If this document had been written a little more clearly and followed up more courageously, we might have been spared a great deal of subsequent trouble.

I shall stop quoting at this stage because you, Mr. Speaker, have so far allowed me to depart from a discussion of the Bill, and I have no intention to trespass on your good nature. However, when such a measure as this is presented to the House and a member has any ideas to offer as to where the existing system can be improved he has a right to voice them, and I am glad of the opportunity afforded me. It is very easy for an economist to suggest working on a system of productivity, but that is only the beginning of the problem because all economists would tell us that wages must come from productivity. Under the existing system, with all its faults, wages must come from productivity, at any rate indirectly. But if there was some method by which we could deal with the system so that, over a period, the whole output of industry may be related to wages, we would have a wonderful system, and certainly something far better than we have today.

The only way in which such a system could be followed would be by adopting some method whereby, with a type of monster robot calculator, such as now exists, we could have a calculation made in a couple of hours which normally would occupy a staff for six months. Then it might be possible to arrange for the whole output of Australia to be translated into wages and enable the court to produce a really efficient system worthy of 1953.

Reverting to the Bill, I do not intend to traverse the ground already covered by the member for Mt. Lawley. He is in touch with all the questions involved in the measure, having been the previous Minister in this field, and he knows how difficult it is to put one's views into a condensed speech without much preparation. I feel that the introduction of such a measure will have a good effect in that it will permit people to air their opinions and perhaps open up the ground for some better technique for our arbitration system, but the present Bill will not have my support.

On motion by Mr. Moir, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 12.20 a.m. (Thursday).

Legislative Council

Thursday, 12th November, 1953.

CONTENTS.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

1, Pig Industry Compensation Act Amendment.

2, Local Courts Act Amendment.

3, Royal Style and Titles Act Amendment.

4, Western Australian Government Tramways and Ferries Act Amendment.

5, Collie-Griffin Mine Railway.

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS AND ROADS.

As to Capital Expenditure and Maintenance.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What has been the annual capital expenditure on the State railway system for the ten years ended the 30th June, 1953?

(2) What has been the annual maintenance expenditure on the State railway system for the ten years ended the 30th June, 1953?

(3) What has been the annual capital expenditure on the main roads system for the ten years ended the 30th June, 1953?

(4) What has been the annual maintenance expenditure on the main roads system for the ten years ended the 30th June, 1953?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Net annual capital expenditure on State railway system—

Year ended the 30th June	Amount £
1944	19,673
1945	72,699
1946	165,943
1947	308,651
1948	288,450
1949	275,388
1950	2,218,483
1951	1,411,751
1952	4,244,738
1953	6,049,162

(2) Annual maintenance expenditure on State railway system (total operating costs excluding depreciation and interest)—

Year ended the 30th June	Amount £
1944	3,795,929
1945	3,764,290
1946	4,206,706
1947	4,423,801
1948	5,570,000
1949	6,702,254
1950	7,501,395
1951	8,618,863
1952	10,601,917
1953	12,087,333

(3) (a) Annual capital expenditure on main roads declared under the Main Roads Act, 1930-52.

Year	Amount £
1943-44	49,495
1944-45	72,579
1945-46	153,726
1946-47	346,518
1947-48	439,689
1948-49	365,087
1949-50	322,758
1950-51	417,485
1951-52	558,117
1952-53	841,147

(b) Annual capital expenditure on main roads prescribed under the Traffic Act—

Year	Amount £
1943-44	349
1944-45	14,151
1945-46	2,998
1946-47	7,430
1947-48	44,909
1948-49	62,695
1949-50	73,083
1950-51	135,205
1951-52	105,752
1952-53	257,849

(4) (a) Annual maintenance expenditure on main roads declared under the Main Roads Act—

Year	Amount £
1943-44	56,591
1944-45	49,020
1945-46	73,709
1946-47	91,257
1947-48	106,238
1948-49	127,371
1949-50	123,054
1950-51	176,753
1951-52	255,661
1952-53	269,197

(b) Annual maintenance expenditure on main roads prescribed under the Traffic Act—

Year	Amount £
1943-44	14,151
1944-45	10,177
1945-46	10,322
1946-47	10,159
1947-48	11,089
1948-49	14,280
1949-50	24,419
1950-51	19,937
1951-52	22,118
1952-53	41,721

NATIVE WELFARE.

As to Tabling Annual Report.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Chief Secretary:

Further to the reply to a question asked on the 16th September, 1953, can he advise when a typewritten copy of the annual report of the Native Affairs Department for the year ended the 30th June, 1953, will be available to members?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

The report is now being typed and it is expected that a copy will be available for tabling on the 24th November.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Reports of Committee adopted.

BILL—ELECTRICITY ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—MATRIMONIAL CAUSES AND PERSONAL STATUS CODE AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [4.40]: The Bill is to add to the Act something that was omitted in 1948. Whether the omission was intentional or not, I am not going to agree to its being included now. I must admit that the Bill has nothing to do with divorce, but it has something to do with the aftermath of divorce. Some members said last night that the Bill had been brought down to protect some unfortunate people who were in a particular state because of an omission from the Act. So far as my knowledge of the matter goes, they would only have to go to South Australia where their marital state could be recognised.

Hon. H. K. Watson: What a bright idea!

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Are you going to pay their train fare?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: In my later years I have thought that what is wrong with the world is that we have got too far away from Christianity. It does not matter whether it be social, industrial, or any other type of life, I believe a great number of the troubles are caused because we have got away from the teachings of Christianity.

It is known that a number of members —perhaps all—have received communications concerning this matter from various organisations. Mr. Parker suggested that those people were misled. I do not think they all were. I received letters from different sources, including the Mothers' Union and the Anglican Archbishop of Perth, but I was not satisfied. I am a vestryman of St. Paul's Church of England, Beaconsfield, but in order to be sure that the matter was not parochial and desired by just one group of people, I interviewed a Roman Catholic bishop, Dr. Goody; and from my conversation with him, I have no doubt that the desire of the churches of this State, as a whole, is that this addition to the Act be not agreed to.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: I assume you interviewed them all, or had some word from them.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I said that because only the church to which I belong had written to me, I was not prepared to regard that as indicating the requirements of all the people who look upon these matters with some disdain.

