

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 26th October, 1954.

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The Abattoir Board has experienced considerable industrial difficulties since taking over the operational control of the abattoir last July, and has full authority granted by Parliament for dealing with administrative adjustments which may be necessary as the result of operational difficulties including stoppages. The board has already granted remissions of agistment charges to the extent deemed reasonable to operators when they have been obliged to hold sheep and lambs in the lairages or yards for a longer period than normal owing to stoppages, and it is reasonable to assume that consideration will be given to adjustment of charges as a result of the strike last week.

It should be borne in mind, however, that prior to the establishment of the Abattoir Board—when operators made their own arrangements for holding stock and for slaughter—the whole of any additional costs of feeding as the result of any stoppage would have been borne by the operator. Since the 6th July, 1954, at which date the board assumed operational control, there have been 23 stoppages lasting from 15 minutes to three days, in which a total remittance of £1,216 2s. 6d. has been made to operators. This has been incurred as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
July, 1954	475	9	0
August, 1954	330	10	0
September, 1954	232	18	11
October, 1954	177	4	7
	1,216	2	6

I have been very concerned, since the board took over the operational control of the abattoir last July, at the general dissatisfaction which seems to have developed not only amongst operatives at the abattoir, but amongst the trade generally, and I have found considerable difficulty—because of the many interests involved and the ramifications of the trade generally, particularly during the winter and spring months when the complications of the export lamb slaughterings occur—in obtaining a clear picture of the real cause of dissatisfaction. Because of this, as long ago as the middle of August consideration was given to seeking advice from an Australian authority upon the various aspects of the administration and organisation of the Midland Junction Abattoir. It is extremely difficult to obtain a suitable person to carry out such a wide investigation, and the two gentlemen so far approached have unfortunately been unable to comply with the request.

The more recent complaint made by the member for Greenough regarding the inability of the meat export works at Robbs Jetty to slaughter certain types of stock now offering is, however, another question and is due primarily to the very poor

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

Midland Junction Abattoir Dispute, Etc.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Last Thursday the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Greenough asked a number of questions regarding the slaughtering of stock at the Midland Junction Abattoir, and arrangements for the feeding and watering of stock which could not be slaughtered as the result of a strike at the abattoir.

season being experienced. It is not a question of lack of facilities, as the meat export works could slaughter at least five times the present quantity of stock offering if manpower were available to operate the chains. Every effort has been made by the management and every avenue explored to obtain sufficient men to start another chain, but there does not appear to be any likelihood—unless there is a curtailment of operations at Kwinana—of such labour being available immediately.

It has been suggested that the problem could be overcome by increasing the number which may be slaughtered by private operators under licence. The Government has spent considerable sums in providing facilities at Midland Junction and at the meat works at Robbs Jetty, capable of handling all stock which are available, subject to labour conditions. Where, however, for any reason these works are unable to slaughter stock, arrangements can be made—and have been made in the past—whereby a permit can be granted for exceeding the weekly kill granted by licence. The Government, however, is opposed to increasing the licence, as under normal conditions this would reduce the quantity handled by the Government works, which would ultimately lead to increased charges for slaughtering and might result in an overall increase in the cost of meat, or the killing charges for stock exported.

The present situation is not due entirely to the strike, but to two other major factors which have developed in Western Australia. Firstly, the saleyards at Midland Junction Abattoir—which were originally intended for fat stock sales for the provision of meat for the metropolitan area—have gradually developed into a general trading market, in which more stock are sometimes sold to graziers than for slaughtering purposes. The nominated yardings last week, for instance, were approximately 42,000 head, whereas the number required for the local market was not more than 15,000. It is agreed that some of this stock would be purchased for export, but a considerable amount returned to the farming areas, having been purchased by graziers.

It is unreasonable to expect that facilities for the immediate slaughter of an unknown number of stock can be always available at either Government or private works. Private works are in a position to safeguard themselves by purchasing or accepting nomination of stock that they can handle, whereas the Government-operated works are apparently expected to come in at this stage and provide facilities for an unknown number of stock and usually the most unprofitable types of stock to be handled. In other States it is usual for three weeks' notice to be given before stock are forwarded; and, although this is a condition of marketing at export works in this State, only a proportion of farmers definitely book reservations. At

the meat export works there are no nominations beyond the 8th November at present, and it might be inferred that stock would not be available for export after that date. This is the second major point which makes it difficult to plan ahead for the slaughtering of stock.

I have been concerned—like the member for Greenough—at the position which may develop because of the poor season and, after making allowances for a metropolitan requirement of 15,000 sheep and lambs per week, and also because it is unlikely that the labour position will improve at either Midland Junction or the export works. Assuming that the export of lambs will taper off rapidly after the 8th November, it may be reasonable to expect the existing works to handle some 200,000 sheep and lambs during the three months, November to January, covering those suitable for export, for storage for local trade, and for canning. If necessary, this rate could be continued later in the year.

However, it appears essential that some consideration by farmers and agents should be given to nominating approximate numbers which will be sent down both to the export works or to the Midland market. I know there are difficulties in this, particularly where road transport is concerned, but at this juncture it seems unfair that farmers—who have to send their stock some distance either by road or rail and nominate their sales—should run the risk of competing with unnominated stock which have been run in from nearby districts by road. As many as 6,000 sheep have arrived by road at Midland Junction with notice. I feel that there is room for very close collaboration during the next few weeks between all interested parties in overcoming a problem which has been brought about suddenly by an adverse season.

QUESTIONS.

JUNIOR FARMERS' CLUBS.

As to Financial Assistance, Organisers, etc.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Education:

(1) What was the amount expended in respect of the junior farmers' organisation in each of the financial years 1946-47 to 1953-54, inclusive?

(2) What is the amount provided for expenditure thereon this financial year?

(3) How many district organisers fully engaged in Junior Farmers' Club work were there in the year 1952?

(4) How many district organisers are there now?

(5) Have any, if so, what changes been made in the organisational set-up since the 1st March, 1953?

(6) If such changes have been made, when were they made?

(7) How many clubs were actively functioning at the end of 1952?

(8) How many clubs are actively functioning now?

(9) Have any, and if so, how many new clubs been formed since the end of 1952?

(10) How many, and which, clubs are now in recess?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 1946-47, £915; 1947-48, £1,008; 1948-49, £1,941; 1949-50, £3,242; 1950-51, £4,449; 1951-52, £5,916; 1952-53, £4,385; 1953-54, £3,800.*

* The drop in 1953-54 was occasioned by difficulty in filling a vacant position for portion of the year.

(2) £4,650.

(3) For part of the year there were four full-time district organisers.

(4) No full-time district organisers, but eight part-time district organisers as well as the State organiser and the assistant State organiser.

(5) (a) The Minister's State Advisory Committee has been set up and first met on the 16th December, 1953, in the presence of the Minister for Education.

(b) A full-time assistant State organiser (male) was appointed from the 1st March, 1954.

(c) A half-time office assistant has been provided by the Education Department. Approval was recently given for a full-time secretary to replace the part-time assistant.

(d) Part-time organisers, as described in No. (4) were appointed from time to time until the number now totals eight.

(6) Answered by No. (5).

(7) Seventy-seven.

(8) Eighty.

(9) 1953, six new and four re-formed ones; 1954, six up to date.

(10) Fifteen—Bolgart, Moora, Pinjarra, Balingup, Denmark, Katanning, Kent District, Narembeen, Pingaring, Nannup, Cookernup, Dongara, Donnybrook, Píawaning, Willyabrup.

Nine of these have been in recess for several years and one is in process of joining forces with a neighbouring active club.

COUNTRY SWIMMING POOLS.

(a) *As to Applications and Government Policy.*

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Treasurer:

(1) What districts, if any, have applied for financial assistance to construct swimming pools?

(2) What centres have been assisted or promised assistance, and to what extent?

(3) What is the policy in regard to aid to country centres to construct swimming pools?

The TREASURER replied:

(1) Derby, Merredin and Cunderdin have applied in writing during the present Government's term of office.

(2) Derby to the extent of £2,000 and Merredin £10,000. Other country centres, including Goomalling and Northam which have not actually applied in writing for assistance, have been advised of the Government's policy.

(3) The policy of the Government is to make available one-third of the total cost of an approved swimming pool with a maximum payment by the Government of £10,000. To be eligible for assistance the plans for a particular swimming pool must first be approved by the Government, as must be the actual construction of the pool.

Centres within 35 miles of the sea coast are not regarded as being eligible for assistance, unless there are special circumstances, as at Derby, where the sea waters are shark infested.

(b) *As to Subsidising Local Governing Bodies.*

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Works:

Will he subsidise local governing bodies in the eastern suburbs for the purpose of building swimming pools to take the place of the swimming sites along the Swan River now held suspect by health authorities, or will the river be made fit for swimming purposes?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Works) replied:

No. Steps are continually being taken to improve the condition of the river and consideration is being given to amending legislation to ensure greater control.

(c) *As to Cost of Financing Government Assistance.*

Mr. CORNELL (without notice) asked the Treasurer:

Can he give the House a clue on the ultimate cost of implementing the Government's plan to finance the construction of swimming pools in country centres? Will there be sufficient money in the Treasury to meet all the claims which may be made, or will it be a case of the early bird catching the worm?

The TREASURER replied:

I am a little upset by the last few words of the question, by which the hon. member suggests that it might be a case of the early bird catching the worm. It could be a case of the early bird catching the bird. However, it would not be possible to say, with any degree of accuracy, how much the Government might have to spend over a period of years in helping public-spirited committees in country centres to

establish swimming pools. The expenditure of Government finance under this heading will depend upon the initiative of local citizens.

Where local people decide to construct a swimming pool, it will be necessary for them first to raise a considerable amount of money by their own efforts. Some local authorities that set out to do this will succeed, but I am afraid quite a number will fail because it is not easy to raise locally the substantial amount of money which would be required in most instances. However, the Government is convinced that any funds spent under this heading, no matter how the total might grow over the years, would be spent in a very good cause, because the establishment and operation of swimming pools in country centres will provide a very good local amenity and therefore to some substantial extent this would be a very appreciable encouragement to decentralisation.

RAILWAYS.

As to Northcliffe-Nornalup Line and Road Transport.

Mr. HILL asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is there any possibility of the Northcliffe-Nornalup railway being constructed in the reasonably near future?

(2) If the answer is in the negative, will the Government provide road transport with charges comparable to railway charges from the South-West to Albany?

(3) Alternatively, will the Government allow private road transport to operate from, say, Bridgetown and southward to Albany without restriction by the Transport Board?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) It is not the policy of the Government to provide road transport below operating cost where land has not been settled on the faith of unfulfilled promises of railways.

(3) In accordance with the State Transport Co-ordination Act, so long as existing services can cater for traffic, the duplicating of services cannot be introduced. Unless the Bridgetown-Northcliffe and the Nornalup-Elleker lines are closed, the operation of an unrestricted service as suggested could not be approved.

FENCE POSTS.

As to Availability and Royalties.

Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) Is he aware that forestry officers, when approached by farmers to make timber available for fence posts frequently select timber from areas that have recently been cut out by timber mills?

(2) Is he aware that such timber as is left after timber milling operations have been completed in an area is nearly always most unsuitable and uneconomic for utilisation as fence posts?

(3) Would he go into this matter with a view to making available to farmers timber that is suitable for splitting into fence posts?

(4) When was the royalty on fence posts first imposed?

(5) Has any alteration in the rate of royalty taken place recently, and if so, to what extent has the rate been altered?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(3) Yes.

(4) 1925. The very low royalty of 1d. per post has operated since 1925. A regulation was drafted in 1941 to increase this to a more reasonable figure of 3d. per post but was disallowed by Parliament.

(5) No.

SWAN DISTRICT HOSPITAL.

As to Proceeding with General Section.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Health:

As the Guildford-Midland electorate is, with the closing of Beaufort private hospital forced to depend upon one private hospital for receiving general cases, will he have steps taken to proceed with the general section of the Swan Districts Hospital to cater for the needs of the electorate?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (for the Minister for Health) replied:

The needs of this district will be watched carefully.

MEAT SUPPLIES.

(a) As to Government and Private Slaughtering.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Following on the ministerial statement made by him a few minutes ago, which included the intimation that he was not prepared to grant further licences to private slaughterers in the Midland Junction area because the Government had spent considerable sums of money in providing facilities, is the Government frightened that retail traders would prefer private slaughterers because they are more efficient? If not, why will he not, when necessary, allow private slaughtering to be done at Fremantle?

The MINISTER replied:

One point I should have included in the statement I read is that referring to the actual position which affects the private company mentioned by the hon. member. This company applied to increase

its killing quota from 6,000 to 10,000, but it was refused on the ground which I referred to in my statement this afternoon, which was fair and reasonable. What I should have told the hon. member, however, is that this firm is eligible for a permit increase each year and at the moment it is killing 9,000 head, which is its maximum.

So, whatever arrangements were made for that firm today, would not affect the number of killings in the metropolitan area, regardless of how many head of sheep were sent to the abattoir. Therefore, the emergency that was caused last week through the strike was actually due only to the fact that there were some extra 2,000 to 3,000 head over and above what is normal, and the total offering of sheep at that time was round about 5,000.

Bearing in mind that this particular firm could not kill any more than 9,000 head, because it is already killing up to its capacity, and bearing in mind that there was a strike at Midland Junction, despite the greatest efforts made at Robb's Jetty to secure extra labour, it was not available. The Government is not afraid of any competition in the meat trade, so far as killings are concerned. The Midland Junction Abattoir is up to date in every respect, not only in regard to working conditions, but also in regard to costs. The whole problem concerns a question of policy and unfortunately a solution could not be found last week because the firm was killing to its maximum.

(b) As to Firm's Request for Increased Killings.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Why did this firm ask for an increase in the number of killings if it could not slaughter the stock?

The MINISTER replied:

Because it is not concerned about a temporary increase in the number of killings. It wants its permit for killings increased to 10,000 head per week, and made permanent, whereas the Government, bearing in mind its policy and its requirements at Robb's Jetty, says that a fair number is 6,000 per week. The firm is not disgruntled about that because it can now increase the number of killings to 9,000 in certain periods, but it wants a permit to enable it to do so throughout the year. This is entirely against the interests of the Government and of the Robb's Jetty meatworks, bearing in mind the increased costs which will be caused to the trade generally.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The company did not ask for a temporary licence?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No.

PERTH AIRPORT.

As to Establishment as International Terminal.

Mr. HUTCHINSON (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Did he read the Press report on page 1 of last Friday's issue of "The West Australian," headed "Darwin Will Have Sleek New Airport"?

