves for that mill and, soon after, I decided that I would see what I could do to rectify the position. As a result, I interviewed the Conservator of Forests, and wrote to him on the 20th October, as follows:—

> Confirming our conversation of the 19th inst., will you please make arrangements to submit for tender the two areas discussed south of Shannon River and the country south-west of Milyeanup.

Which is the country immediately to the west of that which is now under discussion and is an area of between 60,000 and 70,000 acres. The letter continues—

> If possible, have this advertised early next week, and advise me immediately.

It is interesting to note that the same company, when this re-assessment was made early in 1949, objected to having its royalties increased from 5s. to 7s. and from 5s. 1d. to 5s. 6d. on the adjoining country. Now, it is prepared to tender 14s. 8d. It is interesting to read the letter the company wrote to the Forests Department when the royalty was raised by this small sum of 5d. in one instance and 2s. in the other. On the 16th June, 1949, the company wrote and protested most emphatically that it could not afford to pay the increase. Members are asked to note one or two paragraphs in the letter. It states—

> We confirm conversation by telephone in which we stated that although we objected very strongly to what we think is the excessive increase of these southern mills, in order to enable you to finalise the matter, we would agree to these figures.

They refer to some factors that should have been taken into consideration in the assessment, and the final paragraph states—

> We do not think that these factors have been properly taken into account in your re-assessment of royalties and consider that if it is expected to get more timber in the metropolitan area from South-West mills, it may be necessary in future to reduce some of these royalty increases.

So, on the 16th June, 1949, the company wrote to the Conservator of Forests saying that it could not afford to pay 5s. 6d. and 7s. respectively for its country and yet, 12 months later, the company puts in a tender for 14s. 8d.! It does that without a blush.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Do you think they only tendered at this price to keep others out?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I have no doubt about that whatever. I think it was to keep out a company of whom I shall speak later. It was to keep out the biggest timber company in Australia—to keep it out of the retail trade in this State. May I say this in passing? It is very easy, when a company has large areas of country like that, to be able to absorb a further area. This company has 150,000 acres, approximately, in two areas to the east of Milyeanup, and if it absorbs a further 70,000 or 80,000 acres at a higher royalty, the overall average for the whole 220,000 acres would be about 9s. an acre, which is a little under the royalty assessed by the Conservator of Forests when he gave his considered opinion that it should have been 10s.

Mr. Styants: Is provision made for an adjustment of royalties in all these agreements?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yes. I understand that the assessment in 1949 was the first for some considerable time, but if the House considers that this country is worth 14s. 8d., then I would be lacking in my duty as Minister for Forests if I did not have a re-assessment made of the country immediately to the east and see that it is brought up very close to the 14s. 8d. at the same time.

Mr. Oliver: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Following on the discussions I had with the Crown Solicitor, and the decision by Cabinet that the whole matter should be ventilated in Parliament, and Parliament given an opportunity to say yea or nay to whether the lower tender was to be accepted, the Kauri Timber Company sent one of its directors from the Eastern States. I had several discussions with him, and he met the sub-committee of Cabinet. As a result, the draft agreement was prepared and this is embodied in the Schedule to the Bill. The draft agreement has already been signed by the company but naturally has not been signed by the Government, and will not be signed until Parliament approves. If members look at the Schedule, pages 2 and 3 of the Bill, they will be able to follow me when I give them some indication of just what this company is prepared to do if it is allowed to operate in Western Australia. This company in the past has been a company exporting timber only. It has its headquarters in Victoria, and opened business in Western Australia some 30 or 40 years ago with the sole object of acquiring our jarrah and karri and taking it to the company's retail yards in the Eastern States and New Zealand.

When the company said it was prepared to come to Western Australia and open up in a big way, it really meant to do so. I want to point out to members one or two things that the company intends to do, if the Bill is passed, and from that members will see what I mean when I say, "in a big way." Paragraph (k), on page 5, states—

> That the minimum sum to be expended by the company on the acquisition or erection and establishment of the said timberyard in the metropolitan area of Perth aforesaid and the said sawmill at Nannup aforesaid shall be £200,000 and such sum shall be allocated as near as possible in the following manner:—For the erection and establishing the said mill at Nannup, together with the necessary

buildings and equipment as aforesaid the sum of £88,000, for the erection of drying kilns complete with boilers, £16,000, for the erection of a machinery shed and machinery to be installed therein as aforesaid £18,000, for the acquisition or erection and establishment of the said timberyard or yards and necessary plant and equipment as aforesaid the sum of £78,000.

In addition, the company guarantees, in paragraph (1)—

To market the whole of the jarrah output of the new Nannup mill plus seventy per centum (70%) of the jarrah output of the company's existing Nannup general purpose mill on the local Western Australian Market.

That means that we are going to get approximately 60 loads in the square per day, which is the equivalent of five houses and, in round figures, the timber for 1,250 houses per annum. This is a company that, in the past, has entirely relied upon the export of timber. In addition to opening this retail yard in the metropolitan area they have also agreed to import—when necessary—and merchandise a comprehensive range of all builders' hardware of Australian and oversea origin; to merchandise Western Australian hardwood and other available Western Australian timbers including jarrah, blackbutt, merchantable and selected scantlings, green and seasoned joinery, timber floorings and the like; to import and merchandise timbers produced in the Eastern States of Australia, including Tasmanian oak, blackwood, plywood and veneers both plain and fancy, iron and steel produced in the said Eastern States including corrugated galvanised iron, flat galvanised iron, ridging, guttering, down piping, round and flat steel shafting.

They further guarantee that they are prepared to enter into a bond with the State Government of Western Australia of a penal sum of £50,000 to be paid to the State Government at the Treasury in Perth if they do not comply with the terms of the agreement. A little earlier in the agreement members will find that they require to have portion of their mill producing a minimum of 12 loads of timber per day within three months and within nine months of the permit to extend it to capacity of 20 loads of timber per day. They have also undertaken to build 20 houses, including single men's accommodation.

Mr. Hoar: What is the capacity of the other mill at Nannup?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: I understand it is about 40 to 45 in the square.

Mr. Hoar: Is it working in conjunction?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: Yes. Under this agreement we are to get 70% of the output of the existing Nannup mill and 100% of the mill they are going to erect on this Milyeanup country. It means in effect that we are going to get in round figures 60 loads in the square per day, which we were not getting before. During the negotiations one problem arose in that the company needed buildings in order to house their machinery, their flooring machines, drying kilns, and buildings had to be erected at Nannup and in the metropolitan area. The matter of permits for their erection, therefore, came up for consideration. The State Housing Commission said it was not prepared to give them all our local material for the erection of these buildings and wrote to them on the 11th October. A reply was received on the 23rd October, stating that the provisions of that letter are acceptable to the company. Incidentally, I will lay this on the Table of the House for the information of members. We said to the company that it had to import material for the erection of these buildings and this it agreed to do.

I want to touch for one moment on the type of company we are hoping to introduce into Western Australia in the retail market. I have here the annual report together with the balance sheet and profit and loss account of the company, as at the 31st August, 1949. I find there are two registered companies, one being known as the Kauri Timber Company Ltd., with a capital of £1,250,000, with debentures of £400,000, while the assets show a value of £2,290,678. The joint assets of the two consolidated companies represent £3,816,037. It will be seen, therefore, that we are hoping to bring to Western Australia a company that will make a big mark in the timber and hardware building business. From that it will be readily appreciated that those who in past years had a controlling interest with almost a stranglehold on the timber industry of Western Australia will be fearful of a company of this size coming to the State.

I face this with the knowledge that it is necessary for us to have a little keen competition in the timber industry of Western Australia. As I said earlier, it is the first time that we have put our best foot forward, knowing full well that we are going to do something for this State, at least as far as timber is concerned. I fully realise that there are some who are going to say, "Why should we be prepared to accept a tender of 11s. alongside of somebody who tenders 14s. 8d.?" My answer to that is, "We must also consider the implications of paying 14s. 8d. for our timber against 11s. Today more than ever I think costs should be kept down. With a difference of 3s. 8d., if it is brought down into the common housing timber we have to use, it means a difference of just over £6 per house in round figures.

As I mentioned earlier, this company will be producing sufficient timber for 1,250 houses, so one can see that in round figures we are going to get those houses £7,000 cheaper if we allow this company to operate at 11s. On the other side, there are some who argue that the State, by allowing this timber to go for 11s. instead of accepting this tender of 14s. 8d., is going to lose something. That may be so. By accepting 11s. instead of 14s. 8d., there will be a loss to the State of £2,000 per annum. Can one consider £2,000 against a saving of £7,000 for the people who want homes, and in addition to the building of 1,250 per annum?