Hon. L. Craig: Did you tell them the circumstances of the error?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I knew nothing about the individual person.

Hon. L. Craig: I mean, the clerical error.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I did not need to tell them. These leaders of various denominations are very well educated people. I only wish I were half as well educated as they are, because I would then be able to put up a much better case than I am doing now. I do not believe that a person's religion should be a matter of politics. In my opinion, there are two things that should remain absolutely sacrosanct—a person's marriage and his religion. These things have nothing whatever to do with any other person in the world. This is repulsive to me because there are so many easy ways of getting a divorce.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What are they?

Point of Order.

Hon. H. Hearn: Will the hon. member relate his statements to the Bill? Do you, Mr. President, consider he is talking about the Bill?

The President: Yes; most decidedly he is talking about the Bill.

Debate Resumed.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: When I was elected to this Chamber, I followed a party ticket to win the election; but even so, when I became the successful candidate I considered I had to represent all persons in my electorate, irrespective of their politics, age, or religious denomination. Whilst I am holding this seat, I shall carry out my duties fearlessly and to the best of my ability. My personal opinion coincides with what I found as a result of the inquiries I made from the representatives of various religious denominations. As I have often heard Sir Charles Latham say, I am not going to cast a silent vote on this matter. In my opinion, the inclusion of the words in the amendment will lead to something distasteful to the majority of the people in the State. For that reason I oppose the Bill.

HON. J. McI. THOMSON (South) [4.49]: I am appreciative of the fact that I am now better informed as to the purpose of the Bill than I was last night, thanks to those who spoke on it. It is indeed a matter of concern to us all to know that there are some people—referred to in the Bill—who have married and had children. One cannot but be appalled at the laxity of those who should be better acquainted with the actual position of the law as it stands, and on whose advice the people concerned with this measure acted.

It is regrettable that it has taken five years to find out about this omission from the Act, and for the matter to be brought before Parliament to be rectified. I consider that the legitimacy of the children concerned in these marriages is of the first consideration; but I do not favour the idea of this Bill attempting to rectify that unfortunate position, because I think the measure is purely for the convenience of the parents. If the Bill is passed, the position will become a free-for-all, and—

Hon. A. L. Loton: What does the term "free-for-all" mean?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I will allow the hon. member to put his own interpretation on it.

Hon. A. L. Loton: You made the remark, and I want to know what you mean by the term.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: The hon. member can put his own interpretation on it. I cannot support the Bill; because, although Mr. Parker stated that it has nothing to do with divorce, the provision in it is closely allied to divorce. I think we would be taking a retrograde step if we made it easier for people to obtain a divorce, and so I cannot agree to this measure.

We must consider the reaction of the children who would be concerned and who would be called upon to live under conditions which I consider would be morally wrong. Over past years we have encouraged a brazen lack of responsibility towards our moral standards; and I feel that if we pass this Bill it will be a further retrograde step. I know that the measure will provide justice for some people; but in determining these points, we must decide which is the lesser of two evils. I think we would be making it easier for people to obtain divorces, and therefore I propose to vote against the Bill.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [4.55]: I would like to try to make the position as clear as possible. Mr. Roche, when introducing the Bill, and Mr. Parker, when speaking in support of it, made the position fairly clear. They told members that in 1948, when the Act was codified, certain words were inadvertently omitted. Those words were "as if the marriage had been dissolved by death." This Bill has nothing to do with divorce; it is purely a measure to provide that after a divorce—

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: It is closely allied to divorce.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: —people have the legal right to be married. But it is absolutely dissociated from divorce. I was rather surprised to hear Mr. Lavery say that, because of the circumstances that exist in this State, some people have to go to South Australia to become legally married. It is an unfortunate state of affairs, when people in Western Australia have to legalise their marriages by travelling to South Australia, or to some other State in the Commonwealth. As legislators, we ought to provide means for people to legalise their marriages here in the same way as they can be legalised elsewhere.

I was rather disappointed that a certain word was used last evening in the debate on this Bill. Mr. Parker used the word "adultery" on a number of occasions. If the hon. member had used the words "living in sin" instead of "adultery," he would have been nearer the mark, and I feel sure that is what he meant. If, owing to the laws in this State, a person, after divorce, cannot legally marry the brother-in-law or sister-in-law, as the case may be, that person has only one course left, and that is to live in sin. If a person is divorced in those circumstances, he does not live in adultery.

Hon. H. S W. Parker: Are we not all living in sin?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I would like the Chamber to realise that there is a big difference between "adultery" and "living in sin."

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: What is the difference?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The hon. member knows the difference as well as I do. If a married person is living with another person, he is living in adultery; but if a person is legally divorced and is living with another person, he is living in sin, unless the position is legalised.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Would you consider living in adultery to be different from living in sin?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Certainly; although I will admit that it depends on the standards and religion of a person. But there is a marked difference; and if the hon. member cares to study the Oxford Dictionary he will see that the two terms are entirely different.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Does the dictionary have a definition for "living in sin"?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: In the Oxford Dictionary there is a definition of "adultery" and a definition of "sin."

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: But not of "living in sin."

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Surely the hon. member could sum up the words "living in sin" if he looked up the definition of the word "sin." If he compares the words with the word "adultery," he will see that there is a big difference. Perhaps there are some members who, because of their religion, feel that this measure should not have been introduced; but we are here to handle legal questions. Although I can understand some members having religious scruples about this measure, I still think we should do the right thing and correct the legal position in Western Australia.

I aver that, by supporting this Bill, we are only doing something that is right legally, and members should consider what will be the legal aspect if this measure is not passed. I would rather see a person legally married, even though in some churches he would not be considered morally married, than I would see him living in sin. It is for us to decide which is better for the children and for those reasons I intend to support the measure. I trust other members will give it their support.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan, debate adjourned.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [5.0] in moving the second reading said: We often hear the expression, "This is a small Bill," and that applies quite definitely to the measure I now propose to introduce. It contains one small amendment only, which deals with the sale of land on account of unpaid rates. In such a case, where a transfer of the land to the purchaser is lodged at the Titles Office for registration, and a duplicate certificate of title cannot be found, the Registrar of Titles is required to advertise his intention to register the transfer without the production of the duplicate certificate.