(2) Is he yet able to say whether the plan of the Department of Civil Aviation to spend large sums on Darwin Airport will sound the death knell to Western Australia's high hopes that B.O.A.C. will reroute its service through Perth instead of Darwin?

(3) If not, will he institute immediate inquiries at the highest Federal level, and at the same time reiterate Perth Airport's undoubted claims as the best entry point for United Kingdom air services?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No, although the proposal to establish the new airport at Darwin would seem to indicate that the chances of Perth having a suitable airport established are now much less than they were previously.

(3) The State Government made representations some little time ago, arising from a question asked by the member for Cottesloe, to the Prime Minister pressing the claims of Perth. In the circumstances, it is advisable for the Government of this State to wait for a few days in the hope that a written reply from the Prime Minister may be received. If this is not received within the next few days, the matter will be taken up again with the Prime Minister.

INTERSTATE ROAD TRANSPORT.

(a) As to Privy Council Appeal, Hughes and Vale.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Has he been advised of the result of the Hughes and Vale appeal to the Privy Council?

(2) If so, will he advise the House of the decision, or lay on the Table of the House any report on the decision?

The MINISTER replied:

No official advice has been received on the decision in this case. I have been informed unofficially that the decision of the Privy Council will be given in the not too distant future.

(b) As to Rumoured Decision of Privy Council.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

In view of the significance to interstate road transport, will he have inquiries made to determine whether the decision referred

to has been announced, in the face of the strong rumours persisting in the Eastern States that a decision in favour of Hughes and Vale has been given?

The MINISTER replied:

After receiving prior notice of this question from the hon. member, I have been informed, as a result of inquiries, that a decision has not been given but that possibly it will be given at the next sitting of the Privy Council, which is expected in about a month's time.

STATE HOUSING COMMISSION.

(a) *As to Consulting Local Authorities re Land Resumptions.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

In view of a question I asked of the Minister last week in the matter of the complaint made by the Mayor of Fremantle, regarding resumptions at Hamilton Hill, and whether it was his policy not to consult local governing authorities prior to their reading of such resumptions in the Press, and in view of his answer to me that "the member for Cottesloe was on a loser in this question", can he now say why both the Belmont Park Road Board and the Perth City Council have been critical of the fact that no negotiations preceded the notices of resumption?

The MINISTER replied:

Once again, the hon. member has his facts astray.

Mr. Hutchinson: That is the report in the Press.

The MINISTER: I am not responsible for what appears in the Press. I do not take a great deal of notice of what appears in it. With regard to the Belmont Park Road Board, I have very vivid recollections of representatives of that board consulting me and pressing me to resume certain areas in that district. With regard to the Perth City Council, I have not had conferences with its representatives. Whether conferences have taken place with departmental officers I do not know. I am inclined to think that such discussions have not taken place.

(b) *As to Elucidating Ministerial Reply.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON (without notice) asked the Minister for Housing:

In view of the answer he has just given, is it not a fact that he wrote to the Belmont Park Road Board, as reported in today's newspaper, saying that in future he hoped to give prior notice of all resumptions? How does the Minister align that statement with the reply he has just given?

The MINISTER replied:

It is not fair that questions should be asked without notice, concerning portions of any communication that might have

been written some months earlier. I repeat that I have very distinct recollections of discussions with representatives of the Belmont Park Road Board. I am unable to vouch for the exact verbiage that might have been employed in the communication that passed between myself and the board. If the hon. member wants more explicit information, then I shall be only too happy to furnish him with it.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Police Act Amendment Bill (No. 2).

BILL—CITY OF PERTH SCHEME FOR SUPERANNUATION (AMENDMENTS AUTHORISATION).

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILLS (2)—REPORT.

- 1, Argentine Ant.
 - 2, Native Welfare.
- Adopted.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £15,000,000.

In Committee of Ways and Means.

The House resolved into Committee of Ways and Means, Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

THE TREASURER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [5.2]: I move—

That towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty for the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1955, a sum not exceeding £11,000,000 be granted from the Consolidated Revenue Fund and £4,000,000 from the General Loan Fund.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [5.3]: Before we agree to this motion, there is one point that I should like the Treasurer to explain. I am particularly interested in the amounts allocated to the extension of country water supplies. As all members realise, we are at the end of a very difficult winter period when the catchments, not only in districts nearest to the coast, but also in the inland areas, are at a very low level, in many cases at a lower level than at any similar period that I know of.

As I am aware from discussions with the Minister for Water Supplies and from statements made by him, he is greatly concerned about the position. Already restrictions have been imposed in many country areas. Recently the Minister announced that the comprehensive water scheme would be completed within five years, and he also stated that it is uncertain whether the Commonwealth Government will meet any greater liability on account of the comprehensive scheme than it originally agreed to. I assume that further negotiations with the Commonwealth

are taking place, and I should be pleased to know from the Treasurer what he thinks of the prospect of receiving additional assistance from that source.

Obviously, if the Commonwealth Government did not agree to meet the increased cost, the State would have to carry on with the scheme. It would be unthinkable on the part of any Government not to complete that project as a whole, but other factors enter into the picture. As I have indicated previously, there are considerable portions of the area I represent not within the boundaries of the comprehensive scheme, and while I know that, when the matter was under discussion previously, some of those districts were not keen to be included, there has been considerable development in all our agricultural areas since, and clearly the area to which residents desire the comprehensive scheme to be extended is very much greater than might have been expected originally.

This being so it is vital from my point of view that a public announcement should be made as soon as possible as to the Government's intentions. In my electorate are growing towns—I instance Lake Grace—where there is practically no reticulated water supply. Admittedly there is a small town dam and half-a-dozen houses or business premises are connected with that supply, but it is entirely inadequate. When I hear of residents in other parts of the State complaining how badly they have been treated, my thoughts go to areas such as that which have no worth-while supply at all.

These districts are very important producers of agricultural commodities. It is all very well to talk about decentralisation, but it is quite another matter to do something about it. If we are going to do anything to encourage decentralisation, the biggest factor is to provide amenities such as people in the more privileged parts of the State enjoy as compared with those in the more sparsely settled parts. I appreciate that it is necessary to be practical when dealing with this question, but if the Treasurer and the Minister for Water Supplies consulted the technical officers, it would be found that, from the practical point of view, there would be no difficulty in conveying water from the coast to districts at Kulin, Lake Grace, Newdegate and Pingrup where at present there are no reticulated supplies.

I am certain that, if reticulated supplies were made available in those areas, development would be very much more rapid than it is at present. It is most noticeable wherever one goes in Western Australia that there is a much greater demand for land and that land values are very much higher in districts that have an assured water supply as compared with those that have none. That is only to be expected.

If the Government is going to do something about decentralisation, it is necessary to face up to the question of extending the reticulation of coastal water through the agricultural districts as far as may be practical, and I am speaking of practicability from an engineering point of view. There has been some investigation on the engineering side, and I understand that when the big pipeline from the Wellington Dam reaches Narrogin, it would be quite a practical proposition to extend it eastwards to a point somewhere near Wickepin, where a pressure tank could be constructed from which the water could be reticulated out to Kulin and southward to Lake Grace, Newdegate and Pingrup.

In all of those districts, the present water supplies are causing great difficulty and, in my opinion, represent the limiting factor of development in those districts. From a legal point of view, the limit of the comprehensive scheme at present is the Great Southern railway; there is no provision for extending it east of the Great Southern line.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Which would be the nearest point to Lake Grace?

Mr. PERKINS: The ground contours enter into the question to a great extent and there are other districts to be served. Until a detailed survey is made, it seems likely that the route would be eastward from Narrogin towards Wickepin and out to Kulin, thence extending through the lower country to Lake Grace, Newdegate and Pingrup. It would be possible to follow the valleys in that general direction, and it is in the valleys where the richest agricultural land is situated, where the carrying capacity is greatest and where the greatest need exists for water. It is easier to find water on the undulating and higher country, but there, as a general rule, the productivity of the land is not so great and the need for water is not so urgent.

However, I was saying that from a legal point of view, there is no authority under the comprehensive scheme to extend the pipeline eastward of the Great Southern railway. The proposal is to serve the towns along the Great Southern line. Eastward of that line, as I know the position, the need for a reticulated water supply is very great indeed, and the limiting factor in the further development of those districts is the absence of water. In the area adjacent to the Great Southern line, the rainfall is considerably heavier than it is further east, and so the need for water for agricultural purposes is not so great along the railway as it is in those areas where the rainfall is considerably lower.

It must be obvious to all members that the need for water for agricultural purposes is likely to be much greater in 14-inch rainfall areas as compared with those that receive 17 or 18 inches of rain per year. According to statements already made by the Minister for Water

Supplies, he hopes that the comprehensive scheme will be completed within five years, which is to say that all those towns up and down the Great Southern railway will have water within that period. I sincerely trust that water supplies are made available to those towns within that time, because the position is acute.

I am particularly interested to know what plans the Government has for extensions to the areas further to the east which, in my opinion, are in even greater need of water than are some of the areas which, of course, must be served earlier, because the pipeline has to reach the nearer points first. Unless the Commonwealth is going to face up to an increased liability, and agree to the extension of the boundaries of the comprehensive scheme, the State will need to make some plans to finance any extensions into areas that are outside the boundaries of the scheme as at present delineated.

If the Government envisages that it will find the money from its ordinary loan funds, then it would be quite practicable, once the pipeline reached Narrogin, to proceed with the construction of a line to those areas further to the east simultaneously with the construction of the pipeline to towns north and south of Narrogin along the Great Southern railway.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has one minute to go.

Mr. PERKINS: I think the Premier can see that the matter is extremely important from my point of view, and I believe it is also important from the point of view of the State because, obviously, if further development is going to be limited by lack of water, it will, in the long run, have a serious effect on the overall finances of the State.

THE TREASURER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply) [5.18]: There is no doubt that the present dry season is highlighting the water supply question in many parts of the State. We have known for years that water is, perhaps, the outstanding need of most of our country areas. Because of that knowledge, proposals have been developed from time to time, and legislation has been introduced into Parliament on more than one occasion.

When the first legislation in connection with what is now known as the comprehensive water supply scheme for country areas was introduced, we heard a good deal of criticism of the scheme because it was claimed by many farmers that the boundaries were too extensive. The farmers concerned also claimed that they had ample means of conserving sufficient water on their individual farms; and other arguments were put forward by these people

and their representatives to show that not only did they not want a water supply scheme of Government origin, but would do everything within their power to oppose the gaining of parliamentary approval for the proposed scheme; that in the event of the scheme becoming the law of the land they would take whatever steps were available to them to avoid the necessity of having their properties served by the scheme; and that they would, if possible, avoid the payment of rates.

Mr. Perkins: Most of the country I have mentioned is not within the boundaries of any scheme. The limit of the scheme you put up originally was the Narrogin-Kulin-Merredin railway. Most of this country is east of that area.

The TREASURER: I am dealing with the general situation as it existed in 1946. As a result of this widespread opposition by farmers in various areas, and because of the failure of a conference, representative of both Houses of Parliament, to reach agreement, the legislation which was introduced in 1946 was finally defeated. In the following year, a modified scheme was introduced in Parliament in the form of a Bill, and, if I remember rightly, the modified scheme was planned to cover only half of the agricultural country which the 1946, or original scheme, was intended to deal with.

So, today the State is engaged in putting into operation this modified scheme. The progress has been very slow indeed, due to a variety of reasons, all of which have been legitimate and, I think, have largely been unavoidable. Much of the work still has to be carried out, and naturally a great deal of expenditure has yet to be incurred to complete even the modified scheme. When approaches have been made to the Commonwealth Government on the basis that it should increase its £ for £ payment, to which it is committed, it has always replied by pointing out that a considerable amount of its present offer has not been drawn upon. Therefore it tells us that it, as a Government, is not prepared to commit itself to any new offer or expenditure, but would be prepared to look at the question when the present amount is largely absorbed.

Hon. V. Doney: The implication is, nevertheless, that when the money is required you would anticipate that the Commonwealth Government would make it available.

The TREASURER: I would indeed anticipate that when the time is considered appropriate by the Commonwealth to look at a new proposition, the Commonwealth would then view favourably the question of making an additional offer to the State on a £ for £ basis in order that a great deal might be attempted and achieved in Western Australia by way of providing assured water supplies for our drier country areas.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Would it not be more a matter of the Commonwealth looking at an unfinished proposition rather than a new one?

The TREASURER: I think it will be a matter of the Commonwealth looking at the question of making more assistance available in connection with the present modified scheme, although it will be a new proposal as far as the Commonwealth is concerned.

Mr. Cornell: One Federal member says that the State cannot spend the Commonwealth money. Is that correct?

The TREASURER: I have seen a most extraordinary document circulated by Senator Vincent, I think it is, in which he lays it down, hard and fast, that the State Government is rolling in money; that it has ample for all kinds of useless purposes; and that it has not been able to spend all the millions which it has had made available to it by the Commonwealth. That is just so much political poison which this senator is attempting to spread in Western Australia, and what he states in his document has no relationship to the truth whatsoever.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He might be trying to counteract some political poison, too.

The TREASURER: I would say there is nothing unusual in the present tactics of this particular person, because as far as I have been able to gather he has, since being a senator, never had the slightest relationship with the truth. However, that is by the way.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He is a great battler for Western Australia.

Mr. Oldfield: Very harsh words!

The Minister for Lands: If he opened his mouth to yawn, you could not believe him.

The TREASURER: The needs of the particular area of country to which the member for Roe referred, are, I would say, very great. The policy of the present Government in regard to water supplies—I think it would be the policy of any Government in this State—is to make available, from year to year, as much loan money as possible, consistent with the requirements of other essential needs, for the extension of existing water supply schemes, and for the provision of new ones. For instance, in this financial year, the Government, if I remember rightly, will expend on water supplies double the amount that it did last year. We would hope, from year to year, to keep on increasing the amount available for water supplies to the maximum extent possible.

I will undertake to have a talk with the Minister for Water Supplies about the point raised by the member for Roe in connection with the special areas in his territory. Those areas, as he pointed out,

were not included even in the original comprehensive water scheme proposals. If my memory serves me correctly, at that time it was considered by the Director of Works that those areas could not be served by the scheme and that it would be impossible to reticulate the water from Mundaring to some, or most, of these areas. But I might not be right in this regard.

Hon. V. Doney: What areas have you in mind?

The TREASURER: The more southern areas of the district of the member for Roe. I know that the Minister for Water Supplies is anxious, not only to push on with the existing comprehensive scheme but, wherever possible, to put in small schemes to meet the needs of farmers and townspeople.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

First Reading.