When we look at the subsidies we are giving for everything else in Western Australia, is it asking the Government too much to subsidise the building of 1,250 houses by relinquishing that £2,000? The answer is irrefutable. Here we have a company prepared to come to Western Australia and enter into a bond to produce large quantities of timber and other hardwood merchandise and, in addition, to give us at least 1,250 houses that are so badly required today.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Would the highest tenderer have entered into a similar agreement?

The MINISTER FOR FORESTS: That is hard to say. My answer to that would be this: When I look back in "Hansard" at the speeches of my predecessors, I find that in 1947, 1948 and 1949 on every such occasion they said, "In six months time our timber shortages will be over." Let us take positive steps. Here is a company prepared to put up a bond of £50,000 and produce the timber this State needs. I commend this measure to the House, and move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. A. M. Coverley, debate adjourned.

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 19th October.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [7.56]: This Bill contains two provisions. These represent drastic changes from a similar provision in the parent Act. One of them is new to this Chamber, while the second provision is merely a very extensive expansion of a principle to which previous Parliaments have subscribed. Dealing with the first provision, which proposes to amend Section 92 of the Mining Act, I wish to say that in all my lengthy experience in the mining industry, and my association with the Mining Act, I have never heard of any person who has been disgruntled at the provisions of that particular section. It has served the mining industry in this State particularly well and, I repeat, has never been the subject of complaint by any individual, syndicate, or company. Bearing that in mind, we have to accept the position that unless there can be some real justification for this proposed amendment, it would not be acceptable.

I propose to review the position as I know it personally to see whether we can justify making such a drastic change in a provision in the parent Act which has served the industry so well over these many years. The Act provides that mining tenements or leases for gold and other metals shall be limited to 24 acres. There is one exception, which is of a minor character and is seldom availed of. In general, 24 acres constitutes the maximum area of a goldmining lease, but there is no limit to the number of leases any individual or company may acquire on application. Consequently, the experience has been that companies have lawfully obtained possession of particularly large areas simply because there is no limitation in the Act.

In reviewing the legislation of other countries, I do not know of one instance where it is so generous to the lessee as is the provision in our Act. For instance, for the first 12 months the lessee of a 24-acre lease pays 5s. rent per acre, while the labour conditions in the first 12 months require one man to every 12 acres. At the expiration of 12 months, the law provides for a rental of £1 per acre and one man to every six acres. This is all the Government charges for the right to mine gold and other metals; no royalty is payable and there is no obligation on the lessee apart from manning the leases and mining them.

The provision in the Bill proposes to depart from the principle in the Act. A lessee, when his leases are adjoining—that is, when one lease pegged adjoins another held by the same lessee—may apply under Section 92 for exemption from labour conditions for the purpose of concentrating the labour for all the leases on to one or more leases. We have never had reason to find fault with that provision, and I believe that all the large mining companies have taken advantage of it. Section 92 also makes other provision for a lessee to apply for exemption, but the Bill deals with the one aspect only.

Those of us who represent goldmining districts have from time to time regarded with disfavour the practice of some people of securing leasehold tenures over fairly large areas, holding them out of productivity, and playing the dog-in-the-manger by preventing other people from working them. For the edification of members who may not know, I point out that these iniquities are mainly the responsibility of the Minister, due to over-generous treatment meted out to holders of areas under leasehold tenure. Thus, one may be excused for entertaining some fear about the proposal in the Bill. Only if we can find evidence to justify this change should we support it.

Goldfields members are aware that there are many small goldbearing deposits, many of them of low grade, and that companies regard them with disfavour. They are more inclined to develop a low-grade proposition provided it is large enough to produce a great tonnage of ore and thus enable them to show as much profit as they would get from a small proposition, richer though it may be. A small proposition is not attractive to mining investors, largely because experience has shown that values do not live at depth. Either the lens disappears at depth or the values peter out. Further, a small proposition cannot be economically worked, because the overhead costs are high in proportion to the small tonnage of ore that can be raised. Consequently, a multiplicity of these smaller lenses are lying idle because they are unprofitable to a prospector and of little use to a company.

I congratulate our goldmining companies on the material change in their attitude. In the very early days, companies did nothing more or less than to pick the eyes out of their areas and make of the mines a sort of monkey-on-the-stick to be used to work the Stock Exchange. Thus, those people who were in the know were able to make fortunes. Today, on the other hand, most of our large companies are working their propositions scientifically. They regard their holdings as an asset, and many of them are employing technical men such as geologists to advise what may or may not be possible.

From the surveys that have been made, contrary to the old belief that outcrops with gaps of Crown land between were separate ore-bearing bodies, it is more than probable that they are linked at depth and constitute one line of lode. Individually, they could not be worked profitably. The proposal in the Bill is to make it possible for a company to avail itself of the concession provided in the Act in respect of adjoining leases. The Minister, when moving the second reading, refered to a certain company, and members might have inferred that the intention was to grant a concession to a particular company. That is not so. If the Bill becomes law, the Act will be thrown right open and any company or individual may take advantage of the new provision. Under the proposal, an individual or company may take advantage of the concession so long as the leases are within the one mining district.

Our mining areas are very extensive. I am not sure of the exact number of mining districts in the auriferous belt, but I believe there are 10 or 12 under the Act and they cover the whole of the auriferous belt from Norseman in the south to Kimberley in the north, so members will realise that a very large extent of territory is included in each mining district. Under the Bill a company or individual may enjoy the benefit of the concession even though the leases may be miles apart. So long as they are located within the one mining district, the holder would be entitled to apply for exemption in order to concentrate all the labour on one or two leases.

Mr. Perkins: How is the term "mining district" defined?

Mr. MARSHALL: It is defined in the regulations. Fairly large areas could be held at one point and, 50 or 60 miles away, the same company could hold another group of leases and concentrate all the labour on one lease. In reviewing the proposition submitted by the Minister for Mines when he introduced the measure in the Legislative Council, one can readily appreciate the handicap that an individual would have even under the amending Bill because low grade propositions are costly to mine for the reason that most of them are small, so far as we know. To concentrate the treatment of ore at a particular point would mean fairly heavy overhead charges for transportation from a group of leases to the treatment plant But that is a matter with which we need not concern ourselves.

There is one company which we all hold in high esteem—I suppose it is one of the finest goldmining companies that has ever come to this State—which feels that it can make a success of what it calls a group system of leases, so long as it is permitted by law to concentrate all the labour for a number of leases at a given point. That is the only matter we have to decide. While I do not like the granting of concessions to individuals or companies so that they may hold up large areas of auriferous country, I have to take the view that the propositions I have referred to—that is a number of small shows, probably of low grade—would never be worked at all except under an arrangement such as we are now considering. Provided the Minister for Mines exercises his functions strictly and fairly, I feel that we should not oppose the suggested provision until it has at least been given a trial.

Under the Act and regulations, a goldmining company enjoying the principle of group operating must apply for exemption every six months. So there is a safeguard there, provided the Minister is watchful. But what makes me doubtful about the whole matter is that in past years certain individuals and companies have been able to sway the Minister most wrongly, in my humble judgment. This brings to mind a point which causes me a great deal of concern. Unfortunately when notice is given that a company or individual intends to make application for exemption under any of the provisions of Section 92, including this one, no action is ever taken to go into court to object to the granting of the exemption; it is when the exemption is granted that someone starts to kick up a row.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Would you have to apply every six months under the Bill?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. An application each six months is the practice. It is set down in regulation 173. A warden can grant exemption for one month. In respect of a period beyond one month, the warden takes evidence in open court, and it is permissible for anyone to lodge an objection to the granting of an exemption, or even to the granting of a lease. In the case of an exemption, the warden takes evidence and then forwards his notes and recommendation to the Minister for decision. Only in certain conditions can a greater period of exemption than six months be granted at any one hearing. That is under Section 94, which is rarely used. Under that section a period of exemption is granted by the Minister under what is termed, "exemption by right." I have not known that course to be adopted, except by one individual, and he used it for many years. The section gives an extension of the exemption by right under the Act to working miners and to companies under certain conditions, when they spend certain sums of money. Taking it by and large, however, that section is never used. If we agree to the provision, what is suggested there will be thrown wide open, and every company could apply for the same privilege.