The expense of advertising has to be borne by the purchasers of the land, and many complaints have been received about the high cost of the advertisements. In past years, of course, these costs were not of any great moment, but as members are aware, advertising prices are considerably higher now.

The Road Districts Act does not provide for any similar action, and the Commissioner of Titles does not consider it necessary for such action to be mandatory. The commissioner is of the opinion that the example in Section 283 of the Road Districts Act should be followed, and the registrar given the option to advertise should he think fit. It may be that in certain cases an advertisement would be wise, and I trust, therefore, that the Bill will be agreed to. The Secretary for Local Government agrees that the commissioner's advice should be taken. This is on a par with other legislation we had earlier in the session concerning advertising, and it has been brought down only because of the high cost of advertising. I move—

> That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham, debate adjourned.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [5.3]: in moving the second reading said: The main object of this Bill is to authorise the State Government Insurance Office to enter into the field of insurance business generally. As members will be aware, up until 1943 the business of the State office was limited to the indemnifying of employers against their liability under the Workers' Compensation Act. Subsequently, amendments were made extending the scope of the office by broadening the definition of "Insurance Business" to include—

(a) All classes of insurable risks in connection with the ownership and use of motor vehicles;

(b) All classes of insurable risks in respect of which local authorities and friendly societies ordinarily require and obtain insurance;

(c) Acting as agent in Western Australia for and on behalf of the State Insurance Office of any other State of the Commonwealth.

In addition, as agent for the Treasurer, the office administers the Government fire, marine and general insurance fund and the Government workers' compensation fund.

It is conceded in insurance circles that employers' liability and motor vehicle insurance are the two least profitable types of business. It is remarkable, therefore, that the State office has made phenomenal growth during its short life. From a humble beginning, and without any monetary assistance from the Treasurer, it has become a sound financial institution. Furthermore, throughout the years it has made a material contribution to the State Treasury. That has been achieved notwithstanding the fact that the premiums charged to the public have always been the lowest obtainable in Western Australia.

Under the Government fire, marine and general insurance fund and the local authorities pool, every type of risk insurable with any other insurance office (other than a life office) is underwritten by the State Government Insurance Office. During 1951-52 the marine premium alone exceeded £48,000. I refer to this to indicate that the office has the experience necessary to cope with any type of business should the Bill become law.

I shall now quote figures which reflect the growth and the financial strength of the office, the desire of the public to seek its services, and a continuing public confidence:—

	First year of Operation	Premium Income First Year	Premium Income 1952-1953
		£	£
Workers' Compensation (General Accident only)	1926-27	23,725	253,410
Motor Vehicle (Comprehensive)	1943-44	4,115	79,017
Local Authorities Pool	1946-47	2,158	16,751
Govt. Fire Marine and General Insurance Fund	1927-28	21,182	93,962

The office holds substantial reserves which at the 30th June, 1953, were covered by the following investments and cash balances:—

State Government Insurance Office:

	£
Commonwealth inscribed stock	1,309,994
Local authorities loans	11,527
Fixed deposit, Treasury	240,000
State Housing Commission	170,000
Miscellaneous	47,585
Land, St. George's Terrace	30,463
Cash balance at bank	80,992
Total	1,890,561

Government Fire, Marine and General Insurance Fund:

	£
Commonwealth inscribed stock	89,160
Cash balance at Treasury	109,357
Total	198,517

In addition to the accumulated funds, an amount of £776,185 has been paid to the State Treasurer and credited to the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Furthermore, the State Government Insurance Office has accepted the responsibility of erecting a building of ten storeys in St. George's Terrace at a cost of approximately £350,000. This building will materially assist in relieving the congestion in other State departments, a condition which has caused the Government much concern. With the limited loan funds available, it would have been impossible for the Government to have undertaken the erection of such a building, so that once again the value of the office to the State is demonstrated.

The cost of administering the office is considerably lower than that of any other insurance office, as the following figures for the year ended the 30th June, 1953, indicate:—

Workers' compensation (general accident)	9.7 per cent.
Motor vehicle (comprehensive)	10.4 per cent.
Local authorities pool	9.0 per cent.

These percentages represent about one-third of the administrative costs of the private companies, notwithstanding that the premiums charged by the State Government Insurance Office are substantially lower than those charged by the companies.

When the local authorities pool was established in 1946, only 60 local authorities participated. The premiums charged were, so far as could be determined, approximately 20 per cent. below ruling tariff rates. At the 30th June, 1953, however, 119 local authorities were members of the pool. This is an indication of faith in the office.

Notwithstanding the low premiums charged to local authorities, it has been possible to make annual cash rebates to the participants. The total amount in this connection is £7,465, and, in addition, £6,041 has been credited to the office reserve account. That has been achieved after debiting the pool account with taxation, fire brigade charges, claims and administration costs.

The pool, successfully established against considerable opposition, has proved of material benefit to the State as a whole, and more particularly to the ratepayers of those local authorities which participate. This gives some indication of the extent to which the general public could benefit if the Bill becomes law. Those members who are keen to preserve private enterprise must surely realise that the rejection of this Bill will render a definite disservice to the insurance companies operating in this State, and I am told this is recognised by the companies.

It must be obvious to all members that it is only a matter of time before the Commonwealth Government has an insurance office established in any State where a State Insurance Office is not operating. It already has the statutory power to engage in the business in respect of any class of insurance prescribed. This is provided by Section 134 of the Commonwealth Life Assurance Act of 1945. There is every reason to believe, however, that the Commonwealth would refrain from entering the field where a State instrumentality was already catering for the public.