In accordance with the foregoing resolution and that agreed to in Committee of Supply, Bill introduced and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE TREASURER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [5.31]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [5.32]: I think this is a convenient time to deal with a matter which has been giving me some concern since the 8th July last. It is in reference to remarks made by the Minister for Railways concerning a Royal Commission held as a result of allegations made in this House about certain officers of the Transport Board. I regard the remarks of the Minister, on that occasion, as being in some respects most improper and had I not, at that time, already spoken on the Address-in-reply, of which the debate formed a part, I should certainly have taken up the matter at that time.

The hon. gentleman, in the course of his remarks, and in the course of what one might call an attack upon the member for Moore, said a number of things which I do not think—and I hope to be able to prove it—are borne out by the report of the Royal Commissioner. In my opinion, the Minister for Railways completely overstepped the mark in his references to the member for Moore. I have no reason to take a more favourable view of the member for Moore's action in this matter than I would that of any other member. But I have a great respect and place considerable value on the right of members of this House to ventilate matters that come to their notice and to see that they are inquired into. I shall make some further reference to that aspect of the matter before I sit down.

If the right of members to bring up these questions and suspicions, upon the information available to them, is to be questioned in the way it was questioned by the Minister for Railways, one of the valuable privileges of this and the other House—one which has been taken advantage of on many occasions in the past—will have been substantially lost.

I shall divide my speech into two parts, one concerning certain of the actual observations made by the Minister and the other on what one might call the general issue. On the 8th July last, as will be found by reference to the reports, referring to Mr. McPherson the Minister said, and said it more than once, "He was completely exonerated." He went on to say—

I sometimes wonder what is the motive behind the pursuance of this transport officer by the hon. member. Is it because he took certain of his favoured friends there and asked for favours in the shape of carting, not only super, but wheat as well, which on his own admission he did, and because he did not get all his favours granted 100 per cent.? Or is it because the member for Moore is salving his conscience with his cock-and-bull story told in this House? These allegations, which could not be substantiated before the Royal Commission, cost the State in the vicinity of £1,500.

Let us look at the views of the Minister, as compared with those of the Royal Commissioner on this subject. In the circumstances, I am sure the House will take a great deal more notice of the views of the commissioner, than it will of the views of the Minister for Railways. On page 4 of the commissioner's report, he says—

Messrs. Ackland and Jones were perhaps a little precipitate in making some of their allegations without having more evidence to hand, but there is no doubt in my mind whatsoever about their bona fides and honesty of purpose. They had Wilson's allegations of direct bribery and had based their opinion on what numerous carters told them, that unfair and discriminate allocations of superphosphate were being made by the superphosphate section of the Transport Board. Mr. Hatfield—

He was the counsel for the officers concerned.

—in his address said that he considered Messrs. Ackland and Jones reputable men with a high regard for their responsibility in this matter. I hold the same view.

The commissioner said, "I hold the same view." He goes on to say—

There is no doubt that the superphosphate section of the Transport Board bore an unenviable reputation amongst carters generally and for reasons I shall give later, justifiably.

Day after day, as the figures corroborate, the same carters were obtaining the bulk of the work running in some cases into thousands of pounds a year. At the same time others who called very many times at the board were merely told that there were no loadings available, which was untrue. Not unnaturally, even in the minds of the fairest men, some suspicion must have been aroused that bribery, undue favouritism or the like, was taking place.

So we find the commissioner expressing his complete absence of doubt as to the bona fides of the members who raised this question in both Houses. The commissioner also had no doubt that the complaints made and the unenviable reputation of the superphosphate section among carters were justifiable. He also expressed the same views given by counsel for the officers in question, that the persons who made the complaints knew their responsibility in this matter.

Now we go on a little further and turn to page 9 of the report. There the commissioner has this to say—

According to the evidence, McPherson, Blair and Byrne all had a hand in the rostering of superphosphate. One would call out the names and the other would write. The majority of Wilson's rosters were signed by Blair. If one were in the bribery it is probable the whole section was. In order to find McPherson and Blair guilty, I would have to find the whole section implicated, and I am not prepared to do this. At the same time, I am not at all satisfied with the evidence of a single officer from the superphosphate section of the Transport Board.

I ask members to note that. He says—

At the same time, I am not at all satisfied with the evidence of a single officer from the superphosphate section of the Transport Board.

He goes on to say—

I must, therefore, give McPherson and Blair the benefit of a very grave doubt. I do so on the grounds that it might be dangerous to act on Wilson's evidence which is that of an accomplice and almost entirely uncorroborated legally. Should this case go before a jury, I feel that the jury being warned that it is dangerous to act on the uncorroborated evidence of an accomplice, would bring in a finding of not guilty.

If the system which, I understand, has prevailed in Scotland for many years had been available to the commissioner in this instance, it is quite clear from those words that he would have said that this offence, for legal purposes, was not proven. But he certainly could not have said that he regarded the officers in question—as the

Minister has stated on so many occasions in the speech to which I have referred—as completely exonerated.

If you were in the same position, Mr. Speaker, and the commissioner said of you, after an inquiry, "I must, therefore, give you the benefit of a very grave doubt," I do not think, especially after reading the remainder of the phraseology of the sentences, you would feel yourself to be completely exonerated. I certainly would not.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: But that does not make him guilty.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I am not suggesting that there is sufficient evidence to convict these officers; but I am saying that the observations of the Minister made on the 8th July last, were entirely unwarranted, out of place and somewhat improper and were given for reasons which I cannot estimate. The fact remains that the speech was made and in my view, for the reasons I have given and because of some more which I will give in a minute or two, the remarks were, to say the least of it, unworthy of him.

Now we turn to page 16 of the report and the commissioner says—

It is necessary in the administration of a public department, not only that justice be done, but that it should seem to be done. Carters knew favouritism was being shown and many of them put it down to bribery. Messrs. Ackland and Jones became suspicious and realised impartiality was not being maintained and I have no hesitation in finding accordingly.

It is not pleasing for a commissioner to find, in regard to anyone holding a position such as those gentlemen held, that they were not acting impartially in the exercise of their duties. He goes on to say—

On the evidence, whilst I am suspicious, I cannot say that the partiality has been due to bribery and corruption. I agree with him that on the evidence it would have been unwise to have said it.

The Minister for Transport: That was the charge, of course.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: The statement of the commissioner does not justify the continual repetition of the phrase that the person concerned was "completely exonerated"; also, it does not justify pouring ridicule upon members who raised the question, which is what the Minister has done. The commissioner continues—

McPherson, who has served in the Liquid Fuel Control Board, the Tyre Distribution Branch of Emergency Road Transport, and finally, in the Superphosphate Section of the Transport Board, has been for years in direct contact with the public and in a position to grant or withhold favours. In view of what I consider to be partiality shown in the administration of his

section, I respectfully recommend for consideration that he be moved to some other form of work.

I felt it my duty to make the above recommendation, but in view of my findings on the specific charges and as the administration of the Board is not in question, no further recommendations are necessary.

It is obvious that throughout the report there was only a fraction of a difference between the decision arrived at by the commissioner, and another decision. He says that he views the matter with suspicion; he gives them the benefit of the gravest possible doubt, and so on. Accordingly although I agree he was not able to find any other verdict on the evidence before him, both he and every reasonable thinking person would, I suggest, agree that the members who raised this question were thoroughly entitled to do so.

If members in this House, or those in another place, are to be attacked by a Minister of the Crown, in the manner that the Minister for Railways dealt with this particular issue, because they happen to be unable in the final analysis to produce the last word of evidence that is required to deal with a case of this nature, then the privilege of members, which has been exercised so many times in this House, to ask for inquiries based almost entirely on suspicion, would be lost; or at least members would be reluctant to make use of it for fear of the consequences to their own personal reputations in the House and, perhaps, outside as well.

I look back over the years I have been here, and I can recollect quite a number of inquiries that have been held, so far as this House is concerned. Those inquiries were authorised very substantially on suspicion voiced by one or perhaps two members. I look back on the inquiry in 1939 into the investment trust companies, which was moved by the then Leader of the Opposition, Sir Charles Latham, and which was really seeking an inquiry into the operations of a concern known as Lichfields Australasia Limited. What the hon. gentleman said on that occasion—and I have since looked up his speech—was based on hearsay and suspicion.

Yet, had that inquiry not been held by a select committee, of which I was a member, as was the Minister for Works—the member for Melville—there could have been, and I think would have been, one of the greatest frauds perpetrated on a large section of the community by that concern, and its managing director. The present Leader of the Opposition was a member of that committee, as was, of course, Sir Charles Latham himself.

That inquiry was based entirely on uncorroborated suspicion; yet it lasted over many weeks and resolved itself into revealing this unsatisfactory state of affairs

which required Parliament to bring down legislation to remedy it; or to enable the people involved in the fraudulent loss they would themselves suffer, to seek a remedy, when under the existing state of the law they had no remedy. So greatly was the position impressed on the then Premier, Hon. J. C. Willcock, that he agreed to the House dealing with that particular legislation.

It is not so long ago that an inquiry, moved by the member for Maylands, was authorised by this House into the operation of a firm of estate agents. The information the hon. member had was very largely derived from suspicion and hearsay; it was second-hand. But the report of the Royal Commission makes very interesting reading, particularly as to the conditions that prevailed in that particular concern, and the methods used by it in dealing with customers.

One could go on and quote cases down the years. There have been many of these instances, and so far as the members who bring them before the House are concerned, they can have no more than suspicion before them. If they had evidence that was proved, there would be no need for a Royal Commission or a select committee; they would have proof and would take action in whatever court of law was available to them. But it is because one has only suspicion that one is obliged to ask for these inquiries, and they are a very valuable adjunct to the proceedings of Parliament. I do not think the privilege has been unwisely used in this Assembly since I have been here; nor do I think it has been unwisely used at any other time. It has been used by men on both sides of the House. I can recall the Minister for Works—the member for Melville—seeking an inquiry into matters relating to a Mr. Alcorn.

Mr. Oldfield: The Minister for Housing wanted one into the housing position.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That is so. The Minister for Housing asked for an inquiry into the State Housing Commission. The result of it was even more negative than the one I have been discussing. These inquiries have been the practice, and it is a very valuable practice in the public interest. If it did not exist, the inquiries that we have been referring to could never have been made, and a number of wrongs that have been righted over the years could never have been righted. Accordingly, I trust we have heard the last of the sort of references that were made by the Minister for Railways on the 8th July to the hon. members concerned.

I trust it will be freely recognised that although Mr. McPherson and his colleague were, of course, not able to be convicted by the commissioner for reasons which he gave—and which I have endeavoured

fairly to set before the House—nevertheless members were not unjustified in bringing the matter before the House. We cannot in fairness say that the officers were completely exonerated, and a number of the Minister's remarks—I have only quoted a portion of them, but if members are interested they may read them in "Hansard"—were, to say the least of it, somewhat unnecessary.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. H. H. Styants—Kalgoorlie) [5.53]: Evidently the hon. member who has just resumed his seat has received a brief from the member for Moore to take up this case. I was wondering what fee there might be in connection with it.

Hon. L. Thorn: That is your usual style.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I do not know of too many people in the profession to which the hon. member who has just resumed his seat belongs, who would take on a brief without a fee.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I think I am entitled to ask for a withdrawal of that statement, and I do so.

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the Minister to withdraw the statement.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I withdraw it, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to say that the hon. member who has just resumed his seat has taken this opportunity not so much of dealing with the facts of the case, as of making an attack on the Minister for Railways. In the first place I think it would have been much better had he referred to the Minister for Transport rather than to the Minister for Railways. It is entirely a transport matter.

Hon. L. Thorn: What difference does that make?

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: It makes a lot of difference because he drags the Railway Department in, whereas in fact it is a transport matter. I would like to ask the member for Stirling—who was a Minister in the previous Government—what he was doing, and what action he took when the two informants concerned went to his Premier and laid complaints in connection with what was alleged to be going on. It is well known, of course, that the two informants in this particular case went to the then Premier, Sir Ross McLarty, and lodged the same complaints that were made to the present Premier. For some reason, however, no action was taken, and no inquiry was made. What was the member for Stirling doing at that time, when the matter referred to was reported to his Leader and it was said that bribery and corruption were rife in the Transport Board?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It is not correct to say no action was taken.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: What did the member for Stirling do at that time?

Hon. A. F. Watts: Are you aware that the matter was reported to me?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: As a Minister in the Cabinet, I take it that the hon. member's Leader would report it to him, because immediately the matter was reported to my Leader he consulted me, and he also consulted Cabinet in order to make us all conversant with the allegations.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You are not correct in saying that no action was taken, because I immediately sent for the Commissioner of Police and discussed it with him. What does the Minister for Lands find funny about it?

The Minister for Lands: What was done about it?

Mr. Yates: We went out of office.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: There was ample time to have had an inquiry instituted. I have no objection to any member at any time raising a question in the House; even if I did, it would not make any difference. I do not object to anybody voicing complaints if they think bribery and corruption are taking place in a Government department. What I did take exception to, and what I take exception to now, is starting a heresy hunt as far as this particular officer is concerned.

After the report of the commission which exonerated him was made known, that should have been the end of it. But what has been the history of the case? It has been repeatedly brought up here, and the heresy hunt has continued. Has anybody given consideration to the feelings of this man's wife and children in relation to this matter? Has anybody stopped to think of the effect it might have on the kiddies who are at school and who are aged 11, 12 and 14 years of age, particularly when they constantly see a reference to this unsavoury matter being resurrected in the Press?

The Minister for Lands: The hon. member should be ashamed of himself.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: What about this man's wife? Are we not to consider her feelings? Is this matter to be resurrected again and again, even though her husband has been exonerated? The member for Stirling adopted tactics which are frequently pursued by members of the profession which he follows. He read certain words out of the context but did not read the whole report. But that is common practice in the profession in which he was trained. I say it was a cock and bull story with particular reference to one part of it.

Does the member for Moore recollect having made allegations to the effect that a case of beer and a wireless set were purchased for McPherson? What happened to that accusation when it came before the Royal Commission? As far as I know, no mention was made of it, because it was a cock and bull story and there was no truth in it. I object to this continuous heresy hunt of a man who has been exonerated by a Royal Commission, but I notice the member for Stirling did not mention the fact that a member on his own side of the House objected to this heresy hunt continuing about certain things that were alleged in the House but concerning which no evidence was produced before the Royal Commission.