But there are certain safeguards to prevent what I have always objected to, and that is the carpet-bagging of goldmining leases—individuals getting possession of leases and hawking them around in an endeavour to float or sell them and so reap a premium for themselves. I do not feel there would be any possibility, under the amendment, of that happening, because each individual lessee would have to apply for exemption in order to get a concentration of labour. Those I have known who have tried to get a rake-off from the sale of mining propositions could scarcely succeed under the provision of the Bill. There are other sections which would give some protection. For instance, under the Act, every company must lodge with the Minister a monthly return showing the operations for the month; and further, when the Minister grants exemption he sets out certain conditions which must be strictly complied with. If they are not, the land becomes open for forfeiture.

So long as the Minister exercises his authority in a just and fair way, and in the interests of the State, I feel that we have not much to fear in regard to the provision. I take the view that I am not prepared to oppose what is suggested, but to support it so that it can be given a trial. If there is any abuse, it will be the prerogative of any private member to move to delete the provision that we are now dealing with, and return to the present conditions. If some companies are courageous enough to take up small shows and work them as one mining proposition —they could never be successfully worked, individually—we should encourage them because by so doing we may be able to rob Mother Earth of a lot of wealth and, at the same time, create employment and induce an era of prosperity in centres which are now practically defunct.

The next provision in the Bill deals with reservations, and members, especially the older ones, will know the attitude I adopted many years ago towards the granting of reservations. I do not know that I would have been quite so hostile in those days if there had been some limitation in the granting of reservations, but when I found that the whole of the auriferous belt was to be subject to reservations I felt I had better take action, which I ultimately did. The provision in the Bill seeks to extend the parent Act—and here I might be said to be the culprit because in 1945 I introduced a Bill to make provision, by Section 277, for the right to grant occupancy for the purpose of deep alluvial mining; the reservation to be 100 square miles—to a particularly large area. But what is proposed here goes further.

The suggestion is to alter Section 277 to allow of a reservation of 5,000 square miles. But the right of occupancy is to be limited to exploring and mining for what are known as alkali earth minerals. I have taken the opportunity of looking up some geological works in regard to alkali and alkali earth minerals, and I find that from such a rock we get certain minerals, and from the by-products we get certain chemicals. I understand that the company which inspired the Minister to include this particular amendment is a very big concern which operates in Australia, and I believe that the source of supply of the particular alkali mineral, with which it is concerned, is becoming depleted. This firm has interests in England, as well as having several subsidiary companies in Australia. The subsidiaries are interested in the manufacture of superphosphates and cement; and other subsidiary companies are interested in the production of chemicals and acids, all of which are by-products of this particular mineral.

We who are interested in goldmining need have no fear for the interests of the industry or those of the prospector, because the area in which this company is likely to operate—if it ever does—will not be in any Goldfields district. The rock from which salts of sodium are obtained is a dehydrated rock centuries younger than that associated with gold, and it is not found in greenstone country or any other country with which gold is associated. Even if the work of the company did encroach upon auriferous areas in this State the provisions of the Act would give the company right of occupancy only for the purpose of mining

alkali earth minerals. It would be limited to that. The statute also contains a provision that would prevent the occupier from excluding from the area any bona fide prospector prospecting for other minerals or gold. Here, again, there is special provision that a monthly return must be forwarded to the Minister, setting out the operations of the lessee or occupier and the work performed by him from month to month.

In granting the right of occupancy the Minister lays down certain terms and conditions with which the occupier must comply unless he wishes the reservation to be subject to forfeiture. The minerals for which this company would be searching are not found on the surface, but only in certain rock strata that occur at depth. I am informed that the process of exploring an area for such minerals is very expensive. A geological survey is necessary in order to get an idea of which parts of the country are most likely to be productive of the required minerals, and then the actual presence of the mineral can be ascertained only by deep boring.

A further complication is afforded by the fact that the particular alkali minerals with which we are dealing dissolve in pure water, and therefore no results could be obtained unless during boring operations the company used water of particularly heavy salinity. That would be necessary in order to get an indication of the value of the deposits if and when they were located. Lime is an alkali and is often associated with gypsum. If a company acquired a reservation under Section 276, with right of occupancy under Section 277, it might happen that it would find beds of gypsum of great value at shallow depth. However, I am informed that this company has no interest in gypsum. If gypsum were located it would in all probability be found at some depth, probably associated with alkali minerals.

Should the company discover large beds of gypsum in this way the information would be revealed to the Department of Mines, but I do not think it would be a commercial proposition to work that gypsum. At present it is difficult enough to produce gypsum profitably from surface deposits, and if one had to indulge in deep mining to obtain it I do not think the process could be made payable. Under the provisions of the Bill the company, if it discovered gypsum at depth, or even on the surface, could prevent anyone else from exploiting it and I have therefore drafted an amendment that I propose to move when the Bill is in Committee. I appeal to the Minister not to push the Bill through the Committee stage until I have had time to give further thought to the amendment that I propose to move.

In exploring for alkaline earth minerals large areas are essential, though of course there is no guarantee that such minerals will be discovered in this State in commercial quantities. I believe that we should encourage big companies to operate in this State, as their presence will add ultimately to the prosperity of Western Australia, and I am prepared to support the Bill in order to give its provisions a trial, but if after 12 months I find that it has resulted in any injustice I will take the first possible opportunity of endeavouring to have the Act amended accordingly. Again I ask the Minister not to take the Bill beyond Clause 3, when it is in Committee, as I wish to give further consideration to an amendment that I propose to move to Clause 4.

MR. KELLY (Merredin-Yilgarn) [8.43]: The Bill contains two amendments to the Act. One is in the interests of a company that is already operating in Western Australia, and the other in the interests of a concern that is considering beginning operations in this State. The first amendment deals with an alteration to the present labour conditions applying under the Mining Act and by means of it the company desires to do something that has not been attempted in the past. The wish of the company is to establish a major treatment plant in a certain district, with a view to obtaining subsidiary supplies of ore from adjacent areas. When introducing the measure the Minister stated that that was desirable, particularly in view of our experience over the years. We have had instances of companies commencing operations with only limited areas from which to draw their ore supplies.

We know of instances where a company has gone to the expense of erecting a complete treatment plant which has been rendered useless when ore supplies became exhausted. Many mines have closed down because of that. This amendment proposes to enable a company, under these conditions, to retain its plant in one place while it centres its labour force on other leases that it may hold in the district. That is a very desirable object. It will give a longer life to some districts where a quantity of low-grade ore exists but where, because of widely separated operations, working conditions are hampered. This amendment arises mainly at the instigation of the Great Western Consolidated Co. which is a subsidiary of the Western Mining Corporation. When it entered the Yilgarn field, it set about rejuvenating it by its careful activities.

It has not been afraid to introduce capital into an area which, at the time of its entry, was at an extremely low ebb. The Great Western Consolidated Co. has acquired 110 leases, not by the usual method of pegging, and these are spread over an area of some 35 miles. It has done a very fine job in the Yilgarn district. It also

has a subsidiary company in the Coolgardie field which is doing equally fine work. It plans to outlay £1,000,000 for development work alone, and the finances of the company amount to something like £2,500,000. The establishment of this central major treatment plant which will be at Bullfinch, constitutes a move which has not been made in the Yilgarn goldfield, or any other field, at any time in the past. The plant will treat many types of ore from many parts of the field.

I understand it is the policy of the company not only to treat ores of its own raising, but also to treat, when the occasion arises, some sulphide ores from many prospecting shows. This will open up many possibilities for prospectors in the field, and will have the effect of re-opening many mines which today lie dormant. I have perused the history of some of these shows which have remained dormant because of the refractory nature of the ore, although the values have been high. This State as a whole will benefit by the enactment of this legislation, and the complete policy, as enunciated by the Western Mining Corporation through its subsidiary, will undoubtedly have a beneficial effect on the future of the Yilgarn goldfield.

Although there is some cause, perhaps, to view with a small degree of misgiving the wide application of this amendment, I feel there are ample safeguards in the parent Act, and we need fear little, as the member for Murchison has pointed out, if the Minister controls the Act in accordance with the best interests of the State and the interests of those people who are represented by Goldfields members in this Chamber. When an application comes before a mining warden and he is satisfied with the statements in it, and the conditions are such as to warrant consideration, it is within his jurisdiction to recommend to the Minister that this concentration of labour not only be granted, but also, in some cases, that the application be extended for a further term. Therefore, the safeguards are ample and, if the legislation is administered correctly, it will leave no doubt in my mind that the first amendment in the Bill will render great service to the future of the goldmining industry as a whole.

The second amendment proposes to grant temporary reserves of a maximum area of 5,000 square miles. This is a tremendous area to be granted to any one company to tie up for any length of time. There does not appear to be anything in the Act that specifies a given period whereby this huge tract of country should be held by one company. An area of 5,000 square miles is roughly 3,200,000 acres, which is nearly as large as some States and represents a tremendous block of country when it is considered that it is to be held by one applicant for an unlimited time.