Once a Commonwealth Insurance Office is established, it will be too late for the State to act as it would have to operate in competition with the Commonwealth office and its late start would be a serious handicap. On past experience, it can be anticipated that the insurance companies would get little, if any, business from the Commonwealth, whereas from a State office considerable reinsurance business would be available. In fact, such business would materially offset any loss of premium income due to business placed directly with the State Government Insurance Office.

The State Insurance Offices of New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania handle every type of general insurance risks, and the two larger States deal in life assurance also. They work in complete harmony with the Underwriters' Association in each of the respective States; and there is no obvious reason why the State Government Insurance Office in Western Australia should not be allowed to cater for the public, operate in the same way,

and enjoy the same relationship with the underwriters as has been established in the Eastern States.

The figures I have quoted show the extent to which the State has financially benefited as the result of the restricted activities of the State office, and indicate the very substantial benefit which would be derived from an unrestricted franchise. In view of the existing financial stringency, and the difficulty in obtaining the necessary funds for the development of the State, a direct source of revenue such as this should be welcomed by all who have the interest of Western Australia at heart.

The clauses of the Bill are largely self-explanatory, and need little comment. It is proposed to alter the title of the chief adminstrative officer from "Manager" to "General Manager," as it will be necessary to appoint branch managers if the Bill is agreed to. The term "General Manager" is used in New South Wales and Tasmania, and in Victoria and Queensland the title of "Commissioner" applies. Action is taken to avoid unnecessary repetition of the words "State Government Insurance" throughout the Act. The full title will appear only in the definition, and the term "Office" will be used thereafter. Similar consequential adjustments have been made throughout by this Bill.

The Bill seeks to preserve the present appointments of officers of the State Government Insurance Office under the Public Service Act, 1904-1950, and further provides that other officers with special knowledge may be appointed from time to time to meet the requirements of the office. The appointment of casual employees, such as agents, assessors, adjusters, etc. will be made by the general manager.

The principal Act provides that the Minister shall, by the name the State Government Insurance Office, be a body corporate. It is deemed desirable to make the State Government Insurance Office the body corporate as this would, in the event of litigation arising in respect of claims, facilitate an approach to the court. It may prove more difficult to sue a Minister of the Crown than the State Government Insurance Office as a body corporate. This provision is similar to that in the New South Wales Act.

The Bill specifies the funds which shall be established at the Treasury by the office and the nature of the accounts which shall be kept by the office. It will be observed that separate accounts must be maintained to show all transactions relating to industrial disease insurance as distinct from other business of the office

It is also provided that a separate banking account shall be maintained by the Treasurer, to which shall be credited all revenue received by the office, and against which all expenditure shall be debited. For many years no special banking account has existed, and at times difficulty has arisen in providing the cash necessary to enable investments to be made as required by the manager. As from the 1st January last, a special banking account was established, and since that date funds have always been available for immediate investment. It is considered that the office must, subject to the Treasurer, have absolute freedom in the investment of any funds available. It is obvious that the greater the amount of interest earned, the more improved is the financial position of the office, and this must ultimately redound to the benefit of clients. This provision really validates what is an accomplished fact.

For many years the office has acted as agent for the Treasurer in respect of the State Government fire, marine and general insurance fund and the State Government workers' compensation fund. On several occasions, underwriters with whom the State office reinsures, have raised the issue as to the legal status of the office in respect of the State Government fire, marine and general insurance fund. If the office is to continue to act as agent, it is essential that it should be in the same position in regard to transactions through the fund as it would be in respect of transactions conducted by the State office. The Bill will enable action to be taken against the office should the necessity arise. This amendment is considered essential by the State Crown Solicitor.

As in the past, any profits made by either of the funds will remain the property of the Treasurer to be dealt with in such manner as he deems fit, and will not be regarded as part of the profits of the State Office. Provision is made that such profit shall be determined only after the Auditor General is satisfied that the amount held in reserve is adequate. Provision is made also for the proper apportionment of the administrative costs of the office as between the respective funds, and it ensures that no such expenditure shall be a charge against Consolidated Revenue Fund.

The Bill seeks to protect any person taking a life assurance policy with the office by providing that any money credited to the life assurance fund shall be used for no other purpose. It is obvious that if the office is to engage in life assurance business, it will be necessary to issue reversionary bonuses at the end of each year. That was done in New South Wales, pending the receipt of the actuary's valuation at the end of the first quinquennial period. The intention of this provision is to give the general manager the stautory right to declare such bonuses, pending the issue of an actuarial valuation.

It is realised that the State office should operate only in fair competition with other insurance companies, and so the Bill pro-

vides that an amount equivalent to taxation payable to the Commonwealth Government by such companies shall be paid to the State Treasurer. The Bill also ensures that fire brigade charges, stamp duty, rates, taxes, etc., shall be payable by the office.

The Bill also seeks to protect the Minister, the general manager, or any person acting under the direction of those officers in respect of any matter done or entered into in good faith. There is a similar provision in many other Acts, and members will agree that the Minister or the manager should not be liable personally for any action taken in good faith.

The schedule to the Bill is merely to provide the machinery for the proper administration of the office. The accounts will be audited by the Auditor General, and, as soon as practicable after the close of each financial year, will be transmitted to the Minister for presentation to Parliament. The provisions of the schedule are similar to those contained in the Queensland Act. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

BILL—PUBLIC TRUSTEE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [5.19] in moving the second reading said: This small Bill contains only two amendments to the principal Act. The first proposal is to increase the fees chargeable by the Public Trustee for the administration of an estate. These fees are levied on the gross capital and on the income of an estate. It is proposed, however, to ask approval for an increase only on the fees chargeable on the gross capital. These fees at present are 2½ per cent. of the gross capital of the estate, or £5, whichever is the greater. The Bill seeks authority for a flat charge of £5 on estates which do not exceed £100, and 2½ per cent. or £10, whichever is the greater, on estates over £100.

In effect, this will mean no increase on estates not exceeding £100. The minimum charge of £10 will apply to estates of from £101 to £400. On estates of over £400, a fee of 2½ per cent. will apply. I think members will agree that the services of the Public Trustee warrant this modest increase, especially when it is realised that both the W.A. Trustee Company and the Perpetual Trustee Company are permitted by law to charge a minimum fee of £25. It is estimated that the increased fees would increase the revenue of the Public Trustee Office by £700 to £1,000 a year.