I have no objection whatever—and if I did, it would not make any difference—to anyone voicing any complaint in this House; but I do have a very strong objection to this kind of thing. I consider that the action taken concerning this man has been despicable. He was charged with bribery and corruption, but was exonerated. That should have been sufficient for any fair-minded man. The matter should have been allowed to rest there, but has been constantly resurrected.

Many of the remarks of the Royal Commissioner concerning the unsavoury reputation of the Transport Board were lifted out of their context by the member for Stirling. They were not made in connection with bribery and corruption but with the unfair distribution of superphosphate deliveries. However, that was not the charge against McPherson, who was accused of bribery and corruption, of receiving wireless sets, and beer, and money. That is what he was charged with, and the charges were not substantiated.

Mr. May: Not one of them.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: No, not one. To have a charge of bribery and corruption levelled against one is different from being charged with unfair distribution of superphosphate cartage. I could produce a document which shows that there was no favouritism and no partisanship so far as McPherson was concerned, but that other circumstances brought about the unfair distribution.

If the member for Moore would assure this House that he did not at least on one occasion go to the Transport Board and ask for loads of super to be transported by one of his friends, I am prepared to say that my information was incorrect. But I can bring a reputable officer of the Transport Board to bear out the statement that the hon. member did, at least on one occasion, try to obtain loads of super for one man whose name I could mention.

Hon. L. Thorn: There is nothing wrong with that.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Then why am I taken to task? Why did the member for Stirling say that my statement was wrong? My statement was completely true, unless the member for Moore is prepared to say that he did not do as I have said, in which case I would be prepared to accept his assurance.

What was the cause of animosity amongst these carters? Some of them had been wheat carters, and had not transported a load of super. But as soon as the wheat carting cut out, they wanted to muscle in on those who had been doing super carting exclusively. There was a great discrepancy in the distribution of deliveries, but I have a document which gives very good reasons for that discrepancy. These fellows were antagonistic to McPherson and to the Transport Board because they did not get what they thought they were entitled to—a greater proportion of super carting. Consequently, they were not very much concerned about what they said of McPherson.

After a very close scrutiny of the report, I consider that there was only one man who was reliable as a witness, and his testimony was discredited by the evidence of his wife, and was commented upon by the Royal Commissioner as being evidence which could not be relied upon. Had it been corroborated by his wife, there might have been a different finding. But the couple were contradictory in their evidence. So, in my opinion, the only witness who gave any reasonable evidence of the receipt of money was discredited by the testimony of his wife. I very much regret that this matter should have been raised again. It is deplorable that this heresy hunt is being continued.

Hon. A. F. Watts: If it had not been for your rash outburst in July, it would not have been referred to again.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I do not agree that my outburst was rash.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Of course, you would not!

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Neither am I prepared to withdraw one word of it. What I said was quite justified. It is despicable that, after a man has been charged with an offence and taken before a Royal Commission—in other words, taken before a court of the land and tried—and after he has been acquitted, there should be a constant harking back to the matter. Not only is it grossly unfair to the man, but think of the pathetic position of his wife who mingles with friends in her social circle and from time to time finds this business resurrected, knowing that her husband was tried and found not guilty! Then there are the kiddies, 12 and 14 years of age, at school. What must their feelings be when they know that this

kind of thing is being bruited about in the daily Press? I say such action is despicable.

I am very sorry the matter has been brought up again. I make no apology whatever for what I said. It would have been different if the member for Moore had been prepared to accept the findings of the Royal Commission. I know that the hon. member did not receive the backing he thought he was going to get. I believe he honestly considered that he would receive backing from the super carriers. He assured this House he could get quite a number of witnesses, and I believe he honestly thought that was the case. But it happened that he was more or less left out on a limb, so far as witnesses were concerned, and a poor case was submitted. Most of the complaints were in connection with the distribution of super loadings; and so far as the charges of bribery and corruption were concerned, McPherson was exonerated.

A perusal of "Hansard" will show that by means of questions, the member for Moore constantly resurrected the matter, after the report of the Royal Commissioner had been presented. On top of that, he made further charges in connection with the subject, despite the fact that the man had been acquitted by the Royal Commissioner. I would have said nothing whatever had the hon. member accepted the verdict of the Royal Commissioner. But the matter has been resurrected from time to time. I think it was despicable, in the circumstances, and it was despicable that the member for Stirling, for the purpose of attacking the Minister, has been prepared to ventilate the matter again.

Hon. A. F. Watts: That is rubbish, too.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I think the hon. member talked a lot of arrant nonsense and rubbish.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I can reciprocate twice over.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: We will agree so far as that is concerned. We are entitled to our opinions. For a member to get up and take extracts out of their context may mislead the uninitiated, but will not mislead any member in this Chamber. The member for Stirling knows that the real test is to read the whole of a report and not pick out certain phrases from their context and give them an entirely different meaning.

Again I say that I consider my remarks on the occasion referred to, and my criticism of the matter today, have been quite justified. I do not make any apologies to the member for Stirling for having said what I did, or having taken the action I took. I repeat that I have no objection to any matter being ventilated here; but when it has been ventilated and a decision arrived at by an impartial tribunal, the matter, in justice to everybody, should be allowed to drop.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [6.11]: For some time I have been concerned that the free milk scheme has not been enjoyed to its fullest extent in areas where there are no dairy cattle. I recently asked the Minister for Education certain questions in regard to the scheme. In reply to a question as to how many Western Australian schoolchildren are entitled to receive milk under the scheme, I was informed that the number was approximately 97,200. I then asked what was the average number of children actually receiving this benefit, and was told that it was 61,800. I was also informed that no school is excluded from the free milk scheme, and that in areas where fresh milk is not available, schools can arrange for powdered or evaporated tinned milk to be supplied.

In my opinion, it is much more desirable for children to have fresh wholemilk. I have also noticed that at some schools the children grow tired of the natural milk flavour, as a lot of it is not consumed, and is thus wasted. I made some inquiries into this matter overseas, and found that at Port Elizabeth, in South Africa, milk is sterilised by a process which preserves it for upwards of six months without its going sour or curdling. This is not a new practice in Great Britain and other countries where fresh milk is not readily available; and I consider that the scheme could be introduced in Western Australia in connection with the free milk project, and by that means children in districts where there is not a ready supply could be provided with really fresh, unadulterated wholemilk.

Milk can also be flavoured to make it more palatable to children. I brought back three samples in bottles—one of unflavoured milk; one flavoured with chocolate; and one flavoured with raspberry or strawberry. But unfortunately the Customs authorities, in their wisdom, confiscated those samples, which are now in the hands of Mr. Toop, of the Department of Agriculture.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. BOVELL: Before tea I was explaining that I had brought back from South Africa three bottles containing samples of sterilised milk. That milk is now in the custody of Mr. Toop, of the Department of Agriculture. I visited the department a few days ago and discussed the position with Mr. Lister, an officer there, who informed me that the method of sterilising milk was practised freely in Great Britain. I showed him a pamphlet of information that had been given to me by the Medical Officer of Health at Port Elizabeth, Dr. Duncan L. Ferguson, and he was most interested.

We must, of necessity, cultivate and expand the sale in Western Australia of our wholemilk. The best market is the home

market and the free milk scheme provides an opportunity for us to utilise our own Western Australian wholemilk. At present we have an overseas market for processed and canned milk; but overseas markets are liable to fluctuate, and the time might come when they are not as readily available as they are today. For that reason we must be prepared to utilise our own milk products on our own market.

I will now give some interesting facts about the pasteurisation and sterilisation of milk. About 100 years ago the scientist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) first pointed out what caused milk to sour. Through the primitive microscopes of his time he had observed the living globules that budded, multiplied and evolved lactic acid. At about the same time he showed the troubled wine industry of France that if the fermenting wine were kept at a controlled temperature for a specified time, the ferment could be destroyed while the wine remained unaltered and would keep indefinitely if not reinfected.

Thus is recorded the first commercial usage of heat to control mould or germ life, and 1857 saw its application to milk to improve its keeping quality. Its use to provide a disease-free milk was to follow. Very soon far-seeing members of the medical profession, having realised that milk could transmit disease, began urging the boiling of milk for infants and in 1885 Soxhler—a German—designed an apparatus for the domestic sterilisation of milk in the bottle for infants.

The distribution of milk in Africa is somewhat difficult and the local health authorities of Port Elizabeth recently inaugurated a sterilisation plant at that centre. The method used there is called sterilisation of milk by the Stork process. The plant, which cost £62,000 to instal at Port Elizabeth, was supplied by the Stork Company of Amsterdam and it is an outstanding example of scientific design and engineering skill. I might add here that I had a lengthy discussion not only with the medical officer of health at Port Elizabeth but also with the wholemilk producers in that area. The stages of the Stork process are:—

1. Clarification.
2. Warming.
3. Homogenisation.
4. Pre-sterilisation.
5. Bottling and capping, and
6. Re-sterilisation in the crown-corked bottles.

Perhaps I might now give some detailed information in regard to the various headings to which I have referred. Beginning with clarification, the raw milk is usually filtered through a cottonwool pad on the farms, but it is further cleansed for sterilisation in the processing dairy by a centrifugal clarifier functioning at 6,000 r.p.m. This is something like a cream separator and removes epithelial cells, cell debris and other solids which

normally pass through cotton wool pads. If these substances are not removed by clarification, a fine brownish sediment forms if the sterilised milk is allowed to stand.

Next come the warming and homogenisation. After clarification the milk passes through a heat exchange unit where hot outgoing milk gives up part of its heat to warm the cool incoming milk to 140 deg. Fahr. At this point, branch pipes lead to a homogeniser which works at a pressure of 2,800 lb. per sq. inch. At this pressure curd tension is decreased, a process which makes the milk more easily digested.

Now we come to the pre-sterilisation. Homogenisation releases the fat-splitting lipase enzyme. This causes rancidity if not inactivated immediately by heat, hence the homogenised milk at about 140 deg. Fahr. flows immediately through the second part of the regenerative pre-heater and then enters the steriliser itself. I will not give all the technical details, but the cleaning of the tubular pre-steriliser is done by circulating through the machine, firstly, a preliminary rinse of cold water, then a sodium lye solution followed by a nitric acid solution.

While the bottling and crown-cork capping processes are taking place, bottles are being machine-washed and heated to 160 deg. Fahr. to receive the milk which is filled into them at the same temperature. They are then sealed with crown corks and conveyed to the steriliser. The bottles are washed by a process which prevents any infection remaining in them.

As I have previously mentioned, Great Britain has adopted this system of sterilisation of milk to a considerable degree and some details regarding the process in Birmingham may be of interest to members. Birmingham, with a population exceeding 1,000,000, has had compulsory heat treatment of milk for many years and now 55 per cent. of its population voluntarily use sterilised milk in preference to pasteurised milk. The medical officer of health of that city on the 21st May, 1954, wrote *inter alia*—

There has been a firm conviction that the introduction of sterilised milk did much to reduce infantile diarrhoea and summer diarrhoea in the poorer homes in this city.

I have given a brief outline of the system of distribution of milk in parts of Africa and in parts of Great Britain and I feel firmly convinced that the Government should consider the adaptation of such a scheme to our milk industry in this State for a number of reasons.

Firstly, I have stated—I wish to emphasise this—we must maintain, cultivate and expand our market within Australia for the wholemilk produced within this State and, secondly, we must endeavour to provide all the children entitled to enjoy the benefits of the free milk scheme with wholemilk in a palatable form. Although

the cost of establishing the plant at Port Elizabeth was £62,000, I believe that the expenditure of a similar sum of money in Western Australia, with its vast territory of upwards of 1,000,000 square miles, on a similar plant would be of great advantage. I again urge the Government to give consideration to this question and have it further investigated with the object of eventually establishing such a scheme in Western Australia.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—DENTISTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. H. Styants—Kalgoorlie) [7.46] in moving the second reading said: I am introducing this Bill on behalf of the Minister for Health who is indisposed for a short time and, like most of the measures brought forward by him, it is small and non-controversial. It contains only two provisions but both of them are considered desirable and reasonable. The Bill is introduced as a result of representations made by the Dental Board of Western Australia.

The first amendment proposes to allow the board to reduce the fees payable by those dentists who have withdrawn their names from the register because they are not practising, but who desire to have their names restored at a later date. The second amendment is designed to permit the board to increase the licence fee paid by dentists and assistants. The first amendment will remove a hardship which is inflicted on those dentists who leave the State for a long period to take post graduate studies or for other reasons.

At present the Act makes it compulsory for a dentist who withdraws his name from the register to pay the licence fees for the years he has been away in order to have his name restored to the register. The proposed amendment provides for him to pay only the current year's licence fee. The second amendment will allow the board to increase its revenue. Under the Act, the board is permitted to apply its funds for the furtherance of dental education and research, for any public purpose connected with the profession of dentistry in this State, or the foundation of a dental library. However, after the increase in administration costs, it has not been possible, in recent years, for the board to allow any money for the advancement of these important matters.

An increase in the licence fee paid by those persons engaged in the practice of dentistry would permit the board again to take an active interest in public dental education. The present licence fee is £2 2s. This amount was fixed by the Dentists Act Amendment Act, 1899, and it has not since been altered. By the Bill it is intended to allow the board to charge up to £6 6s. by way of licence fee for a dentist and up to £3 3s. for an assistant. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Bovell, debate adjourned.

BILL—LIMITATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [7.49] in moving the second reading said: Some of our statutes contain provisions which state specifically the time in which notice of action can be given and the time for taking action against persons exercising powers conferred upon them under the respective Acts. Where there is no specific provision in a statute, one has to look to the Limitation Act, 1935.

At present there are approximately 50 Acts which contain varying times for commencing actions or giving notice in relation to different public authorities and their officers. The proposal now is to consolidate these provisions. The setting up of one time for giving notice and one time for bringing an action will simplify matters for the public and members of the legal profession. The present measure is modelled on the English Public Authorities Protection Act, 1893, portion of which was repealed and re-enacted in the English Limitation Act, 1939, and on portion of New Zealand's Limitation Act of 1950.

The Crown in right of the State of Western Australia is excluded as proceedings against the Crown as such are governed by the Crown Suits Act. The Bill does not affect actions between subject and subject. Although the Bill refers to "any person," there are numerous English decisions to show that only those persons who are in some sense public authorities will be entitled to its protection if, and when, the Bill becomes law. The protection given extends not only to public bodies in the execution of an Act of Parliament or public duty or authority, but also to their officers or servants carrying out their mandates. Provision is made for notice to be given as soon as practicable. Action is to be commenced within one year from the accrual of the cause of action.