The company desiring this amendment, the Australian Mining and Smelting Co. Ltd., proposes to expend large sums of money within the State to prospect for salts of sodium, magnesium, beryllium, calcium—of which I desire to say something at a later stage—strontium and potassium. It is realised that some of these minerals are urgently required for the manufacture of fertilisers, and because of that they will become exceedingly important to Western Australia, knowing as we do that farmers are constantly crying out for additional supplies of super., and knowing further that there are more difficulties ahead of the Government of Western Australia for a long time to come in regard to the supply of super. It can readily be understood, therefore, that the question of added supplies of super. is important. In the cricumstances, we should be grateful that this company is actively seeking to obtain fresh supplies of these minerals. When introducing this measure, the Minister stated that prospectors would be granted areas for the mining of alkali and alkaline earth minerals.

As the member for Murchison stated, gold is not an associate of any of those minerals which this company seeks to mine, and I therefore do not think that the amendment will give any Goldfields member much concern. Because prospectors are covered, I have no objection to the clause. As stated by the member for Murchison, another aspect is raised, namely, that by granting this large area it has been suggested that it should be granted for the purpose of mining calcium, if found. Calcium strikes a different note; even though it is a necessary constituent in the manufacture of super. it is associated with gypsum. In order to ascertain the true meaning of "calcium," I referred to vol. 2 of "The Modern World Encyclopædia" and, although published in 1935, it gives the following interesting definition of "calcium"—

> Calcium is a metallic element belonging to the group known as the rare earths.

Several times throughout the Bill, although the actual words "rare earths" are not used, the reference definitely deals with "rare earths." It continues—

> It is not found free in nature, but in combination it is extremely widely distributed. The most important calcium mineral is the carbonate, $CaCO_3$, which is to be found in the form of limestone, marble, chalk, dolomite, etc.

Here, the word "dolomite" again brings to my mind the strong lode which is to be worked by this company in its Bullfinch holding. That is the company to which I previously referred and not the one anticipating the finding of these minerals. The Western Mining Corporation has, as one of its northern lodes, a dolomite lode in asso-

ciation with gold. So again calcium enters into the question of dolomite areas mined by the Western Mining Corporation. I make that point because I do not want there to be any conflict. Having realised that calcium is associated with dolomite, we must appreciate that calcium is one of the minerals for which the smelting company is desirous of prospecting. Reverting to the first amendment embodied in the Bill, one of the elements that the Western Mining Corporation intends to work in no uncertain manner is a dolomite lode. The definition I have referred to goes on to state, with reference to dolomite—

> The latter is a double carbonate of calcium and magnesium. Calcium is also found as the sulphate (gypsum) and as the phosphate.

I think that would tend towards some conflict in the interests but emphasises the need for very large reservations where any one company is concerned. However, in that regard I am not too happy with reference to the second amendment that is to be found in the Bill. I think the amendment indicated by the member for for Murchison may have the desired effect. It has not actually been put before us in condensed form, and in the circumstances I will make no further comment on it. This reference to calcium and its association with dolomite and, finally, its association with gypsum, makes it essential that some measure of protection be granted insofar as prospecting for these particular minerals that come within the purview of the Minister are directly concerned. I certainly hope that when the measure is dealt with in Committee, the Minister will give due consideration to the amendment suggested by the member for Murchison.

MR. OLIVER (Boulder) [9.3]: All that members need be concerned about respecting the amendments suggested to the Mining Act is whether what is proposed is good or bad for the country. The future of mining in this State is, in my opinion, bound up with big money, big areas and big development. I would say that all the easy surface gold has been found, and certainly very little of it is left. If the future of mining, whether it be for base metals or gold, is to be secured, operations must be undertaken on a large scale. As I understand it, the Bill is designed to allow companies to acquire large areas. Provision is made that the companies will have to employ adequate labour, but there is also provision for the concentration of all that labour on one or several of the leases that may be held by the company.

Surely that proposal should meet with the approval of members, because if we have regard to present day operations on the Goldfields we must appreciate how successful that method has proved. Several large companies operating on that principle have acquired old and new mines in various parts. They have set up a central plant to which ore from the various mines is carted, often over a distance of 40 miles. In those circumstances, it will be seen how impossible it would be for small operators to undertake such work. It must be done on a large scale. If the proposed amendment to Section 92 means what I have indicated, I cannot see how the House could possibly object to it. Having studied the proposal, I think the Bill provides all the necessary safeguards to ensure that any such large areas that may be held will not be exploited. Companies will have to make reports continuously on their operations and will have to employ the necessary labour.

I readily admit that anything can be exploited if we are lax in policing whatever it may be. If the Minister and his department give the requisite attention to the business, the Act as amended must be successful in its application. When it comes to a matter of prospecting for alkali or other mineral earths, it is necessary to give the operator the right to take up large areas. The position in that regard is not like prospecting for gold. The products are not worth so much, therefore it is but reasonable that anyone prospecting for them should be assured of an adequate reward should he find something worth developing.

The proposal does not require much discussion in the House. What it means must be plain to anyone who has studied the matter at all. The provisions are absolutely necessary if we are to encourage the development of our mining fields. To give members some idea of what is required with deep alluvial mining, it is thought that south of the Golden Mile, between Boulder and Norseman, there is a string of lakes in respect of which geologists have developed the idea that below the lakes is an old river bed that contains huge mineral deposits, worn away from the lodes on the Golden Mile. Should that theory be correct, obviously there is a vast amount of wealth hidden beneath the surface and it will cost millions of pounds to extract it.

Mr. Fox: At what depth?

Mr. OLIVER: It is estimated conservatively that it will be found at a depth of 100ft. Members will realise what a tremendous amount of money will be required to work such a proposition. Operations will have to be on a huge scale. When we have regard to the tremendous amount of work and money required to develop such a proposition, I think members should not worry much about passing the Bill, which I support.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. G. P. Wild—Dale—in reply) [9.10]: Having listened to the speeches of three members representing mining constituencies who have indicated their support of the Bill, I feel there is nothing for me to add in reply to the debate.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair, the Minister for Housing in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—STATE (WESTERN AUSTRALIAN) ALUNITE INDUSTRY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (Hon. A. F. Watts—Stirling) [9.12] in moving the second reading said: I do not think it is necessary for me to cover the ground for the need for the introduction of this measure, because it has been discussed already on two or three occasions in this House and will be the subject of further discussion. In consequence, all I propose to do is to summarise the provisions of the Bill, which is quite a short one. Section 9 of the principal Act contemplated that the authority of the Minister to establish, maintain and carry on works should be on land dedicated for the purposes of the Act. Section 10 sets out the procedure by which this land might be dedicated for the purposes of the Act. Until comparatively recent months it had been assumed by the Government that the works etc. established at Chandler, had been established and carried on upon land dedicated for the purposes of the Act.

It was discovered a few months ago that no land had, in fact, been dedicated for that purpose as contemplated by Sections 9 and 10. The Act, I would remind members, was assented to early in January, 1947, and proclaimed a little later in that year. Instead of the dedication, a special reserve had been made of certain land at Chandler which was vested in the names of the individual members of the State (Western Australian) Alunite Industry Board of Management. Legal opinion is that land should have been vested for the purposes of the Act under Section 10 before the works at Chandler were established under the terms of the principal Act.

Part of the works at Chandler are not on the reserve which was vested in the names of the members of the board of management, but on adjoining land. Upon those adjoining Crown lands, certain experiments and research into the economical production of potash have been carried out. It is therefore thought expedient to remove any doubts as to the legality of the works established and carried on on the lands I have mentioned at Lake Chandler, and past and future experiments and research, by having this amending measure.

The first amendment is to authorise experiments and research in relation to the economical production of potash as defined by the principal Act; and since the lands upon which these experiments and research are being conducted are not dedicated, the amendment provides that they may be carried on upon land whether dedicated or not.

The next amendment relates to the power to sell, lease or hire. Here there has been some conflict of legal opinion. The Crown Law officers were of the opinion that the right of the Crown to lease or hire the chattels or plant at Lake Chandler were undoubted. There will be found on the file a memorandum saying that the solicitor for the proposed lessee was also of the same opinion. However, subsequently some conflict of opinion took place between the solicitors advising the company here and the solicitors advising the company in the Eastern States—in Victoria, I understand—and it was considered that, as there was a doubt, and presumably a legitimate doubt, the best thing would be to remove it by an amendment to the statute, which amendment is in the Bill.