The second proposal in the Bill is in connection with the crediting of interest to the various estates being administered by the Public Trustee. The Act provides that all capital moneys vested in the Public Trustee, unless invested in any specific manner, shall be placed in a common fund. Investments can be made from the common fund, and the interest from the fund credited each quarter to the respective estates.

There are about 2,000 of these estates, and members will realise that a great deal of work is entailed in crediting interest to each of them every quarter. In addition, the ends of June and December are exceptionally busy times for the Public Trust Office. It is, therefore, suggested that the interest be credited half-yearly instead of quarterly. This will reduce the strain on the Trust Office at peak periods, and will also have the effect of reducing costs to some extent. I understand that half-yearly payments are made in Queensland at least. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Suburban) [5.21]: This Bill will merely have the effect of increasing the fees and permitting administrative alterations. I have a vivid recollection of the original legislation being introduced, the sole object of which was to reduce the cost to the people who benefited from small estates. If members care to look up the debates, they will find that the Public Trustee was going to bring everything down to a minimum. On many occasions I have advised people that, in the case of a small estate, it was far better to employ a lawyer than the Public Trustee.

The Public Trustee was going to do away with the services of lawyers for this work, and save much cost to beneficiaries. This is the first increase in the fees, and I am sure there will be many more. I appreciate that the Public Trustee cannot carry on at the rates set forth in the Act, except at great losses to the public, and so I have no objection to the Bill.

On motion by Hon. N. E. Baxter, debate adjourned.

BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [5.23]: I support the second reading; but having made considerable inquiries today from several men prominent in the legal profession, and another inquiry having been made from a Trustee company, I find that there seems to be a general opinion that one proposal in the Bill is somewhat drastic, and perhaps we should not go so far at present as the Bill contemplates.

Generally speaking, the Bill is a good one; but as is the case with many other Acts, as conditions change, so we have to change our measures. Someone has said that new times require new measures and new men, and that applies to Acts of this sort. The Bill deals only with the estates of those people who die intestate; that is, people who have not taken the trouble to make a will. At present, when anyone dies intestate, the surviving spouse receives £1,000, plus half the balance of the estate, if there is no issue, and members will appreciate what little value that would represent nowadays. If there is issue, the spouse gets £1,000 and one-third of the balance of the estate. The Bill proposes to raise the amount to £2.500.

Then the measure goes further. Where there are no children or blood relations, it is proposed to raise the amount to £10,000. Speaking from my own experience, and from advice I have received, that is rather drastic. Cases have been quoted to me such as that of a middle-aged man who has married a second time. On such a marriage taking place, any will previously made becomes null and void. A farmer might marry a second time and then die suddenly. Under the proposal in this Bill, the new wife would take £10,000 plus half the balance of the estate. Yet the farmer might have had his father, mother, or brother living on the farm. If the farm were worth £20,000, the new wife could wreck the whole show, for she would be entitled to receive £10,000 plus half the balance, which would be another £5,000, leaving only £5,000 for maybe a brother. That is too much for the wife.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: That would apply only to an intestate estate.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes. A man who had remarried may have neglected to make another will immediately. He may have made a most comprehensive will previously, but on his remarrying, that will would be null and void. It frequently happens that a man intends to make a new will, but does not do so. This difficulty could be overcome, in cases of hardship, by amending the Testators' Family Maintenance Act, under which the court may grant a widow or dependant, in the case of there being no will, a reasonable sum out of the estate. If the spouse or dependant feels that, under the will, she has been badly treated by being left insufficient of the estate to keep her in circumstances to which her position entitles her, she can approach the court and the court can vary the will. This has been done in many cases that we know of. The court has held that the testator had not left the widow sufficient of his estate to keep her as she should be kept, and has varied the provisions of the will. However, the court is not able to do that in the case of an intestacy; it has to comply with the Act.

If the Testators' Family Maintenance Act were amended to give the court power to grant justice in cases of intestacy, in the same way as it does where there is a will, that would solve the problem of hardship to those concerned; but the advice I have is that an automatic £10,000, plus half the balance, is too much out of an estate and might do great harm. Therefore, when the Bill is in Committee, I propose to move an amendment to reduce the £10,000 to £5,000. I personally have not sufficient evidence; but the evidence of those who do know suggests that from £1,000 to £10,000 is too great a jump, and it does seem excessive when, in another portion of the Bill, we are increasing the figure from £1,000 to £2,500. An automatic £10,000 could cause grave injustice, for instance, when a man remarried a young wife, after the divorce or decease of his first spouse, and died intestate. Except for the amendment that I have mentioned, I propose to support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan, debate adjourned.

BILL—DECLARATIONS AND ATTESTATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. R. J. BOYLEN (South-East) [5.32] in moving the second reading said: This is a small and reasonable measure which, if agreed to, will be of great advantage to members of Parliament and their constituents, either in their own districts or elsewhere. Its main provision is to make members of both State and Commonwealth legislatures ex officio commissioners of declarations.

The original legislation was passed in 1913 when it was realised that there were not sufficient justices of the peace to meet the requirements of the public generally. Of course, the present Act makes provision for certain people other than justices to be commissioners of declarations, ex officio. Any town clerk, secretary, of a road board, electoral registrar, postmaster, classified officer of either State or Commonwealth Public Service, classified State school teacher, or member of the Police Force, comes within that provision, but there are occasions when no such person might be available to witness a signature. Admittedly there might not be a member of Parliament available either; but should he be available, this measure will give him the power to witness a declaration.