Notwithstanding the other provisions of the Bill, a person—that is, acting as a public authority—may consent to an action being brought against him within six years from the date the cause of action accrued, whether or not the required notice of in-

tention to bring the action has been given. A court is also permitted to grant leave to bring an action within six years of the cause of action accruing, notwithstanding that the required notice has not been given. The court may grant leave where it considers that the failure to give the required notice, or the delay in bringing the action was occasioned by mistake, or by any other reasonable cause, or that the prospective defendant is not materially prejudiced in his defence or otherwise by the failure or delay.

The court is also empowered to impose conditions if it thinks fit. At present, if an action is out of time but the parties themselves agree that it should be brought, they are barred for all time as the court itself has no jurisdiction under existing law to order otherwise. The standardisation of times for giving notice of intention to bring an action and the commencement of the action requires the repeal of certain sections in the numerous Acts affected. They will be found in a schedule to the Bill.

It is necessary to amend the Interpretation Act, as reference is made in a number of Acts to paragraphs (g) and (h) of the Second Schedule to the Interpretation Act, as those paragraphs embody certain time limits. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. D. Brand, debate adjourned.

BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEME.

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of two amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

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

No. 1. Clause 5—Add after the word "determined" in line 8, page 3, the words, "by the Commonwealth Act."

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have no objection to this amendment. I do not see the importance of it except that the Legislative Council itself apparently wants to make the position certain. However, whatever may be the conditions laid down under the Commonwealth Act, they will have to be agreed to by the State. The Parliamentary Draftsman and other legal officers have studied the amendment and they consider that it does not matter whether it is agreed to or not. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No 2. Clause 6—Delete the words “he thinks fit” in line 34, page 3, and substitute the following:—“are not inconsistent with the conditions as determined by the Minister under the Commonwealth Act.”

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Legislative Council has managed to obtain sufficient numbers to achieve something which I have known for 12 months or more to be absolutely essential. We endeavoured to do the same thing last year and we intended to tie it up this year in this Chamber, but we now find that we have complete confirmation by the Legislative Council. The clause under discussion reads as follows:—

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Land Act the Governor is authorised to grant tenures on such terms and conditions as he thinks fit for the purpose of carrying out the scheme.

The Legislative Council's proposal to strike out the words “he thinks fit” and insert in lieu thereof the words, “are not inconsistent with the conditions as determined by the Minister under the Commonwealth Act.” It was said in this Chamber and in another place, both last year when a similar Bill was introduced and on this occasion, that these conditions—no matter what members think of them—are essential for the carrying out of the scheme.

After the Bill had passed through this Chamber, I sent a copy by air to Mr. Kent-Hughes, the Commonwealth Minister in charge of war service land settlement so that the Commonwealth Government could make a clear-cut statement on the issue. Fortunately, he issued a statement in time for it to be deliberated by the Legislative Council and now we have complete agreement between the two Chambers on the actual conditions under which money can be made available by the Commonwealth to this State. I am glad that such agreement has now been reached, and I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—MILK ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 12th October.

MR. MANNING (Harvey) [8.0]: As indicated by the Minister in his second reading speech, this Bill provides for an additional member on the Milk Board. He will represent the milk producers and will be selected by the Minister from a panel of three names submitted by the Farmers' Union, which will have 30 days in which to decide upon and submit the names of the three persons.

Today, the production, treatment and distribution of wholemilk is a major industry. There are 626 licensed dairymen in the State, the bulk of these being in the South-West. Dairymen have their many problems, and to the wholemilk producer the major problems are these—the maintenance of supply in the lean season, stock diseases, loss of stock through the t.b. testing scheme, cost of replacements, cost of fodder, difficulty of adequate supply of suitable fodder, difficulty in keeping the quality of the milk up to the required standard of 3.2 per cent. butterfat and 8.5 per cent. solids-not-fat content.

In recent months quite a number of dairymen have been prosecuted under the Health Act for supplying milk below the standard. The dairymen and the wholemilk section of the Farmers' Union are very concerned about this matter and they have been unable to get very much worth-while advice or information from the Department of Agriculture to help them with this problem—

The Minister for Agriculture: That is not true.

Mr. MANNING: —of solids-not-fat deficiency.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is still not true.

Mr. MANNING: The question is whether this deficiency is brought about by seasonal conditions and variations or by a particular breed of cattle, and whether or not it can be overcome and corrected by feeding. The Department of Agriculture has its herd recording units located right throughout the dairying districts. I think there are five of these in the recognised wholemilk districts and they do valuable work, but are of no real help to the solids-not-fat problem. The Minister would do well to look closely at this matter with a view to his department taking more interest in the problem.

The production of the milk, although it is the most important part, is only one phase of a large industry. There is the transport section dealing with milk trucks which make the twice-daily pick-up at the farms, the handling and chilling by the country depots, the transportation of the milk by tanker to the metropolitan area, the pasteurisation and bottling by city treatment plants, and the distribution through the retailers to the consumers.

The Milk Board, of course, is concerned with and supervises everyone of those phases of the industry. The board also concerns itself with the licensing of producers, control of trading, and fixation of prices. The board supervises the inspection of dairies, trucks, tankers, country depots; it also inspects and supervises the metropolitan treatment plants, the supervision of retail distribution, and the supply of milk to schools.

The consumption of milk in Western Australia is increasing by approximately 700,000 gallons each year, and the present daily consumption is approximately 33,000 gallons. The annual consumption of milk in this State is now over 11,000,000 gallons. The daily consumption of 33,000 gallons is distributed by 168 retailers using some 300 vehicles and employing possibly 500 men. The consumer pays 6s. per gallon for the milk, and of this sum the producers as a whole receive an average of 3s. 5d. per gallon. There is, of course, a variation in prices between certain districts. There is now approximately £3,000,000 circulating within the wholemilk industry each year, so members can appreciate the fact that this section of the dairying industry is a very large and important one.

Today there exists a very high standard of hygiene and efficiency throughout the industry. The Milk Board has insisted on this standard and the industry has responded, but, of course, there still exist those problems I mentioned earlier. However, just as many other problems have been overcome, so also will these if the matters to which I have referred receive the consideration they deserve. Over a period of years there has been some criticism of the Milk Board and, in particular, of the chairman. But time has proved that much of such criticism has been unjustified.

The Minister stated, during his second reading speech, that were it not for the fact that it is the policy of the Government to have producer representation on all boards and marketing authorities, and were it not for the fact that every other agricultural marketing authority has adequate producer representation on it, there would be no reason for bringing this measure before the House, because the board is doing a good job. It is my opinion—I have formed this after years of practical experience of every phase of the dairying industry—that the Milk Board as at present constituted has, by its handling of an extremely difficult industry with its highly perishable commodity, proved to be one of the most successful boards in the history of the State.

The chairman of the Milk Board, Mr. Stannard, is recognised by the industry as a hard, but fair, man. I believe time will prove him to be one of the most able and conscientious officers the State has had in its service. Mr. Stannard has rendered the milk industry an outstanding service; he has lifted it out of the mire of cow-yards and the confusion of cut-throat competition, to a high standard of dairy cleanliness and distribution efficiency.

The policy of the wholemilk section of the Farmers' Union is equal producer representation on the Milk Board. This Bill does not conform to the policy or wishes of the Farmers' Union, but because it provides for producer representation on the board, the union is in agreement with

it. I would like the Minister to give the House an assurance that the producer's representative he will appoint to the board will be a genuine licensed milk producer. There is no doubt but that the Farmers' Union will watch this position closely and will most likely submit only the names of genuine producers. I regard this matter to be of considerable importance because if the producer's representative is to be of worth-while value to the board and to the industry, he can be of such value only if he has a herd of cows to milk.

I believe the time is coming when the Milk Board will have to make major decisions regarding its policy on the production, marketing and price of milk. To appoint a producer's representative to the board at this stage may prove to be very opportune indeed. The additional member will make the Milk Board consist of four members. Where at present the board arrives at its decision by a round table conference or a two-to-one majority vote, the Bill, with the provision for an additional member, must create difficulties within the board unless the chairman is to be given a casting vote so as to overcome a deadlock vote of two-to-two, which could create an impossible position for any board handling a highly perishable commodity like milk.

To my mind, the sensible thing to do would have been to provide that when one of the present member's term of office expired, steps would be taken to replace him with a nominee of the Farmers' Union, who would represent the producers. This would keep the membership of the board down to three, which is advisable. We cannot overlook the fact that the Milk Board has functioned as a board far more successfully since it was reduced to three members. Further, this would give the producers something like equal representation and would be far more acceptable to them and their organisations.

One thing is certain, and that is a small board is far more efficient than a large one. However, Mr. Speaker, I propose to support the second reading of this Bill. I believe that a milk producer on the Milk Board will be of value to the industry. In the main, the sections of the industry other than that of production, are as we see them, but the difficulties and problems of the production of wholemilk is something that has to be experienced to be understood.

The one point I want to stress again is that I believe for this board to function successfully it is necessary to keep the numbers down to three—that is, a chairman and two other members. It can make decisions quickly and easily which is so vital in an industry that deals with such a highly perishable commodity as milk. The wise thing would be to replace one of the present members, on the expiry of his term of office, by the nominee of the Farmers' Union.

I support the Bill because I, too, believe in producer representation on marketing boards. The fact that the Milk Board has functioned successfully cannot be overlooked; it has done the right thing for the industry. I do not propose to offer any amendments because I consider the Minister should make any that are necessary. I hope the Minister realises that in asking for a board of four he will be creating an impossible situation when it comes to making decisions. Rather than put forward amendments to the Bill, I would ask the Minister to look into the matter from that angle and take appropriate action.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [8.14]: I do not wish to traverse all the ground which the member for Harvey has just covered. One thing which struck me, and which I mentioned to the Minister privately, is that according to the Minister's speech, it is the intention of the Government to enable a bona fide wholemilk producer to be elected to the board. The Minister did not use those words, but that was his intention. He can correct me by interjection if I am attributing something to him which I should not.

It is certainly what was in the minds of most producers when reference was made to a representative of licensed dairymen. The wording of the Bill is "of whom one is the representative of dairymen licensed under this Act." Under that provision, I take it that a lawyer could be appointed as a representative of the dairymen. I am not suggesting that that would happen, but it could happen according to the wording of the Bill.

It is true that the Farmers' Union will be invited to submit a panel of three names, and I suggest that it would be quite competent for that organisation to nominate the secretary of the wholemilk section of the Farmers' Union who would not be a producer.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do you think the union would do that?

Mr. HEARMAN: It would be possible. I think I know more of the position than does the member for Fremantle.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Perhaps you do, but your argument is not too logical.

Mr. HEARMAN: It is completely logical. If we bring down legislation to achieve a certain object, let us word it so that it will attain that end and not open up the possibility of our being confronted with a state of affairs later on that was never intended, simply because of the looseness of the wording. Surely the member for Fremantle will agree with me when I say that a Bill should do what it purports to do and not enable something else to be done! It would be possible for an officer of the Farmers' Union to be appointed

as the producers' representative. Conceivably the appointee might be satisfactory to the wholemilk producers, but that would be something not envisaged in the Minister's second reading speech, and it is a point that should be tidied up.

When the Bush Fires Bill was before us, we had a provision under which a man, after fully complying with all the precautions laid down in the measure, could be penalised if a fire got beyond his control. That was not what the Minister intended, but it was the effect of the clause and the Minister agreed with that view.

Let us have these things tidied up. Legislation should clearly state what is intended and just that. From my knowledge of the Milk Board, it has functioned satisfactorily, though there is not a representative of the producers on it. I think the producers would like to have a representative on the board, and for that reason I intend to support the second reading. But I should like the Minister, when he replies to the debate, to indicate an intention of tidying up the matters I have mentioned.

There might be need to insert a definition of "producer" in the parent Act, and the paragraph in the Bill could easily be reworded in such a way as to make it clear who may be nominated for this panel. It is only fair and reasonable that the Minister should do that. If he does not do so, I shall feel inclined to place an amendment on the notice paper, but I am giving the Minister an opportunity to do it.

HON. C. F. J. NORTH (Claremont) [8.19]: We ought to voice the city aspect because, sooner or later, somebody will approach the Minister and endeavour to get representation for it, and I am sure the Minister would be only too pleased to hear that point of view also. The issue here is an attempt to revert to the situation before the board was constituted under the legislation of the McLarty-Watts Government. I think the member for Mt. Lawley had a good deal to do with that measure.

The original idea was a departure from the normal. It was advocated previously that there should be a continuation of the existing system, but at that time there was trouble in the industry, and the new board as constituted has worked well. This much has been told us by the Minister. Now he has brought forward a proposal to appoint a producer to the board and he is aware that all members approve of that. I do not think that any member, be he Labour, Liberal or Country Party, would offer any opposition to that.

Yet there is a difficulty in the minds of those who dealt with the milk question years ago when the present Leader of the Opposition brought in his first Bill. Producers at that time were being offered 5d. a gallon for their milk and there was need

for a board. Under the Minister's proposal, however, will it not have a shandy-gaff effect by bringing a producer on to a non-producer board? Will not that in itself create confusion, apart from the even number of members as mentioned by the member for Harvey?

That hon. member covered the position well. He emphasised the need for a small board and offered what to my mind was a brilliant suggestion, namely, that the Minister should refrain from altering the constitution of the board until there was a vacancy, thus ensuring a decision on each item coming up for discussion, and a quick decision too.

From my point of view, I consider that if a producers' representative is to be appointed to the board, there should also be representatives of the consumers and retailers. I know that in the past any suggestion to include retailers on a board has not been accepted. Though efforts have been made to that end, they have always failed. I would rather see the strength of the board maintained at the present number, and I hope the Minister will consider the suggestion of the member for Harvey and adopt that course.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [8.23]: I should like to offer a few words on this important Bill. The member for Blackwood seemed to fear that, if the measure were passed in its present form, the dairymen might find themselves represented by an official of the Farmers' Union. The member for Harvey, on the other hand, recommended the appointment of a member who should directly represent the Farmers' Union. Thus those two members do not seem to be in agreement. When the dairymen are given an opportunity to recommend a representative, they will certainly recommend a milk producer.

I recall that, before the present Act came into operation, the dairymen were represented on the board established under the previous legislation and they were represented by dairymen. One point on which the member for Harvey was right, in my opinion, was that we should not leave the strength of the board at four. There should be a board of five. A very important section of the community is not mentioned at all, and I should say that the consumers of this State are most important. It is all very well to provide for a dairyman to represent the dairymen. I do not blame these producers for looking after their own interests. They want a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, and are entitled to it.