The Crown Law officers were of the opinion, and they hold that opinion very strongly, that the matter could be dealt with by regulation under the parent Act; but, as I said, there was some conflict of legal opinion on the subject, and it is considered desirable that any doubt should be removed.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: What did the Minister think about that question?

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I am perfectly satisfied with the Crown Law opinion—or opinions I had better say, as there have been more than one.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Minister is easily satisfied then!

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: As I have already told members, the solicitor for the company in Western Australia, for whom the hon. member would have high regard if I mentioned his name—and I do not want to do it at the moment—also expressed the same opinion. I am inclined to think that the hon. member would admit that that solicitor's opinion might be a good deal better than mine. I am prepared to admit it. Therefore I have no regret in saying that I adhere to the view that the Crown Law Department is correct.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It is extraordinary that you can find a solicitor anywhere who will say that you can take power by regulation which you have not got in the Act.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: It has to be remembered, of course, that there are certain Crown prerogatives which, unless expressly taken from the Crown by legislation—which the parent Act certainly does not do—remain the prerogatives of the Crown. Bear that in mind! However, as I have said, it is

admitted for the purpose of the introduction of this Bill that there may be some legitimate doubt; and in order to remove that doubt, it has been decided to bring this Bill to Parliament. The final clause expressly validates past transactions, as if the amendments now proposed to be inserted had always been in the Act. That summarises the three provisions concerned and I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARIBTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—Mt. Lawley) [9.20] in moving the second reading said: This Bill proposes to amend three principles which are contained in the Arbitration Act. Section 101 of that Act provides that the Arbitration Court shall have jurisdiction to try to determine all charges and offences against the Act or the regulations made thereunder and to inflict punishment on any person convicted before it of any offence. Section 103 provides that the powers and jurisdiction of the court under the last preceding four sections may be exercised by any police or resident magistrate appointed by the Governor as industrial magistrate for the purposes of the Act.

Under the parent Act, there was no provision for an appeal from an industrial magistrate; but in 1949 an amending proviso was added to Section 103 setting out that any party to proceedings before an industrial magistrate might appeal to the court in the prescribed manner from the decision or penalty imposed by the industrial magistrate and the court might reverse, modify or vary the decision or the penalty imposed as the court thought fit.

I am informed by the President of the Arbitration Court that the amendment has materially assisted in the efficient administration of the work of the court. But in his opinion the section gives no authority to the court to re-hear a case or to remit it to the magistrate. Nor does it give power to take evidence or power in all cases efficiently or fully to administer justice according to the demands of the particular circumstances. So the proposed amendment will give power to the court to re-hear a matter, to remit it to the magistrate, to draw inferences of fact, and generally enlarges the appellant powers of the court. That is the first proposed amendment.

The next amendment affects Sections 108 A, B and C, which give authority for a conciliation commissioner to deal with certain matters that may be referred to him. Section 108C provides that any party to any proceeding before a conciliation commissioner may within the time and in the manner prescribed appeal to the court from any decision, award or order made by the conciliation commissioner and the court shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine the appeal.

In the view of the president of the court the particular authority given by that section does not give the court the full scope necessary to adjudicate on an appeal and to decide the issues and remedy the position on all occasions. So this Bill extends the power of the court to deal with an appeal from the conciliation commissioner. It will give the court power to confirm, reverse, vary, amend, rescind, set aside or quash the decision, the subject of the appeal and to remit the whole or part of the case to the conciliation commissioner with or without the observations or opinion of the court and whether for report to the court or for determination.

The third amendment deals with Part X of the Act. This makes provision for giving jurisdiction to the Arbitration Court to deal with Government employees, including members of the Civil Service Association. This part was added to the Act in 1935. In its existing form, Part X restricts the jurisdiction of the Arbitration Court to Government officers whose annual salary is less than £700 and further provides that, in respect of officers to whom the part applies, their salaries shall be subject to variation in the basic wage calculated in multiples of £5 annually.

Reclassifications since the passing of the Act, and increases in remuneration owing to basic wage rises, have raised the salary ranges of officers to whom it was intended the Act should apply above the limits of £700 per annum. The total increases from basic wage adjustments from the 1st January, 1936, have been £189 for the metropolitan area and £210 for country districts. In fact, it has been administratively impossible to apply the limit of £699 to the classes and grades fixed by the court.

Had the provisions of the Act been strictly applied, it would have meant the progressive removal of officers from the scope of arbitration as the rate of their annual salaries, including basic wage increases, increased above £699, and would also have involved distinctions between similar classes of officers according to their vocation because of the higher basic wage rate determined by the Arbitration Court for "other areas." In order to avoid these difficulties, it has been necessary to con-

clude agreements with the Civil Service Association, based on the intention of Part X of the Act, and not on the strictly legal interpretation of its provisions. This Bill seeks to overcome these difficulties and to give effect to the spirit and intention of the Act when it was originally passed.

The provisions of the Bill deal with the problem by fixing a rate of salary as at the 1st July, 1950, which may subsequently become variable by basic wage increases or decreases, but which will always be associated with a distinctive grading in the classification of government officers; especially those who come under the Public Service Act, and those whose salaries are regulated by Public Service scales. This will be known as the "justiciable salary" for which a definition is prescribed in the Bill. A clear and permanent line of demarcation between officers within and without the scope of the Industrial Arbitration Act will be drawn by the application of the "justiciable salary"—those receiving that and below will come within the provisions of the Industrial Arbitration Act, and those above will not.

The salary rate of £860 per annum for the metropolitan area, and its equivalent in other areas as at the 1st July, 1950, is considered to represent the point in the classification of the Public Service, and other Government officers to whom Part X of the Act applies, where the division between the senior ranks—including senior administrative and senior profesional officers—and subordinate officers is most clearly defined.

The only other amendment included in the Bill is to give effect to variations in the basic wage by the annual equivalent calculated to the nearest one pound instead of by variations of multiples of five pounds as provided for in the Act. Variations to the nearest pound have, by agreement with the Civil Service Association, been in operation since the 1st January, 1946, and the amendment is required to give effect to a practice that has become recognised procedure approved under the Industrial Arbitration Court.

Officers who occupy positions outside the scope of the Arbitration Court will not have their salaries adjusted by basic wage variations of one pound but will, as in the past, be subject to adjustments of £20 or such other sum as may be determined by the Public Service Commissioner, under the obligation imposed on him to ensure that the salaries of officers in the non-arbitration group are maintained and varied with reasonable consistency with the variations in the salary rates of officers under arbitration conditions. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

BILL—AGRICULTURE PROTECTION BOARD.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 24th October.

MR. MANN (Avon Valley) [9.34]: I do not intend to keep the House long in discussing this matter, but I want to refer to the Royal Commission on vermin which was appointed a few years ago and which consisted of three members from this side of the House and two from the other side. I regret that the findings of that Royal Commission have not been brought down in the Bill. I am a farmer and I realise the serious dangers facing the State from vermin. We in the southern parts are pestered with rabbits, those in the northern parts by dogs and emus and those in the middle part by emus also.

The members of that Royal Commission travelled extensively and took a lot of evidence. We felt that there was only one solution to the rabbit problem and that was the use of mobile gangs to root them out and make a proper job of it. That Commission sat five years ago and time seems to have altered opinions. I realise that the question of labour and equipment is serious today and nobody knows this better than the farmer. I received a letter today from the Minister for Agriculture in New South Wales, who informed me that that State is prepared to spend £500,000 on the eradication of vermin. Yet we in this State are to spend approximately £100,000. That will not go nearly far enough.

We are faced today with a terrific problem to which there are two aspects. One is the complete eradication of the pest by manpower and the other is the use of netting. Netting is very costly these days and we are forced to buy foreign netting at a cost of £148 a mile as against Australian netting at £50 a mile. Our orders for Australian netting cannot be fulfilled for five years. If three or four farmers adjoining each other, on holdings of probably 1,000 acres or 2,000 acres each, were to net the outside boundary of the holdings they could control rabbits. There is nothing in the Bill to give such people any assistance. Our property is fairly free of rabbits and we have spent a good deal of money on their eradication. We were fairly heavily infested at one time and there is a good deal of Crown land not far from the property. We used a dam plough to plough up and down and we have found that the only other solution to the problem is laricide. That is a form of mustard gas and is the only fumigant we have found successful in eradicating the vermin.