The other States have made various provisions to meet the situation, and some have a number of Acts which provide for certain people in different walks of life, such as medical practitioners, public servants, and so on, to attest or declare documents as applying to those particular Acts. In the case of the Commonwealth, and

some of the other States, there is a schedule at the end of each Act showing those who may witness documents under that legislation. In South Australia those persons are bank managers, certain grades of policemen, and postmasters. In Queensland there are specific witnesses for different Acts, and in Tasmania the position is much the same as in Queensland, but the Chief Justice has power to appoint commissioners of declarations. In Victoria there are many more categories than in the other States, and it seems that nearly every second person has power to witness documents in relation to special Acts. Under the Commonwealth legislation, if a Federal member or Western Australian member is residing in or visiting Victoria, he can witness documents in that State, but not in Western Australia. It would be of benefit to members of Parliament, when travelling out of their electorates, to have the power to witness documents. The object of the Act is to ensure that witnesses to signatures will be able to be traced.

The Bill also proposes to enlarge the provisions of Section 3 of the Act to provide that persons appointed by the Federal Attorney General shall be declared commissioners of declarations, ex officio, just as is provided in the Commonwealth Statutory Declarations Act, 1911-1944, where there is provision for State commissioners of declarations to attest Commonwealth documents. The reason is that the Commonwealth grants reciprocity to State commissioners for declarations. In conclusion, I may say that this measure will affect only a small number of people. I move—

> That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. S. W. Parker, debate adjourned.

BILL—JURY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [5.37]: As far as I can ascertain, this Bill, although consisting of 13 clauses, deals mainly with two subjects. It has to do with the inclusion of women as jurors, and proposes to turn the summoning of a jury into what might be called a lottery. I understand that the sponsor of the measure has given notice of his intention to move an amendment in regard to the majority verdict, except for one particular phase—capital offences. Why is it necessary gradually to bring women into all the functions of men? I cannot understand it. Many people seem to consider that women are the equal of men and should meet them on an equal footing everywhere, but they were not brought into this world on an equal footing—

Hon. E. M. Davies: What authority have you for saying that?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Nature, and what has happened over the years, should be sufficient answer for the hon. member. I come now to the turning of the selection of the jury into a lottery by pulling a name out of a barrel; and I think it could result in 15 out of 20 jurors summoned being women, and 10 of that 15 not being available owing to their being tied up with domestic duties.

There are other reasons also which may preclude a woman from attending a trial as a juror, and I think this provision would put the court to a great deal of trouble in many instances. Jury service is not, in my view, a function of women, and I will oppose that portion of the measure. I say without hesitation that some members who voted for this Bill in another place have intimated to me that they did so because they were not game to get up and say what they thought.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: You must not reflect on them.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am not reflecting on them, but am stating facts. At least I am honest enough to give my opinion. I will leave any comments on the amendment that the sponsor proposes to move until I hear what it is all about, and will then decide accordingly. The change in the method of selecting the jury from the alphabetical to the other system may have some good points, because the alphabetical system might lend itself to just one type of person being on the jury. I feel that the other system might give a wider field to the selection. It might lead to a lot more work and trouble, but I think it would be worth a trial. If it did not prove satisfactory, there would be no hardship in returning to the original method. Other than the few points I have mentioned, I have no objections to the Bill, and I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. W. R. Hall, debate adjourned.

BILL—ASSISTANCE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN WIRING DWELLINGS FOR ELECTRICITY.

In Committee.

Hon. W. R. Hall in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Interpretation:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It might be appropriate at this stage to read a ruling that I have received in connection with a point raised by Mr. Henning, as to whether this measure would conflict with the Road Districts Act. It is as follows:—

> It is not considered that the Bill is inconsistent with the provisions of Section 160 (8) of the Road Districts Act.

Section 160 (8) of the Road Districts Act provides that a local authority may, subject to the Electricity Act, 1945:—

(a) Purchase or acquire works,

(b) Sell or supply or contract for the sale or supply of electricity;

(c) provide the material for and construct and maintain all works necessary for reticulation;

(d) supply necessary fittings and appliances to consumers.

The matters mentioned under the headings of (a), (b) and (c) relate to the provision and supply of electricity up to the point where the work of the supply authority ceases. The supply authority ceases its work at the main switch on the premises to which electricity or other power is supplied.

The matter mentioned under (d) is to enable a local authority to assist its consumers to purchase appliances and fittings for installation in their premises, i.e. lamp shades, electrical appliances such as toasters, kettles, refrigerators, etc.

The proposed Bill is to enable local authorities to assist in wiring of premises and is distinct from any of the matters mentioned in Section 160, paragraph 8.

It is noted that the matters set out in Section 160, paragraph 8 of the Road Districts Act are all subject to the Electricity Act, 1945. The Electricity Act, 1945, now provides that the supply of electricity, etc., is subject to control of the Commission. The State Electricity Commission Act, 1945, clearly definies where the work of the suply authority ends and that of the individual commences. Section 7 of this Act includes:—

> "Service apparatus" means all apparatus (including lines poles, leads, switches, fuses and meters) for the purpose of conveying electricity or other power from any distribution works to the position of the main switch on the premises to which the electricity or other power is supplied.

In the same section it states:—

> "electric fitting" means any apparatus which uses or consumes electricity.

It therefore appears clear that there is no inconsistency in the Bill. If there were any inconsistency then the later Act, by implication, repeals to the extent of any inconsistency, if any, in any other Act.

That is the ruling that has been submitted by the department in answer to the point raised.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Applications for assistance:

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I move an amendment—

> That in line 1, the words "or occupier" be struck out.

The person responsible for the payment of this work is the owner. During the second reading, it was made pretty clear that the owner should make application to the local authority.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I will not violently oppose the amendment.

Hon. L. Craig: You are going to do it in a gentle, soft manner.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No; I merely wish to explain to the Committee that there may be some necessity for the words, and personally I cannot see any danger in retaining them. The occupier might have a long lease of the premises, and in the terms of the lease certain things might have to be done by the occupier.

Hon. L. Craig: He would be recouped by the owner.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I feel quite sure that the first thing a local authority would do, if work of this nature had to be done, would be to contact the owner.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: The owner would send in the application for the occupier.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He might or might not. The words were probably placed in the clause for the reason that I have mentioned, and I do not see any necessity for them to be struck out.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: An occupier could commit an owner of a property to a good deal of expense and then, a week or two later, walk out of the premises.