However, the consumers are most important people, too, and they could be adequately represented only by a woman. I have no doubt whatever on the score. I do not think that 25 per cent. of the members of this House could tell us the price of a pint of milk, but there are not many women who would not know. When the

Bill introduced by the previous Government was before us, I moved that a member of the board should be a woman. We should take steps on this occasion to ensure that a woman is appointed.

When the Committee stage is reached, we should move to increase the strength of the board to five and provide that one of them shall be a woman. I feel sure that the member for Subiaco will be ready to support me on this occasion. Whether she did so previously, I cannot remember. However, I hope that members will insist upon one member of the board being a woman and thus give direct representation to the consumers.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [8.26]: I am prepared to support producer representation on any board, and particularly on the milk board. At the same time, I join with the member for Harvey in the suggestion that the board strength should be kept down to three and that a representative of the producers should be appointed in the place of one of the members of the existing board.

It is my opinion, too, that something specific should be included in the measure, as the member for Blackwood suggested, to ensure that a producer of wholemilk is appointed as representative of the industry. The Farmers' Union will take care that a panel of producers of wholemilk is submitted to the Minister for the selection of the producers' representative. However, during the course of his term of office on the board, the producers' representative might sell his property, or for some other reason cease to be a milk producer. Therefore I consider that a clause should be inserted to provide that if the producers' representative ceases to be a milk producer, he shall retire from the board and a producer of milk shall be appointed in his place. That is the greatest danger I foresee.

I hope that the Minister will take into consideration the various points raised by members representing the dairying industry and see that the Bill is made watertight to ensure that the panel of three submitted to the Minister by the Farmers' Union shall be milk producers. It is always possible that the producers' representative on the board might sell his property and perhaps live in retirement or engage in some other occupation. Such a man should not continue to represent the milk producers on the board. That aspect should be cleaned up by inserting a definite provision that the producers' representative shall be a producer of wholemilk.

MR. OLDFIELD (Maylands) [8.29]: With the member for Claremont and the member for Fremantle, I consider that metropolitan interests should be represented on the Milk Board. I cannot understand why the Minister should have seen

fit to introduce the Bill at this juncture. Up to the present the board has been functioning most effectively, and I do not think anybody connected with the industry could find fault with its administration. In the days before the Milk Board was set up, conditions were not too satisfactory in the industry. This is one of the few boards that has benefited all sections of the community.

The Minister for Agriculture: You do not think a producer will spoil it, do you?

Mr. OLDFIELD: If the Minister will allow me to proceed, I shall endeavour to make plain the point of view of the metropolitan interests in this instance. The member for Fremantle has rightly asked why, if a producers' representative should go on the board, there should not be a representative of the consumers? The hon. member even went so far as to suggest that the consumers' representative should be a woman. I have no quarrel with that. There is, however, another great section of the industry to be considered—the retailers; the people who handle and distribute the product. Throughout the metropolitan area, many thousands of pounds are tied up in depots and milk treatment plants.

Mr. J. Hegney: They have been trying to get representation on the board ever since it was established, and they have not succeeded yet.

Mr. OLDFIELD: We have in the metropolitan area about six treatment plants that are licensed by the board, and some hundreds of thousands of pounds are tied up in them. The present policy of the Milk Board is to do away with wholemilk as far as deliveries in the metropolitan area are concerned, and have milk supplied in bottles. That is possibly progress, and one cannot quarrel with it, although some people prefer wholemilk.

Mr. J. Hegney: The people who make the bottles will be the next who will want to be represented on the board.

Mr. OLDFIELD: If we accept the principle that the producer should be represented on the board, we should be prepared to say that a consumers' representative shall be on it as well, and also that there shall be a representative of the retailers and the owners of treatment plants. All these sections of the industry are vitally interested, and the industry could not function without any one of them. It is a habit nowadays to introduce legislation to give certain sectional interests preferential treatment.

The Milk Board could not possibly do a better job than it is doing. The three members at present are doing a wonderful job, and no one can level criticism at the decisions they come to, or at any of their actions. Possibly as a result of pressure from the producers, or from the Farmers' Union, which has been keen for years to have a direct representative, the Minister has agreed to increase the number on the

board by one. If we accept that principle, why not go further and, as the member for Fremantle has suggested, put a representative of the owners of treatment plants and the distributors on the board?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Who do you think are the most important?

Mr. OLDFIELD: One is no more important than the other. We could not have the industry without the producer. By the same token, the industry could not flourish without the treatment plant and the distributor; and if there were no consumers there would be no industry, because there would be no customers. Each is dependent on the other. If we follow the argument to its conclusion, we get a board of six. The present board of three has done very well. We can imagine the arguments that a board of six would have.

What is suggested will probably mean doubling the present cost of conducting the board, because no doubt there will be a member from the country, and his expenses in attending the meetings will have to be met. To have a consumers' or distributors' representative on a board is nothing new. We have about 67 boards functioning in the metropolitan area, and on most of those that deal with an industry concerned with primary production there is a consumers' representative. Even the Metropolitan Market Trust has a consumers' representative. Until recently, Mr. C. H. Webb held the position, but I do not know who holds it at present. The consumers' representative on the trust is generally someone from Trades Hall.

The Minister for Agriculture: A good place, too.

Mr. OLDFIELD: The fact is that we have accepted the principle of having a consumers' representative on the board. On the Metropolitan Market Trust, the merchants from within the markets—the auctioneers and packers—have a representative. As distributors of the goods, they are part of the industry. Undoubtedly, the board could be classified as being rather unwieldy. If it comes to a question of principle as to whether producers should or should not be represented on boards, I say that, generally speaking, I am opposed to the setting up of boards to control anything. I believe in a free market, where possible, and I do not believe in controlled marketing. I believe in orderly marketing as against organised marketing, and sometimes boards are necessary for that purpose. I remember how the present Minister for Works, when sitting on the Opposition side of the House, used to criticise the Apple and Pear Board and also to a great degree the Egg Board. I fully expected that if ever he became Minister for Agriculture, the Egg Board would go the way of the Apple and Pear Board. I have no quarrel with the principle of putting a producers' representative on the

board if we give consideration to those other people who are associated with the industry.

In this instance, because the board is doing a good job, I do not feel it is necessary, to put a producers' representative on the Milk Board. If the board was not functioning correctly, or if the producers were receiving a raw deal at its hands, I would have no hesitation in saying that they should have representation. But they are not. The Minister will readily admit that the producers are very happy at present with the treatment they are receiving from the board; and possibly they have no fault to find with the three members of the board. When a thing is running well, leave it alone! Once we start to interfere, we might do something we will be sorry for.

The board is running smoothly, and if we put a producers' representative on it, he may go there with one idea in view—to put forward the case of the producers. There would then be on the board a man to put forward the producers' case at the expense of the other two sections of the industry.

Mr. Mann: A very narrow-minded view.

Mr. OLDFIELD: That is why he is going on the board, and that is why the Farmers' Union is to submit a panel of three names to the Minister. The union will select a man to put forward the producers' case.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do you not think the producers' case ought to be put forward?

Mr. OLDFIELD: I am not denying that.

The Minister for Agriculture: What are you arguing about?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Who is going to put forward the consumers' case, and that of the distributors and retailers?

The Minister for Agriculture: I am talking about producers now. What is your objection?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Some members who represent butterfat and wholemilk areas have jumped on the band-waggon here. I congratulate the member for Harvey, who represents a dairy farming district, on his impartial view.

The Minister for Agriculture: He put up a good case.

Mr. OLDFIELD: He took a logical line, and put forward what is possibly a far better suggestion than is foreshadowed in the Bill, and that is to wait until one of the present members goes off the board, and then appoint a producer in his stead.

The Minister for Agriculture: I do not agree with that.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I think it is a very good point. I am not saying whether I agree with it or not, but I do say that

the member for Harvey has had the courage, representing the area he does, to make that suggestion.

The Minister for Agriculture: He put forward a good case.

Mr. OLDFIELD: My main quarrel with the Bill is in line with that of the member for Fremantle. The Minister is giving representation to one section—the producers—and forgetting the two other sections that are just as important. Until these disorderly interjections started—

Mr. Cornell: You are an authority on them.

Mr. OLDFIELD: As I was about to say, we have a board that is doing a grand job for all sections of the industry. No one can deny that we get our milk, which passes through the treatment plants, delivered at a reasonable price when we take into account the rapid spiral of price rises in all other commodities. Furthermore, the dairy farmer cannot really grumble at the spin he has had from the board. But if we put a producers' representative on the board, he will go there with one object in view, namely, to put forward the producers' case. Then we will have a one-sided board. The other members will have to listen to the producers' representative without hearing a representative of the consumer or the distributor.

The Minister for Agriculture: I do not think you know what you are talking about.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I know what the Bill is; and the Minister is a representative of a butterfat area.

The Minister for Agriculture: If you look at other boards, you will see they have representatives of the producers on them.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Yes, and they have representatives of the consumers and the distributors.

The Minister for Agriculture: What is wrong with those boards that have producer-representation on them?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Mr. Speaker, these are disorderly interjections, and the Minister is making a fool of himself every time he interjects.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the member for Maylands will address his remarks to the Chair, and disregard the Minister's interjections, they will not worry him.

Mr. OLDFIELD: As I said earlier—

The Minister for Agriculture: You do not worry me.

Mr. OLDFIELD: If we accept the principle of putting a producers' representative on the board, we should go further and accept the principle of putting a consumers' representative on, as well as a representative of the retailers and distributors. By doing that, we would double the size of the board, which is functioning effectively at the moment. Would

the Minister say that the present composition of the board is not satisfactory? Would he say that the board is not doing a good job?

The Minister for Agriculture: Did you hear me move the second reading of the Bill? I praised the board.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Of course the Minister did. Why fiddle with it?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I must ask the Minister to stop interjecting, and the member for Maylands to confine his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Yes, but it is most difficult.

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member to do it.

Hon. L. Thorn: He leads the Minister into a trap, and then turns on him.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I must apologise. I agree with the member for Fremantle, and if the Bill is passed, in addition to a producers' representative, I would like to see a consumers' representative appointed to the board. It might be as well to go one step further and have a retailers' and distributors' representative appointed also.

MR. WILD (Dale) [8.46]: I wish to support the Bill but I think the Minister would do well to take cognisance of what the member for Harvey had to say about allowing the board to remain with three members only. In such an event it would be necessary to wait until one of the present members retired and then replace him with a producers' representative. If the Bill is passed in its present form a situation similar to that which now exists with the Egg Board would occur. As most members know, there is a good deal of friction on the Egg Board from time to time and at present there are three producer representatives and three persons representing the consumers, the Government, etc. appointed to that board. No finality can be reached and they have deadlock after deadlock. The same thing would occur if we had a milk board comprising four members.

In 1948 the Milk Board was an absolute shambles. It was comprised of representatives from all over the place and included people who were not bona fide. As members will recall, the Government of the day took action because of an open brawl between one member of the board and somebody else from a treatment plant at Cannington.

Hon. L. Thorn: They were throwing stones on the chairman's roof.

Mr. WILD: The Government of the day and Parliament took corrective action and reduced the board to three members. I think dairymen will agree that never before has the board functioned as well as

it has since that change was made. It is the policy of dairymen and also the policy of the party that I represent that there should be a producers' representative on the board. But we must stop and take heed. If we have a board of four members it will be unwieldy and will result in an impasse. I think the Minister should take notice of the suggestion of the member for Harvey and still limit the board to three but, when a vacancy occurs, appoint a producers' representative.

When speaking, the member for Harvey said that the Department of Agriculture did not, at all times, advise the industry as it should. This remark brought an interjection from the Minister. I shall not join issue with my colleague over his remark because I think it is entirely correct. But I do not say that it is the fault of the department; I think it has been brought about as the result of a difference of opinion between the Milk Board and the department.

As the Minister knows, only recently I placed questions on the notice paper regarding prosecutions that had taken place in the Armadale-Byford district because of substandard milk—the solids-not-fat content was too low. On making inquiries I found that the Department of Agriculture said, "Leave it to the Milk Board" and the board said, "Leave it to the department." In the meantime the producer has been prosecuted twice in four or five weeks. But he is not getting the advice that he needs and I think the Minister could take heed of what I have to say in this regard. I have every confidence in the department because its officers are experienced and can visit these fellows and say, "Your milk is substandard. You should do this, that or the other thing."

There may be something wrong with the type of stock that the producer is running or something may be wrong with his production methods. These officers could give him the necessary advice. At the moment both the board and the department are saying, "It is not our baby." The producer is like a football—he is being kicked by both sides. As the Minister knows, one farmer in the district received a second summons on the same day as he was fined for the first. It has all happened because nobody has visited him to tell him how to overcome his problems.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Who do you blame for that?

The Minister for Agriculture: You cannot correct an anomaly in five minutes—especially regarding the quality of milk.

Mr. WILD: I agree. But the department has officers who can go out and give the necessary advice, and it should be its responsibility to say that a producer should do such-and-such a thing to overcome his troubles. If the producer does not follow the advice he must take what is coming to

him. However, that is only a constructive thought which I pass on to the Minister. The present trouble has been brought about because of the difference of opinion between the board on the one hand and the department on the other.

The Minister would, I think, be well advised to take heed of what the member for Harvey had to say because we do not want to drift back to the position we were in five years ago. So I think the Minister should agree to an amendment that will enable a producer to be appointed to the board but still limit the board to three members. I support the second reading.

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [8.52]: The parent Act was first introduced in 1931 or 1932.

Mr. J. Hegney: In 1932.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is so. It was a contentious measure and was the cause of much debate in this House. It was introduced because producers, particularly during the depression years, were receiving a price for their milk which did not return to them a living wage; in other words, they were selling their product below the cost of production.

Mr. J. Hegney: They were getting 2d. a pint.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: As a result, there was great dissatisfaction in the industry and a vigorous demand for the establishment of a milk board. Just now I asked that the parent Act be brought to me so that I could have a look at a section of it. I was told that it had been amended on eight occasions and I do not think we have ever had a Minister for Agriculture, in the 25 years that I have been in Parliament, who has not found some reason for amending it. I look forward to the day when we will have a Milk Act that will not have to be amended so often but will still give satisfaction to all sections of the industry. When introducing the Bill the Minister said that the board, as it is now constituted, had done good work.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is fair enough.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I agree that the board has done good work. The reason for its appointment in its present form was that the board was not operating smoothly in 1948. The Minister made some explanation about it and what he said was factual. As the board was not operating smoothly, it was not acting in the best interests of the industry. At that time it consisted of five members; two of them represented the producers and two the consumers. From the producers angle, one producer was elected from what was known as the inner area—the metropolitan area—and the other represented the outer areas. The position was that the producers' representative from the inner area was also a

retailer and, in fact, his retailing interests predominated. So that if one has a knowledge of the Milk Act it is easy to visualise that where there is producer representation under the conditions I have outlined, it is most unsatisfactory and one cannot get the real view of the producers.