If the Government had carried out the recommendations of the Royal Commission and taxed all land in Western Australia, instead of taking the money from

Consolidated Revenue, it would have done a much better job. That would have given the people of the rural areas assistance from all the people of the State. I am most concerned with the principle because that was the recommendation of the Royal Commission and it would have meant that people in Perth would have been helping the farmers. But apparently the Government is not prepared to bring down a Bill on a taxation basis. No doubt it thought that the metropolitan people would oppose such a move. If it were done it would mean only a few shillings on city properties, but would build up a fund which would considerably help farmers. Reverting to the question of mobile gangs! Today it is possible to buy a ripper. The Government could purchase 500 of them and the cost would not be more than £30,000.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Is the taxation on city property, at a flat rate, Liberal Party policy?

Mr. MANN: Not being conversant with all the sections of the Liberal Party policy, I will allow the Minister, when replying, to answer the hon. member's question.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot get me on that point.

Mr. MANN: The only other question is the destruction of warrens. There is nothing, touching that aspect, in the Bill. It does not say how the position is to be controlled. I think there should be a protection board which should have control—it should not be done by local governing authorities—and be able to say, "We will set aside certain areas and those farmers who are not prepared to do the work themselves will have to permit people to go on to their properties to eradicate vermin." That would destroy the vermin and the farmers could continue the work. During the war years, vermin took tremendous toll and there are millions of warrens not only on farms but also on Crown lands. The farmers did not have a chance to keep them down because they could not obtain the manpower.

Mr. Nalder: What sort of inspections would you have?

Mr. MANN: I would not have the present system of inspection. An inspector could inspect a large area and then find out the worst properties. The railways are one of our worst offenders. Some of the land along railway lines is honeycombed with warrens. One day I did see a man with a tin throwing out baits along the railway line. Apparently he thought the rabbits would come up and take them.

The Minister for Lands: We will deal with the railways.

Mr. MANN: I hope the Minister does. We have to face up to the question of rabbit extermination. I do not know whether aerial baiting is successful, but the question of dogs, emus and kangaroos is one that needs urgent attention. The danger to Western Australia from vermin is terrific. I intend to support the Bill in order to see what can be done. If it is not successful we can deal with it again in 12 months' time.

The Minister for Lands: That opportunity will be given.

Mr. MANN: I would like to see the use of phosphorous poison prohibited. I will not use it on my property and I do not care whether the law demands it or not. It is a most brutal system of poisoning and, apart from that fact, the dead rabbits lie around for days causing toxic paralysis in stock and destroying bird life. I sincerely hope that phosphorous poisoning will be abolished. To my mind the way to deal with rabbits is to use strychnine. If one uses half an ounce of strychnine to a kerosene tin of oats the rabbits can be dealt with in a much more humane way than with phosphorous poisoning.

I am sorry the Government did not give full effect to the findings of the Royal Commission. We spent six months on the commission. I think we did a good job and so did the Premier and the Deputy Premier, who were both members of it. But it is strange how circumstances alter the views of mankind. If we want to get the perfect Act then let us put into practice the principles embodied in the findings of that Royal Commission. I think the farmer is prepared to pay a high tax if something can be done, and I consider that all the citizens of the State should contribute towards the cost of the eradication of vermin.

Mr. J. Hegney: Would you give authority to the inspector to enter and see that the farmers did poison?

Mr. MANN: I would.

Mr. J. Hegney: There would be considerable difficulty.

Mr. MANN: Not very much.

Mr. J. Hegney: I was told during the weekend that there would be.

Mr. MANN: The hon. member probably went down south. I did not know that they had any rabbits down there. I suppose the hon. member went on this whitewashing trip! However, that is getting away from the subject.

Mr. J. Hegney: No, that is rabbits.

Mr. MANN: I hope something can be done because this is a most serious matter. If New South Wales, which is a smaller State than this, can find £500,000 for the eradication of vermin, the Government should find much more than that which it proposes to make available. The most just system of finding money is by taxation. That is a true democratic method.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The Premier recommended that.

Mr. MANN: I do not care what it costs the Government as long as vermin are eradicated so that production may be increased.

MR. HOAR (Warren) [9.46]: While this Bill does not include quite a number of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, I think it nevertheless can be taken as a serious contribution on the part of the Government in the attempt to destroy vermin, or at least to keep them under effective control. That is a very important step indeed, because up till now we have been doing nothing but flounder about in our endeavours to control or eradicate vermin. There has been plenty of criticism levelled at farmers generally and in some cases at vermin boards—at those who have not done their cut, one might say—in respect of this important work in country areas. The weakness of the whole set-up has come from the top.

There has never been any vigorous attempt on the part of the advisory committee, responsible for advising the Government, to achieve some overall State plan whereby we may obtain uniformity of action in certain areas adequately to control vermin. That has never occurred in the past. Under the original Act there is plenty of power for the Minister to do what he is now seeking to do, but which never has been done. That Act was further amended in 1946 by the previous administration which altered the set-up of the advisory committee to a considerable extent in an endeavour to increase its powers and today, four years after that amendment, there is no driving force behind the efforts of the Government as to the destruction of vermin. We have to face the situation.

It is no use amending Acts of Parliament unless we are going to infuse some enthusiasm into the officials appointed from time to time. The fact that the Government intends to make up from Consolidated Revenue the sum of about £105,000 a year should infuse that enthusiasm into the advisory committee in charge of this work. Previously, although power has been given under the Act for the advisory committee to make recommendations to the Government from which they might ultimately receive a sum of money, I have never heard of its happening yet. Therefore, any enthusiasm which responsible officers on the committee might have had, has immediately been dampened by reason of the fact that they have never had enough money to work with, or at least not much more than that required for their administration costs.

If we are going to pump in a large sum of money for the destruction of vermin and noxious weeds, then I imagine that the committee in charge of this money will be able to develop that enthusiasm and vigour which have been so noticeably absent in the past. I think it is an excellent suggestion that the Railway Department should contribute something towards this fund. We have known for a long time that vermin, like bushfires, are no respecters of road boards. They find their way into agricultural country and as a rule are most selective. In my opinion this has been responsible for the breeding of vermin that has ultimately found its way to the more developed areas of the State.

Ever since I had the experience of serving on that commission I have believed that every department and person in any way associated with vermin and its destruction, or responsible for its growth and development, should contribute a sum of money so that a State-wide plan might be evolved. If this new advisory committee, which the Minister proposes, utilises the money which is now to be made available to it, and has the oportunity of borrowing say a further £100,000 a year, I think it should be a medium of bringing to light a plan or policy that will cover the whole of the agricultural areas of the State, so far as vermin and noxious weeds are concerned, in a manner from which some effective good might be anticipated

In regard to the Royal Commission's proposal about mobile units, I know from my own experience in country areas that there are road boards that are able to do a reasonably good job in their vermin district as a result of their being able to impose the necessary rating. But there are other smaller road boards and vermin boards which, because of scarcity of population in their areas, are unable to raise the necessary money for a full-scale onslaught on vermin in their particular locality. That being so, I have always subscribed to the view that the Government should consider this matter as a State responsibility. It is not much use one road board making a good job of its area if another, through lack of enthusiasm or money, is neglecting its responsibilities. Once that position arises, in the case of rabbits at any rate, we have this continuous problem.

The present suggestion to constitute a fund, part of the money to come from Consolidated Revenue and part from loan, will give the central committee something to work on. I do not know that it is altogether an equitable way of financing a fund although, of course, coming as it does from Consolidated Revenue the taxpayers generally will contribute some small amount to it in the metropolitan and urban areas. Nevertheless, nearly the whole of the cost in regard to the destruction of vermin must be borne by local areas and by the local vermin board districts. I would like to see a policy evolved by the Government where a more direct approach could be made to the recommendations contained in the report of the commission. I am not of the opinion that this Bill is not going to be useful, because I think it is

something better than anything we have seen up to now, and from that point of view I intend to support it.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay—in reply) [9.55]: I will reply briefly to some of the remarks of the member for Melville, but I intend to do so fully on the Vermin Bill because, when he addressed this House, he had very little to say about the Agriculture Protection Board and confined most of his remarks to the Vermin Bill. I would be offending against the principles of this House, therefore, if I attempted to deal with the Vermin Bill. The hon. member did raise some doubts as to who were responsible for this Bill and I made certain remarks which I have checked and which I have found correct. I told him when he was debating the measure that to a very large extent the officers of the Department of Agriculture prepared this measure.