Hon. L. A. Logan: No, he could not.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Why could he not?

Hon. L. A. Logan: The occupier has no power to commit the owner.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: In the main, the owner is the man who is held responsible, and not the occupier, because in most instances the occupier has nothing.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Unless the owner has a bill of sale.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: That is the trouble; they generally do not have a bill of sale.

Hon. L. Craig: This applies even to a weekly tenant.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Even if an occupier had a three-year lease of the premises, he could walk out at any time; and if he had nothing, the owner would be responsible, and he would not have much

redress. There are instances where the wife owns the house and the husband is the occupier. Under the clause, there is the danger of the occupier committing the owner to a good deal of expense.

The Chief Secretary: Do you believe a local authority would do business with a person who had no authority to carry out the work?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes, because the local authority would be secured, inasmuch as the Bill provides that the charges for the work shall be treated as rates. The local authority would say, "We have a security over this man's property."

The Chief Secretary: But can you visualise them doing that?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes, I can. I support the amendment.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Let us assume that an occupier entered into a written agreement with a local authority to have a wiring job done. The local authority would then lodge a caveat.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It does not need to.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Well, the local authority has the first charge on the property because the cost of the work would be treated as rates. In the event of the occupier not completing his contract and failing to recoup the local authority, I venture to suggest that he could walk out, and the responsibility would then fall on the owner.

Hon. H. Hearn: Of course!

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I agree with the Chief Secretary that in other circumstances it might be desirable to retain the words "or occupier." The Chief Secretary cited the example of a long-term lease. However, such a lease is generally entered into for business purposes, or by persons who are conducting a lodging-house or some similar establishment. The Bill is not designed to assist those in business or in lodging-houses. Its purpose is to assist the home-owner who is in poor financial circumstances.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The interpretation contains the words "dwelling-house."

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Yes. I cannot imagine any occupier of a dwelling-house having a long-term lease. I think the words "or occupier" are dangerous. A person on a weekly tenancy could arrange to have this work done and, within a week or two, give notice to the owner and leave the premises, and the owner would have to pay all the charges.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: He might die.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Yes. I think the words should be omitted.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: When I secured the first adjournment of the debate on the second reading, I took the opportunity to make some inquiries to ascertain how the Bill would be received by some local authorities. I also interviewed the Chairman of the State Electricity Commission, having in mind that that commission has power to take over power-houses that are now conducted by some local authorities. It occurred to me that the commission might also take over any contracts entered into for the wiring of premises such as those proposed in the Bill. Mr. Dumas told me he had not given the matter much thought, but that he was not keen on the State Electricity Commission being involved. The first thing to which he drew my attention was the words "or occupier," because he said he could see danger in them. He said that the occupier might be a man of straw, which could give rise to undesirable circumstances.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Members seem to have some misconception about this provision. I can see nothing in the Bill that would make the owner liable to the local authority.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I think you will find that it has that authority. The charge can be treated as rates.

The Chief Secretary: The Bill says that it shall be regarded as rates, which is vastly different.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: My attention has now been drawn to Clause 7, and I am afraid I have made a mistake.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I would like to hear more about the definition of "occupier," and why it is left in. In my opinion, if a person owns a house and contracts to sell it on time payment, but prior to the sale receives a notice that the house will have to be rewired, then he, as occupier and owner, is the contractor. Subsequently, the new owner would be the occupier, but the vendor would be the contractor.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Bennetts raised an important point. Where a house has been sold under contract of sale, would the purchaser be regarded as the owner?

Hon. A. L. Loton: He would not be the owner on the certificate of title.

Hon. L. Craig: Whoever pays the rates must pay for the wiring.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: If a person bought a house under a contract of sale or an agreement, and a bank had a mortgage on it, the bank could not be regarded as the owner.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Neither would you regard the purchaser as the owner.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Definitely.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That seems incredible. Here is a case where a person contracts to buy a house and pays £1 deposit, the balance being spread over a great many years. He may not have paid off very much, and yet could be regarded as the owner. He has only a small equity.

Hon. L. Craig: After a person has disposed of a house, he is not regarded as the owner.

Hon. H. K. Watson: He is regarded as the unpaid owner.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The purchaser can be regarded as the owner only after the land is transferred into his name.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: That is not the case.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Would the person living in the premises be the occupier or the owner? If he is regarded as the owner, then what is the equity of the owner?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Chief Secretary confuses the term "registered owner" with "equity owner." The latter is the true owner. The registered owner is a nominal person. If a person sells a property, and agrees to take £1 deposit and the balance on terms, he has lost all his ownership.

The Chief Secretary: If that is so, the law is more peculiar than I thought.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If a vendor is foolish enough to let a person take possession, and decides that, instead of keeping the land, he would prefer to take the money on terms, then he is no longer the owner. The same thing applies where a person buys a piece of furniture on credit. Immediately, the vendor has lost his equity of ownership. Similarly, if a vendor gives one a property on condition that one pays 30s. a week, it is no longer his property, and the purchaser can dispose of it straight away. Again, if a person sells his dwelling-house on a small deposit, with subsequent instalments, and the occupier or new owner commits the local authorities to a large sum, I do not know how the registered owner will be able to get his property back. He will have to sue the purchaser. We need not worry about this point: A person buying on time payment is the owner.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: A person buying a house under the circumstances mentioned by the Minister and Mr. Bennetts is termed an equity freeholder. These points are very clear to a lawyer, but not to a layman. Therefore, how could anyone expect the ordinary layman to know that he is qualified for the Legislative Council franchise if he is an equity freeholder? There are many equity freeholders in this State, but the great majority do not understand that they are qualified for the franchise for this Chamber.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I move an amendment—

> That after the word "for" in line 4 the word "financial" be inserted.

It was the intention of the clause that the local authority should give financial assistance. If a local authority does the work, that is assistance. It can assist in cash, and that is regarded as a cash transaction.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: With all due respect to the hon. member, I do not see the necessity to insert the word "financial." The wording is quite clear as it is.