The late Hon. G. B. Wood, who was Minister for Agriculture in the Government of which I was a member, gave serious thought to the whole position. He made a proposal to the Government that a board, as it exists at present, should be constituted. As members know, the late hon. member was a great believer in producer representation, and he made this recommendation after giving it a great deal of careful thought. I can remember the late hon. member telling us in Cabinet that he believed such a board would be a successful one and I was glad to hear the Minister say that it had been successful. I thoroughly agree with him.

I have always been a believer in producer representation. Where their product is being sold the producers should have some say, and for that reason I shall not oppose the Bill. The member for Fremantle, who is one of the three remaining members who were here when I entered Parliament, will recall the debates that took place on the parent Act and what differences of opinion there were in those days. Just now the hon. member asked which was the most important section of the community affected by this legislation. I would remind him, and no doubt he will recall the fact, that in the first place the legislation was introduced in the interests of the producers. It was introduced to ensure that they would get what might be termed a living wage. So the producers would consider themselves to be the most important section affected by this legislation. At the same time, it was introduced to ensure that a good wholesome product was delivered to the consumers at a reasonable price.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: If there were no consumers, there would be no producers.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is so. When the legislation was first introduced there was a wide difference of opinion between the producers and the consumers. I am prepared to support the Bill but I am glad to have been given the opportunity to join with the Minister in paying a tribute to the work of the present board.

Before concluding, I would like to ask the Minister for this information: I presume that the producers' representative, as selected from a panel of names submitted to the Minister, will be approved for a period of three years, as is the case with the present representative. The Minister indicates that that is so. The only other matter to which I wish to make reference—and it has been referred to by the member for Harvey and the member for Dale—is the prosecutions that have taken place

recently, and those that are taking place from time to time. Some time ago I asked some questions of the Minister for Agriculture, and also some of the Minister for Health. At the present time we have two different departments prosecuting for sub-standard milk. I think it would be much more satisfactory if we permitted the Milk Board to deal with prosecutions.

I do not suggest to the Minister that sub-standard milk should be sold. But I do know from my own experience that reputable men—men whom I am perfectly certain would not tamper with their milk—have been prosecuted for under-standard milk. As members will appreciate, such prosecutions constitute a stigma on this type of man. If the Milk Board controlled prosecutions it would know immediately from which farm the under-standard milk was coming, and it could advise the producer about it and say, "We expect within a certain time that the milk you are producing will be brought up to the standard required under the Health Act."

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What would you think is the cause of under-standard milk now? Is there any excuse?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Yes; the cows may be on poor pasture. That would be a reason for under-standard milk.

Mr. Manning: Seasonal conditions would be another.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is so. The hon. member has heard it said that certain breeds of cattle give a different standard of milk from that supplied by others.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Would not this breed of cattle give a standard milk?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: An attempt is being made to bring the standard up in all breeds. Some breeds give a richer milk than others. I have already given some reasons why we have under-standard milk.

The Minister for Agriculture: Our standard is not high; it is only 3.2.

The Minister for Railways: It is equal to the lowest in Australia.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That may be so, but I would point out that some producers fall below the standard unbeknown to themselves, and in some cases it is not their fault. I think the producers should be dealt with sympathetically and given an opportunity to improve the standard of milk. I would suggest that the Minister have a look at this problem from that angle. I believe that if the matter were placed under the control of the Milk Board, it would know at once where the milk was coming from and would be able to say straightaway to the producers, "You have got to do something about this." I feel sure the producer would react as required and we would get away from

many of these prosecutions that take place. Accordingly I ask the Minister to look at it from that angle.

I support the second reading of the Bill. The principle of producer representation on boards that control the sale of his product is one with which I agree. I might say to the Minister that there never has been a time when this legislation has been amended that there has not been an attempt to bring in other sections of the industry. That has always been the case when an attempt has been made to amend the Milk Act. It appears that we are going to have a further attempt this evening.

In my opinion other sections of the industry have not suffered because of the present set-up of the board. In the earliest days of the board members may recall—particularly those associated with the milk industry in the early days—that one of the first members of the board was the late John Curtin. A number of other prominent citizens were also members of the Milk Board. As we have come down through the years, I am certain there has been a desire on the part of the members of the board to see that justice should be done to all sections engaged in the industry.

HON. L. THORN (Toodyay) [9.7]: I was associated with this House when the first Bill to set up a Milk Board was introduced.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: There was quite a lot of argument on that measure.

Hon. L. THORN: As the member for Fremantle says, there was quite a lot of argument on that occasion, and there have been arguments regularly ever since, over the last 24 years. Every time a Bill comes before this Chamber to amend the Milk Act these arguments take place. I am surprised that the Government should bring down this amending Bill, particularly when we look back over the history of the different Milk Boards and realise that at the present time we have a board that has been able to control this industry peacefully and carry on its operations efficiently.

Personally, I do not at all object to producer representation. As the Leader of the Opposition has mentioned, the late Mr. Garnet Wood, who was Minister for Agriculture, was a great supporter of producer representation. But after all the trouble the department had regarding the milk industry, he decided to set up the present board which, as I have already said, has functioned efficiently.

Together with other members I recall what brought this about. When a milk strike was called, we had one of the most disgraceful scenes and set-ups that this State has ever witnessed concerning the control of primary products. These people went far beyond the limits. They

turned milk carts over; they went to the home of the chairman of the Milk Board, and threw stones on his roof. They did everything that, in my opinion, was disgraceful. After all that unseemly behaviour, the present board was set up and it carried out its operations very well.

The Minister for Agriculture: The question of a strike in an industry is not governed by representation on a board.

Mr. Oldfield: Only this evening you blamed the board for the strike at the abattoir.

Hon. L. THORN: The member for Maylands suggests that we should have a consumers' representative on the board; the member for Fremantle throws out his usual bait, and says that a woman should be on the board; and so we go on.

Mr. McCulloch: What does the member for the Subiaco say?

Hon. L. THORN: The point is that the milk belongs to the producer.

Mr. Oldfield: Not after he sells it.

Hon. L. THORN: He produces it, and he should definitely be entitled to representation.

Mr. Oldfield: What about after he sells it?

Hon. L. THORN: If the Minister agrees to give representation to all the proposals put up this evening, we might as well leave the producer off the board; he would be out-voted. That is what the hon. member wants; he wants the selling side to have control and do what it likes.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do you believe the producer should out-vote others.

Hon. L. THORN: I think the producers should have the majority.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Would you give the workers a majority representation in the Arbitration Court?

Hon. L. THORN: That is different. The milk belongs to the producer and he should have the major say about it. The point I wish to make is that the board we have today is functioning very well indeed, and I cannot understand why the Government should see fit to bring down a measure to alter the position. It astounds me, taking into consideration all the trouble we have had in the past.

I have no intention of opposing producer representation but I sincerely hope the Minister will not increase the personnel of the board, and that he will not give representation to any other section. I hope he will keep it as a board of three, as suggested by the member for Harvey. If we continue adding to the board we will have the same trouble as we had in the past; nothing is surer. Seeing that a board of three has proved that it can function without all the trouble we have had in the past, I strongly urge that the Minister leave the board as it is.

HON. DAME FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [9.14]: I had intended to ask for the adjournment of the debate, but as so many members have spoken, I am sure the Minister would like to get on with the Bill. It has really amazed me to see the interest that has been taken on the milk question. The interest displayed probably equals that which is taken in connection with betting and alcohol. I cannot imagine why such a great deal of interest has been taken because there is not one of the members who knows anything about the production of milk. Is the Minister asking for a producer on the board?

The Minister for Agriculture: If we put a producer on the board, literally I suppose we should put a cow there.

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: Or a goat! We should not put a man on. What I wish to say is that it would be much better not to change the board; leave it as it is. I think three members better than four. If a producer is put on the board, we will have to do eventually what the member for Fremantle suggested—namely, include a consumer. I cannot see why the Bill should provide for a producer and not for a consumer. The man who is termed a producer will do all he can to raise the price; he will be there for himself.

The Minister for Agriculture: I do not think I would take that attitude entirely. The experience of this Government, and of that which the hon. member supported, has been that on all other boards the producers' representatives have given fair treatment to all sections of the community.

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: My experience of the milk question is greater than that of almost any other member. I do not suppose there is one who delivered as much as I have. During the strike to which reference was made, I delivered over 1,000 bottles a day with Senator Robertson. We delivered the milk, in defiance of Premier Willcock, wherever we found that there were children needing it. We went out much further than Guildford, and past Midland Junction, delivering milk in those days.

At that time, before children were provided with milk by the Commonwealth, we made an investigation into many of the schools; and it will be remembered that over 60,000 children were examined by the National Fitness Council, who found that milk was absolutely necessary for youngsters. We tried to get the Commonwealth interested, because we knew that milk was delivered to children in other countries.

A tremendous number of children are obtaining milk today; but it is too expensive for people to buy for their families, and many parents are depending on the one-third of a pint that is supplied to their children at school. An enormous expenditure from the weekly wage is necessary to

provide milk when there are four or five young children in a family, because every child should have at least one pint a day. A suggestion has been made that some schoolchildren do not drink their milk. I consider that we should do something to see that children who are supplied with milk at school are made to drink it.

If the Bill passes the second reading, I hope the member for Fremantle will do as he suggested should be done, and move for a consumer to be placed on the board; otherwise less milk will be sold because of the cost. We have been told that the board is a very good one. I agree with that. Though I was opposed to the board when it started, I think it has functioned very well indeed. Why change it?

The Minister for Agriculture: The other boards are also functioning well. This is the only one which has not producer representation.

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: It has not consumer representation either, or other sorts of representation. As the member for Maylands said, if we add another person to the board, before long we will have five or six, and perhaps more. The same thing will happen as occurred previously. We will have a chaotic board, instead of one which, though hard, has been very sympathetic to the people in one way. It has been a good board.

It has been said that milk is being sold at a reasonable price, I would like to know from the Minister why the board has started to put large advertisements in the paper, which must be very costly. Why does it do that rather than reduce the price of milk, if it wants people to buy more?

Mr. J. Hegney: That is what the petrol people are doing. Why should they not reduce the price of petrol and cut down on advertising?

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: If advertisements were cut down, the price could be reduced. There is an insistence on everybody getting milk in bottles. I would like to mention that some time ago I got 3s. 9d. in a milk bottle. Milk had been put in the bottle, but there was 3s. 9d. at the bottom. Apparently somebody had put that money in the bottle the day before or at some other time, in payment of a debt.

The other day I saw a reference in the paper to the fact that one out of eight men offering for national service had been rejected because of medical unfitness. Think of that in a country like Australia, where we should have as much as we want to eat, and should all be healthy, especially young people. Doctors have told me—and it was said during the last war—that the cause of unfitness was insufficiency of milk given to them at an early age. That is what is happening today; we are not giving children sufficient milk.

I understand that so-called producers are licensed to vend their milk. A producer can supply so many gallons. What is done with the rest that is produced? In nine cases out of 10, it is thrown away. I have seen that done. That is something which the board might alter. I am not going to vote against the Bill, because I am paired and have no vote. But if I did have a vote, I would oppose the Bill most heartily. I would not do so because I dislike the board. I do not like boards at all, but that is not why I would oppose the Bill. I have no prejudice against this particular board; but I say emphatically that, once we alter the representation from three to four, we will find ourselves making it five or six, and eventually there will be chaos. The Minister would be wise to withdraw the Bill.

MR. HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe) [9.23]: At the outset I had no intention of speaking to the Bill; but in view of the rather strange debate that has taken place, I feel impelled to clarify my position in my own mind, and possibly add to the confusion generally. The debate has been rather paradoxical. We have found most speakers saying that they support the Bill, yet, at the same time, saying in measured tones, "We do not like to increase the representation." So we find that members are loth to increase the representation on the board, and yet are loth to oppose an increase because it provides for a producers' representative to be included on the board. On the one hand they want one thing; and on the other hand, they want something that will alter their first want.

In trying to clarify the position in my own mind, and from my small understanding of this subject, it appears to me that the best that could have been done would be for no Bill to have been introduced and the board allowed to stand and then later, as has been suggested, when one of the members retired, the position might be filled by a producers' representative. I am not at all sure that I entirely agree with that suggestion. In order to clarify the position for myself, I would suggest that if anybody felt during the Committee stage that there should be a distributors' representative and a consumers' representative on the board, in view of the fact that the Bill provides for a producers' representative, I would support an amendment along those lines.

Mr. Oldfield: Anybody with any sense of fairness would do the same.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: That appears logical to me. Apparently it was the intention of the framers of the board to ensure that there was no sectional representation; and from what I can gather, there is no quibble as to the manner in which the board has functioned. Everyone seems to have the best to say about its work. Yet there is a desire to increase the personnel, and so endanger the composition of the board. It seems to be

generally agreed—not just on this side, but on the Government side—that it is best for the composition of the board to remain small.

To open the gates wide enough for the inclusion of a producers' representative, may mean that they will be pushed wider open to allow two other representatives to be admitted. If I had a choice to make, I would say that I preferred to have the board remain as it is. But if the Bill is passed—and I presume it will be—I shall support anyone who wants to increase the personnel further by the addition of a consumers' representative and a distributors' representative, because I feel they should be included. I will fall in with the majority and support the second reading, but would like to see someone move—though I think the machinery may be difficult—for the inclusion of the two extra representatives to whom I have referred.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. E. K. Hoar—Warren—in reply) [9.28]: I would like to deal first of all with the point raised by the member for Harvey and a number of other speakers, including the Leader of the Opposition, concerning the quality of milk, and with the fact that there have been a number of prosecutions against persons for supplying under-standard milk, through no fault of the producers. I am fully aware of what goes on in that regard, and took action only last week to set something in motion that I hope will remedy that state of affairs.

At present the Milk Board has inspectors whose job is to test milk and declare it either under-standard or over-standard as the case may be. Yet it is the Health Department which makes actual prosecutions. It is rather an unfortunate situation that Milk Board inspectors should be called upon to test milk, but should not be in any way competent to suggest a remedy for that which is under-standard. Consequently, if a farmer wants to do any good in that regard, he must go to the Department of Agriculture to find out what is wrong with the production of milk on his property which has caused the inspectors to condemn it under the Milk Act, and which leads to his being prosecuted later under a different Act altogether—the Health Act.