I do agree, of course, that the requests of the Government regarding the Bill and some of the clauses were also given effect to, but I have ascertained that the department is very keen indeed to have this Bill we are now considering placed on the statute book. After all, I feel it is an excellent set-up as a machinery Bill to assist in controlling the vermin within the State. The hon. member expressed some doubt—and I think he has amendments to that effect—about members of the board being actively engaged in the industry, but that deals with the Vermin Bill—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I think it deals with the protection board.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member challenged my remark that it has been quite the usual thing for the powers that be to appoint representatives of an industry. I suggested that under certain legislation it is stated that "a member of the industry or a representative of the industry," and I would like to remind the hon. member that in 1946 he amended the Vermin Act making provisions for representatives of the industry to be appointed to the Vermin Board. I feel that if he confines and restricts the provisions to a person who is actively engaged in the industry—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I thought you said you were following out the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Very largely, yes.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It recommended what I suggested to you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member is restricting the choice, because we know there are many very capable men who have practically put in a lifetime in an industry and have now retired. I have nothing in view regarding them except that we want to be able to appoint a man of that ability if we so desire. We know we had Mr. Paterson—I think he is still on the Vermin Board—a man who had a large experience of wild dogs and the handling and trapping of dingoes. A man of his experience would be very useful if the Government saw fit to appoint him. Although the hon. member would not agree that we should have this choice, he himself had the Act amended in 1946 to make a similar provision.

Mention of mobile units was made by the member for Beverley and the member for Warren. I quite agree that these units would be a most effective way of contributing to the control of vermin but, as I have already pointed out, we have not made provision for them for the time being because we realise that they would be most expensive to operate.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: And would cost approximately half a million.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Such units would be most effective. They could be operated on the spot and could undertake work urgently needed for the control of vermin. Where a farmer was not doing the job properly, one of these mobile units would go on to his property and do the work. In the light of the experience to be gained during the next 12 months, we might find that further amendments will be needed to improve the operation of the measure, and I shall be pleased to consider any suggestions to that end.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—The Agriculture Protection Board of Western Australia:

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If this legislation is going to operate satisfactorily, we must have a board capable of reaching a decision and giving effect to it. I had hoped that the Minister would explain what was intended by the voting provisions, which are not clear. Does he intend that in no circumstances shall a member of the board have more than one vote?

The Minister for Lands: I had certain ideas in mind. It might be necessary to give the chairman a casting vote.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I read the Bill as meaning that in no circumstances would any member of the board have more than one vote.

The Minister for Lands: That is correct.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That being so, a stage may be reached where the knowledgable men of the department would always be in a minority and could never

have their point of view carried out, because the chairman would not have a vote at all unless the voting were equal.

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: With a board of eight, there would be seven members to vote, and there would not be an equality of voting. Consequently, the chairman would not have a vote. The departmental officers would be in a minority the whole time and the departmental point of view would be in danger of being submerged. A weakness of the existing legislation has been that the departmental officers have not been in a position to have their wishes carried out, because vermin boards declined to take action. When the boards should have proceeded against offenders, they neglected to do so. The same weakness will obtrude here unless a majority of opinion is strong enough to take disciplinary action, and we shall not have a majority opinion under the Minister's proposal. In order that the departmental view may be effective, I suggest that the board be increased from eight to nine. The Royal Commission recommended 13; that is somewhat large, but eight would be an unfortunate number in view of the way the voting has been arranged. The additional member should be a departmental officer. I move an amendment—

> That in line 1 of Subclause (2) the word "eight" be struck out and the word "nine" inserted in lieu.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I accept the amendment. I hesitated about the hon. member's question because I had thought of giving the chairman a deliberative and a casting vote.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is a bad principle.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; this will be much better.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think that the additional member should be the Director of Agriculture, and that he should be the chairman. It would not be right that he should be on the board in a position inferior to that of the Chief Inspector of Vermin. In order to give effect to my proposal, it will be necessary to delete some words from Subclause (3). I move an amendment—

> That in Subclause (3) the words "Chief Inspector appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Vermin Act" be struck out with a view to inserting the words "Director of Agriculture."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot accept the suggestion that the Director should be the chairman. I agree that we should have another departmental officer on the board, because it is essential to have our technical officers in a majority. I hope the hon. member will not press for the appointment of the Director of Agriculture. As a matter of fact, the occupant of the position is Acting Director.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: But the Bill makes provision for men in acting positions.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I should like the Chief Inspector of Vermin to be the chairman. The Director of Agriculture is a very busy man. I have in mind the Chief Inspector of Fisheries who, through his association with the game legislation, has a knowledge of vermin and could be of material assistance to the board. Later on I hope provision will be made for the extra member to be the Chief Inspector of Fisheries.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: With all due deference to the Chief Inspector of Fisheries, my view is that the officers of the Department of Agriculture would have a better knowledge of what ought to be done in regard to the control and eradication of vermin, and that is why I suggest that the extra member should be the Director of Agriculture. I have looked at this from the point of view of the greatest possible efficiency. The officers of the Department of Agriculture would be able to discuss matters departmentally, which would not be possible if the additional member was the Chief Inspector of Fisheries. That gentleman never occurred to the members of the Royal Commission. They believed the chairman of the board should be the Minister for Agriculture.

The Minister for Lands: That is so.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If they thought the Minister should be chairman, then the obvious substitute, if it is not desired that the Minister shall be appointed, is the man who advises the Minister—the Director. To suggest the Chief Inspector of Fisheries seems to me to be weakening the construction of the board. The commission said, "The most salutary power to be given to the agriculture protection board will be the power to supersede the local vermin board and appoint a commissioner to take its place." I agree with that, and in order to see that such effective action is taken, we must have a strong board. If we have the Director of Agriculture in association with the Chief Inspector and the Government Entomologist, as provided for in the Bill, we would have officers of the department who could be in close touch with each other and discuss matters quite freely, and they would be in a position to argue strongly on the board.

Mr. Hearman: What about the Rural Bank Commissioner?

The Minister for Lands: Why not allow me to have a little bit of a say?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think that probably a Commissioner of the Rural Bank would be a more satisfactory man on the board than the Chief Inspector of Fisheries.

The Attorney General: He is the Chief Warden of Game, and it is in that capacity that he would be appointed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I am not speaking disparagingly of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries, but his activities are almost wholly confined to looking after the fisheries of the State. He might nominally be a protector of game, but I do not think he does very much in that way.

The Attorney General: It is hoped he will be very interested in fauna.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes, but this is a board to get rid of fauna. It is not a question of protecting certain animals, but of taking effective means to eradicate some. A Commissioner of the Rural Bank would have an appreciation of what is necessary to get rid of the vermin, but there again I see some weakness. If we have departmental officers they would talk over these matters with the Director of Agriculture and he would be au fait with the ideas and proposals of the Chief Inspector.

The Attorney General: Would not they need to have one mind? The Director of Agriculture and the Chief Inspector of Vermin would be speaking with one mind.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I hope they would on this matter, because it is fundamental that we should have a clear-cut policy. The real weakness so far has been the reluctance of local vermin boards to take action against those who are lagging. The board suggested here would not take the necessary disciplinary action unless it was in a strong position. I think the Minister would make his position more difficult and weaken his legislation if he discarded my suggestion to appoint the Director of Agriculture to the board instead of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries. If the Minister insists, I suppose I should let him have his way, but I feel he will not get the strength on the board which he could otherwise have.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have no doubt about the strength of the board. The hon. member raised the question of the Minister for Agriculture being chairman. He would only be a nominal chairman. To strengthen the board I think it is better for an experienced officer to be chairman, and give the Minister the power of veto. One feature which I feel is not quite fair is that the Chief Vermin Control Officer has taken a great interest in the legislation and has done a tremendous amount of work in the drafting of it.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Do you propose to give him a vote?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He should be chairman.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The legislation provides that he will not have a vote, unless the voting is equal.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We shall come to that. If he has a casting vote, it still leaves the voting power on the side of our experts. The position could not arise with a board of nine that could arise with a board of eight.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Yes it could , because there is no guarantee that all will be present on each occasion.

The Premier: Why are you so worried if he has a casting vote?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: There is no suggestion of a casting vote. The provision is that the chairman gets no vote.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so unless the voting is equal. If the Director of Agriculture goes on the board, owing to his seniority, he must supersede the Chief Vermin Inspector.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I think it is desirable

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not because, after all, the Director of Agriculture has no knowledge of vermin and since the hon. member's amendment has been on the notice paper, he has not been keen on the appointment, but has shown that he does not want the job.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Has he too much to do?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I take it he has. He is administering a busy department. It is the wish of the Government that the Controller of Vermin be the chairman. I hope the Committee will support my contention. I also hope that the member for Melville will agree, after all that the Chief Protector of Fauna will strengthen the board.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If the Minister had indicated what he proposed to do with regard to the voting, I would be much happier. There is not much sense in putting the Chief Inspector of Vermin on the committee and then depriving him of a vote.

The Minister for Lands: I now indicate that I will give him a vote.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Before the Minister moves his next amendment, I think he should explain the provision relating to the Chief Inspector of Vermin in Subclause (3). The Minister eliminates him by the Vermin Act.

The Minister for Lands: He is not eliminated yet.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then what about an explanation?

The Minister for Lands: He is not eliminated yet. It is on the advice of the Crown Law Department that this procedure is being followed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: What happens if we agree that the Chief Inspector of Vermin shall be the chairman and subsequently pass the Vermin Bill?

The Minister for Lands: The Interpretation Act makes provision for him to go back. That is the advice I have received

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It seems to me to be back to front. We speak of appointing the Chief Inspector of Vermin as chairman and in immediately following legislation we provide for the abolition of that position and the setting up of a vermin control officer. Why not say that the vermin control officer shall be chairman of the board? If we do not pass the Vermin Bill this provision will be no good.

The Attorney General: It will, because the old Act will apply.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Will it? These Bills are complementary to one another.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, but if we lost the Vermin Bill the old Act would remain.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Then this measure would not work as it is intended it should. Why not say straight out that the chief vermin control officer shall be chairman of the board?

The Attorney General: It is a technical matter of drafting and I think we should accept the advice of the Crown Law Department.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would not accept some of the advice it gives from time to time. I think this is the wrong way round. If this is the way of the law, it is a strange way.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move an amendment—

> That in line 12 of Subclause (3) after the words "Deputy Chairman" the words "Chief Warden of Fauna" be inserted.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I wish to make certain that these words are being inserted in the right place. Surely you cannot accept the amendment to insert the words here, Mr. Chairman?

The Minister for Lands: It should be in the next line. It comes after "Deputy Chairman."

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister must not carry on a private conversation with the member who is addressing the Chair.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I think the proper way in which to do it would be to strike out the word "and" at the end of line 12 and add the provision for the additional man at the end of the next line.

The CHAIRMAN: After the words "Deputy Chairman" there is a semi-colon and the amendment is to add the words "Chief Warden of Fauna" after the semi-colon and before the word "and."

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: In his reply to the second reading debate, the Minister indicated that he did not think it necessary to stipulate that representatives ought to be truly representative of the industries from which they were appointed. There is another departure from the recommendations of the Royal Commission. I draw the Minister's attention to page 7 of the report of the Royal Commission which stated—

> Two nominees of the Pastoralists' Association—one to be actively engaged in pastoral pursuits north of the 26th parallel and the other elsewhere in the State at the time of appointment.

So the commission felt that the representatives of the pastoral industry ought to be actively engaged in that industry. It goes on—

> Five nominees of the Road Board Association of Western Australia, at least four of whom shall be farmers and be selected (as far as possible) one from each ward of the association. . .

There again we find the emphasis on men actively engaged in the industry. In this legislation the Minister is definitely departing from the recommendation of the Royal Commission so my amendments are along the lines recommended. I move an amendment—

> That in line 24 of Subclause (3), after the word "authorities" the following words be added:—"the former two representatives to be actively engaged in the pastoral and agricultural industries, respectively, and the latter two representatives to be farmers."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This restricts the choice. It must be realised that there are many capable farmers and pastoralists who retire from the industry at an early age and who would be available to act on this board and would have the time to give to the work. I ask members to reject this amendment. The hon. member when introducing his Bill in 1946 did not adhere to the recommendations of the Royal Commission. There is a Mr. A. Paterson who is on the Vermin Advisory Board. He is a retired station owner and is considered to be the leading expert on wild dog destruction in Western Australia.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I agree with that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He is the pastoral representative and has been on the board for many years and was there when the member for Melville was Minister.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You could not get a better man.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This amendment will restrict the choice.

The Minister for Education: Could not Mr. Paterson be a member of the board if the amendment were passed?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, because he is not actively engaged in the industry. Our expert officers should be able to choose the best men available as long as they are representative of the industry.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister cannot use as an argument what I did when I introduced my Bill, because at no stage did I promise to give full effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on vermin. But the party of which the Minister is a member, did so. Both the Premier and the Deputy Premier were members of this Royal Commission and during the election they stated that they would give effect to its recommendations on vermin. When I introduced amendments to the vermin legislation some years ago members of the Government, who were then on this side of the House, kept asking why we were not giving effect to the recommendations of the commission. Now they are over there they decline to do it.

The Minister for Lands: I take it you are anxious to make the best board possible.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. The man mentioned by the Minister is exceptional, but he will not live forever and his position will have to be filled by somebody else. It will be a better board if the members are truly representative of the industries they purport to represent, instead of being nominally so.

The Minister for Lands: They would be truly representative.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If we provide that they shall be actively engaged in the industry, then they will have a better appreciation of the problems than will men who are spending their time in some other walks of life.

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

Ayes	23
Noes	23
A Tie	0

Ayes.

Mr. Brady	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Oliver
Mr. Fox	Mr. Panton
Mr. Graham	Mr. Read
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Sewell
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Styants
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. May	Mr. Wise
Mr. McCulloch	Mr. Kelly
Mr. Needham	*(Teller.)*

Noes.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Manning
Mr. Ackland	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nalder
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Cornell	Mr. North
Mr. Doney	Mr. Owen
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Griffith	Mr. Totterdell
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hill	Mr. Wild
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Bovell
Mr. Mann	*(Teller.)*

Pair.

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Yates

The CHAIRMAN: The voting being equal, I give my casting vote with the noes.

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I move an amendment—

> That in line 8 of paragraph (6) after the word "present" the words "and where there is an equality of votes the question is to be determined in the negative" be inserted.

The paragraph provides that all matters shall be determined by a majority of members present. A quorum could be formed with less than nine members. As the clause stands, should the voting be equal, the chairman would have no casting vote. Every member of the agriculture protection board should have a vote as well as a voice. We should give them all one vote and no man more than one. Should there be an equality of votes at any one meeting, for instance, where eight members are in attendance, the question should be resolved in the negative, and this would allow it to come up before a full meeting of the board when there would be a majority present.

The Minister for Lands: I was going to give the chairman a casting vote.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not care for that. I would never agree that any man, however good he may be, is worth two other men.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I wish to have some clarity on this paragraph. I do not know whether the member for Melville desires to take any action on the last paragraph.

The Minister for Lands: He will have to. The hon. member is going to, is he not?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Yes.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: As the paragraph stands, the chairman and all other members would have a deliberative vote, and if there is an equality of votes, the question must be resolved in the negative. I cannot agree with the amendment unless the last paragraph is wiped out. That would then ensure the chairman having a deliberative vote. I think that all words after the word "present" down to the end of the paragraph should be struck out.

The Minister for Lands: I agree with that. That is more simple than the amendment moved by the member for Melville.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It does not matter which way we do it, so long as we give effect to our purpose. It will be seen that the amendments which I have on the notice paper provide for the deletion of the word "excluding" and inserting in lieu the word "including". It would then read "each member, including the chairman, shall be entitled to one vote." If

the amendment which I propose to move subsequently were agreed to, it would clear up the point.

The Minister for Lands: I will accept the hon. member's amendment, as already moved.

Amendment put and passed.

On motions by the Hon. J. T. Tonkin, clause further amended by striking out the word "excluding" in line 9 of Subclause (6) and inserting the word "including" in lieu; and by striking out at the end of the subclause the words "but where there is an equality of votes, the chairman shall have a casting vote."

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 11—agreed to.

Clause 12—Emu and Grasshopper Advisory Committee:

On motions by Hon. J. T. Tonkin, clause amended by inserting after the word "present" in line 8 of Subclause (4) the words "and where there is an equality of votes the question is to be determined in the negative"; by striking out the word "excluding" in line 9 and inserting the word "including" in lieu; and by striking out at the end of the subclause the words "but where there is an equality of votes, the chairman shall have a casting vote."

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 33—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 11.9 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 1st November, 1950.

CONTENTS.

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

QUESTIONS.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Metropolitan Services and Meters.

Hon. W. J. MANN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What was the number of water services being provided by the Metropolitan Water Supply Department at the 30th June, 1950?

(2) How many of such services were fitted with water meters at the same date?

(3) What was the percentage of unmetered premises drawing water from the Department's mains at the 30th June, in the years 1940 to 1950, inclusive and respectively?

(4) Is the Government aware that considerable waste of water is being occasioned and consequent loss of revenue sustained because of unrestricted water services permitted?

(5) If so, what steps does the Government propose to remedy the position?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 79,835.

(2) 49,370.