It is an absolute injustice for a man to be prosecuted when he may have followed the advice given to him by departmental officers in regard to the laying out of his farm, the improvement of pastures, and so on. There is an anomaly somewhere and it is a rank injustice that a man who has done all he should, may find, for some reason beyond his control or knowledge, that he is subject to prosecution. Last week a deputation from the Farmers' Union waited on me, and rising out of that I intend to call a conference between the Department of Agriculture, the Health

Department and the Milk Board to see whether a standardised method can be adopted to use the best brains of each of those instrumentalities so that the farmer may be enabled to avoid so often finding his milk under-standard.

I am hopeful that the conference will be productive of ideas that will improve farming practice and bring the Department of Agriculture more into the picture than it is at present so as to help the farmer in his endeavour to produce milk of the standard required in this State. I might add that I have for some time been thinking over ways and means to overcome the difficulty.

The member for Harvey, the member for Blackwood and one or two others desired an assurance that if a producer is put on the board he will be a bona fide producer and not just a nominee of the Farmers' Union, who might be anybody. The member for Harvey feels sure that the Farmers' Union will hand in a panel of names of bona fide producers, and I agree. If the union is not capable of giving the Minister such a panel, then it cannot believe in the policy it has pronounced over the years, and I, for one, do not think that is true.

I am convinced that those selected by the Farmers' Union will be bona fide farmers, and it is up to the union to make sure of that. If members still have any doubt in that regard, I have no objection to an amendment being moved, during the Committee stage, to make sure of the position. In nominating the Farmers' Union to submit a panel of names, I chose a body which I thought would do just what members have said they want it to do, but, as I have said, I have no objection to an appropriate amendment being moved during the Committee stage.

There is not much reason for argument about increasing the number of members on the board to four. There are in this State a number of similar boards, the membership of which ranges from two to seven. Obviously numbers will not affect the efficiency of the board. It is merely a question of whether its activities, which have been excellent up till now, might be damaged by further representation and in this case, with producer representation, I do not think that will be so. I am concerned at the moment with making a start in giving representation to the producers, because this is the only marketing board we have which lacks such representation.

With the existing set-up, the chairman of the board of three is appointed for seven years, and each of the other two members for three years. The staggering of the periods makes it difficult to await the day when one member's time expires, thus making a vacancy, before putting somebody of specific character in his place. We cannot just wait for a vacancy among the existing personnel and fill it

with a retailer, consumer or producer. The Act lays down the independence and non-sectional interests of the board and it would have to be amended if we wanted to do what is suggested here.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do some of them retire this year?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think it is next year, but the Act must be amended before we can do anything of that kind. Instead of waiting for perhaps a couple of years and then trying to amend the Act in the hope that in a further 12 months Parliament will agree to the addition of a producers' or some other representative, I thought it better, in order to gain the initial advantage of having the extra representation, to move to add it to the existing board. Once we have done that, we have accepted the principle that other phases should be represented on this board, and later on, when vacancies occur, we can effect other alterations if Parliament desires them. In that event, we can alter the Act to enable other forms of representation to come in—

Mr. Hutchinson: To make it sectional instead of non-sectional?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That will be something for a future Parliament to decide, and at the moment the efficiency of this board of three must be disturbed as little as possible.

Mr. Hutchinson: But you have suggested that this opens the gate to the entry of other sectional representation.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Not at this stage. In the light of past experience, I think the altering of a board such as this should be done gradually. We can see what producer representation on it will do and if it is successful, as it is with the other marketing boards, Parliament could agree to further alterations later.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: If you have producer representation, should it not be equal representation to be effective?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Not necessarily. Not many of the boards in this State are in line with each other today. I think there is one that has producer control and three or four others with equal numbers. Still others have one or two producer representatives out of a board of five or six. They all appear to be working satisfactorily. If we add a producer representative to this board, we need not worry about numbers making it unwieldy, or about equality of voting, because the Act provides that a question must be decided by a majority vote, and if the voting is equal, the question is decided in the negative.

I think that is a good idea because if one cannot get a substantial majority of such a board in favour of any question, it is probably better that there should be no

change made. That is what the Act provides, and our job now is to decide whether to extend this board to include other representation. At present it is completely impartial and is not connected with any section of the industry. It is Government policy—I think the Leader of the Opposition was right when he said it applies to all parties—to see that all marketing boards have on them representation of the ownership of the product being sold.

Mr. Hutchinson: When the Bill is in Committee will you agree to an amendment framed to include distributor representation?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In order to examine that side of the question further, I propose to make the Committee stage of the Bill an Order of the Day for another sitting. I do not see any objection to what is proposed in the Bill but in any case any desired amendments can be moved when the Bill is in Committee. I will not answer individual speakers, as I have endeavoured to cover the main points raised during the debate.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 12th October.

MR. WILD (Dale) [9.42]: This is a Bill to amend the Inspection of Machinery Act and in my view it is necessary to clarify the position in regard to two sections of the Act. The first of the provisions I have in mind deals with the number of certificated drivers required when there are engines of a total cylinder area of 200 square inches or less.

There is a point that I would like the Minister to clear up. I refer to the wording of Clause 2, where it refers to any internal combustion engine or group of engines under the charge of one driver. With the high cost of maintaining staff in these days, I do not think any concern would have more than one driver if it had engines the total cylinder area of which did not exceed 200 square inches. Surely one would have only one driver for a small amount of machinery such as that, and so I cannot see the necessity for that provision.

It occurs to me that certain circumstances could arise whereby possibly there could be two drivers engaged, not only on engine driving, but also on other work that it would be permissible for them to do and therefore, on my interpretation, both those drivers would have to be certificated. I cannot see that any employer of engine drivers on a mine would want to do that, and yet when one looks at the Act it is found that it refers only to "the driver in charge." However, in the Bill

it says, "where they are under the charge of one driver." Therefore, if an employer had occasion to employ two men who were not engaged full-time on that work but were doing other work around the engine-room, he would require to have two certificated men on the job according to this clause in the Bill.

The second clause seeks to bring modern cranes into line with the provisions of the Act. As the Minister said when he introduced this measure in years gone by, practically all cranes were operated at ground level and moved only at a slow speed, whereas today we see in operation the gantry type of crane with the driver in an overhead cabin and the crane being operated at four or five miles an hour, or at a slower speed, according to his whim. Therefore, a competent man is required in that cabin, and, further, he must be one who is medically fit.

Provision is also made for charging fees for the inspection of cranes driven by hand or animal power. That provision is only bringing the inspection of such machinery into line with inspections of other types of machinery. It means that an inspector has to make periodical checks of the machinery and it is only reasonable to assume that there shall be some small charge for such inspections.

The final amendment refers to regulating the construction, inspection, maintenance and testing of lifting tackle and gear and other appliances or contrivances of whatever description connected or used with any machinery. That again only follows the policy that has been laid down ever since the Inspection of Machinery Act came into operation. Anybody who has worked among mining machinery recognises that it is a most necessary provision and that there must be regular inspections made of machinery. I remember one accident that occurred in the shaft of the Ivanhoe mine. The winding cable broke and, of course, the worst happened. When one sees accidents such as that occur, it makes one realise the necessity for regular inspections of the machinery used. The inspection of the machinery on the mines was generally done every Saturday morning, apart from the routine check that was made daily by testing the cage up and down the shaft. Therefore, on this and on any other type of machinery inspections should be made regularly on every day of the week.

I can see nothing objectionable in the Bill. It clarifies one or two points that were not very clear before. The only contentious provision is that prescribing the fees to be charged, but even that is only coming into line with other provisions in the Act. I support the second reading.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. L. F. Kelly—Merredin-Yilgarn—in reply) [9.49]: I am not clear on the point raised by the member for Dale in regard to one

driver being referred to in the clause. It is thought that this is necessary only in the case of an engine with a cylinder area of 200 square inches or a group of engines with a maximum cylinder area of 200 square inches. For such engine or engines, one driver only would be needed. The hon. member might be confusing the issue. There is no suggestion that such an engine would be needed on a mine. An engine with a cylinder area of 200 square inches does not come within the category of that used for pumping and other purposes on a mine.

Mr. Wild: I raised that point only because, if one looks at the relevant section in the Act, it will be found that it does not say whether there shall be one, two, or three drivers in charge, and yet the clause in the Bill refers to only one driver.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I see the hon. member's point, but this provision is only increasing the maximum engine power that one driver can look after. Normally, only one driver is required to look after an engine with a 200 square inch displacement or a group of engines that do not exceed a displacement of 200 square inches.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: And as long as you do not have more than one man in charge of them.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Two men would not be needed to look after them.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Well, why provide for two?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Only one driver would be required to look after an engine of a total displacement of 200 square inches or a group of engines of small horsepower. For instance, there might be a hoist in one place which has a 4 h.p. engine and another engine in some other place of 2½ h.p., and both would require to be in the charge of only one engine driver.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Well, you would have no objection to deleting those words?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I see no reason why they should be deleted.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I see no reason for them to remain in the clause. The Minister cannot give any reason for putting them in.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Except that not more than one driver is necessary.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why have the words in the clause?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The objection by the hon. member is poorly based and is purely technical. I have been given an assurance that the provision is quite in order. I understand that Mr. Winzar gave the hon. member full details, and I thought he had been assured that the provision was quite in order.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The drafting is very bad.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The drafting was done by those officers who usually do the drafting and who did it when the hon. member was in office.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It must have been done under your instructions on this occasion.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No, it was not. The Bill comes from another source and I had nothing to do with it. Nevertheless, I have an assurance that the clause is quite in order.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; the Minister for Mines in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Section 53 amended:

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I cannot disagree with the principle expounded by the Minister, but nevertheless I think the clause is somewhat confusing. Section 53 of the Act provides that every person employed or acting in charge of a steam engine, an engine driven by compressed air; any crane, hoist, winding engine, or any internal combustion engine to which the Act applies shall hold the required certificate under this Act.

As the Minister has said, there are exceptions provided under Subsection (3) and, among other things, it says that it shall not apply to any combustion engine or engines having an area of cylinder or combined area of cylinder not exceeding 200 square inches. The Minister has stated that that is the exception that is sought to be covered by the Bill. But a curious thing has happened.

The Bill proposes to add the words "where they are under the charge of one driver." Those words clearly imply that if there are two drivers they do not come within the exception provided. If one driver is employed it is quite in order, but if, because of the need for greater care or for some unknown reason, two drivers are in charge of the engines, one at least must be certificated. That seems very curious. If the Premier read this clause, he would agree with my interpretation. It seems illogical that if one driver is employed he need not hold a certificate, but if two drivers are employed at the same time then one must possess a certificate. I therefore move an amendment—

That the words "where they are under the charge of one driver" in lines 15 and 16, page 2, be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I oppose the amendment. This clause was inserted at the request of the Deputy Chief Inspector of Machinery. His opinion of what amendment is required in the Act is of greater value than that of the hon. member. The member for Mt. Lawley

cannot convince members that he knows more about the requirements relating to the drivers of machinery.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Do you allege that where one driver is employed he need not hold a certificate, but if two are employed then one must hold a certificate? That is what the clause says.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It does not say that at all. In the past when there were several cranes driven in various parts of a workshop it was necessary to have several certificated drivers. This clause deals with a small group of engines not exceeding 200 square inches of cylinder area. The Bill proposes to bring such groups under the control of one certificated driver. There are three workshops in which this does not apply, where much bigger machinery is employed and where the machinery is totally used for maintenance and upkeep of the plant at the workshops.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is a very weak explanation. According to the clause and the explanation given by the Minister, the position is that if it is necessary to employ one driver for a small group of engines, he need not be certificated; but where the situation calls for two drivers to be engaged then one must hold a certificate. If that is the intention of the Minister, I would agree to the clause, but apparently it is not.

Mr. O'BRIEN: The wording of Clause 2 is very clear, and its inclusion is intended to give greater protection. Where greasers and cleaners are employed, there must be a qualified driver. Regarding the overhead cranes used in up-to-date mines to transport heavy machinery from the engine room to the various parts of the shop, qualified drivers must be engaged. I think the clause is most necessary.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I oppose the clause, in particular paragraph (b) dealing with crane drivers. It is intended to except cranes used solely for maintenance of the plant. Either an overhead crane is safe or it is not, and the fact that it is used for maintenance has no bearing. If it is safe then the exception should be deleted. Why should a crane be considered as safe when it is used for maintenance if the need to engage a certificated driver can be dispensed with? If certificated drivers are required for safe cranes, then no exception should be made when they are used for maintenance.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Overhead travelling cranes are employed for a variety of uses and have capacities of from 2 to 15 tons in this State. But there are three with much greater capacity. These have been installed by the owners purely for plant maintenance.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Why is it not required to have a certificated driver for those machines?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member has a point there. I do not see the reason for applying the safety rule in one case and not in another. I am prepared to accept the deletion of paragraph (b).

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Section 82 amended:

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: From time to time members have objected to legislation by regulation, particularly when it is extraordinarily wide. Of course, we must permit policy to be carried out in detail by regulation, but I think the Premier will realise just how wide the proposed new paragraph (8a) is. Often he has expressed himself as being opposed to government by regulation. I am sorry that the member for Fremantle is not in his seat because he would agree with me. The proposed new paragraph provides for regulations—

regulating the construction, inspection, maintenance and testing of lifting tackle and gear and other appliances or contrivances of whatever description connected or used with any machinery.

Can anyone imagine anything wider than that? There should be some limitation. I ask the Minister to report progress, and consider for what particular purpose such a wide regulation is required.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 10.19 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 27th October, 1954.

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

QUESTION.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Provision for Stock.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

In view of the extremely low quantity of water now held in dams on individual holdings throughout many country districts, which threaten to go dry within the next four or five weeks, plus the fact that there appears very little water, if any, available to cart, can the Minister inform the House—

(1) Has this serious position of supplying stock with water been given any consideration by the Government?

(2) If consideration has been given to this problem, what the Government proposes to do to meet this apparent serious position?

(3) If nothing has been done to date, whether the Government is prepared immediately to investigate the matter so that it will be in a position to meet, without delay, any urgent demands to supply water for stock purposes?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) The position has not yet received detailed consideration, but the serious overall situation is known.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) The situation is being closely watched and means of utilising available water to the best advantage in consultation with appropriate authorities and departments are likely to be adopted. The Government will do its best to meet any emergency, but it cannot accept responsibility for the supply of water for stock where such is not available.

BILL—PHARMACY AND POISONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Hon. R. J. Boylen and read a first time.