Hon. H. HEARN: If the amendment suggested by Mr. Parker is accepted, it will cover what I have in mind, and I shall not have to move my amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

> That in line 5 the word "shall" be struck out and the word "may" inserted in lieu.

The substitution of this word would make it optional for the local authority to consider the application. There is a great difference between the two words. Local authorities should be given a discretion to consider an application. That is the only reason for my amendment.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If the word "may" were inserted, a local authority would be at liberty to consider one application and ignore another. In local governing circles, just as much pressure can be brought to bear as in other walks of life. The effect of the amendment would be to throw greater responsibility on the local authority. If a local body did not intend to enter the scheme, the ratepayers would know and would not apply. The hon. member would be well advised not to press his amendment.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The amendment should not be accepted, as it is likely to cause a lot of argument. If two applications were received, one might be given consideration while no action was taken in relation to the other.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I oppose the amendment. Consideration of applications would be automatic, and applicants would receive replies from the local authority. Before replies could be sent, the applications must of necessity be considered.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: In support of Mr. Baxter, I point out that a local authority may decide not to participate in the scheme. Further, a local body might, after a period of time, resolve not to continue in the scheme and, under the clause as printed, the applications would have to be considered.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: As Minister for Local Government, I wish to see local bodies conducting their business efficiently. If consideration were made permissive, applications might be lodged and receive no consideration. We do not want that to happen; our desire is that applications shall be considered. When a local body received applications, it would

lay down a policy either to enter the scheme or not, and once the policy was laid down, applicants would be notified accordingly. If the word "may" were inserted, applications could be held up indefinitely.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Not at all.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, the board could ignore the correspondence. I gather from the hon member's remarks that if an application were received, the board must enter the scheme. Is that not so?

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Yes.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot see how that interpretation can be placed on the clause.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: A local authority can conduct its affairs differently from a business house. A local body that entered the scheme would be engaging in time-payment business and therefore would need finance before any application could be considered. No business firm would enter the time-payment field unless it had the finance for it. Under the Bill, the local authority has to find the finance. My amendment means that if a local authority does not want to enter the scheme it can say it will not provide the finance, and if there are any applications it will not consider them. If the word "shall" is allowed to remain, local authorities will be forced to consider applications, even though they have no finance.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Clause 4—Agreements:

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: In view of my previous amendment, I move an amendment—

> That in lines 4 and 5, the words "pay the cost of the assistance to" be struck out, with a view to inserting in lieu the word "repay."

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This wants a little bit of consideration. It could be only the repayment of the assistance granted, whereas this is the cost of the assistance granted.

Hon. L. Craig: If it is the same thing, why not leave the clause as it is?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is what I want.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—Wiring:

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: This clause should be deleted. The agreement will set out everything. I think that Clause 4 does all that is required.

Hon. H. HEARN: The work envisaged here should be done by private enterprise, and not necessarily by a road board or its officers, because many road boards would not have the facilities. I move an amendment—

> That in line 5 the word "supplying" be struck out with a view to inserting in lieu the following words:—
>
> "calling public tenders for such work or services, through a recognised newspaper circulating in the district governed by that local authority, to provide"

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hope the Committee will not agree to this. I am surprised that the hon. member should have moved such an amendment. Fancy calling for tenders for a small electrical job in a dwelling-house! Surely we can leave to the local authority the matter of doing the work itself, if it has an electrician, or of having it done by an electrician in the town without calling tenders. Much of this work will be a matter of only £20 or £30, or even less. Surely we should not make it mandatory that the letting of such work be by tender! There might be very few of the local authorities coming under the scheme that would have the facilities to do the work themselves. As it stands, the provision is that the local authority may do the job itself or have it done by an electrician.

Hon. H. Hearn: There is nothing in the Bill to that effect.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The measure leaves it open to the local authority.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The Kalgoorlie Municipal Council has linesmen and electrical technicians; and if there were a dozen applications for rewiring, the electrical engineer of the undertaking would call for tenders from the local electricians, and the lowest tenderer would get the job. I think the same position would obtain at Boulder, Norseman, Merredin, or Southern Cross, and so there is little fear that the householder would be put to any undue expense. I think the local authority would get a better price for the job than would the householder.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I think there is doubt about the application of the word "supplying." I—and I think other members—have it in mind that the words "by supplying the service," etc., mean that the local authority shall be the contractor for the work. Would the Minister accept the word "engaging" in lieu of "supplying"?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I think the clause is being read too literally. If Mr. Griffith's interpretation is right, it would exclude all the boards who did not have the employees to do this work, while the purpose of the Bill is to enable small local authorities to assist householders by having this work done for them. The provision in the Bill means that an applicant who wanted to have a house wired for electricity, and could not afford it, would

apply to the local authority for financial assistance to have the work done. The arrangements might already have been made between the applicant and the electrician before the board was approached.

Hon. H. Hearn: That is your interpretation.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes; and if it is not the right one, the clause would exclude all the small boards for whom the measure is specifically intended.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I think the wording of the clause does exclude them.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think so. "Supplying" does not mean that they must have everything in stock. Mr. Hearn wants to ensure that tenders are called for all these little jobs by advertising in the local Press, and I do not think that is right.

Hon. H. Hearn: It is certainly not the intention of the Government.

Hon. L. CRAIG: This measure would cater mostly for the people who wanted small jobs done, and I think the provision should remain as it stands.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I do not think Mr. Hearn appreciates what the amendment would mean. There are many towns that have no newspaper except "The West Australian."

Hon. H. Hearn: That is wrong.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: What local Press has Port Hedland or Marble Bar? The only paper circulating in those centres is "The West Australian," and so the amendment would mean unnecessary expense and delay. What local papers circulate in many of our suburbs?

Hon. H. Hearn: There is one in Victoria Park, and one in Subiaco.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: What would be the use of advertising in those papers?

Hon. H. Hearn: What is wrong with that?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Who will see it?

Hon. H. Hearn: All the tradesmen and people in the district.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I wish I could think that. Why can they not call for tenders outside the district? I cannot see any need for the calling of tenders. Surely, if a man wanted his house rewired he would make his own arrangements with the local authority concerned. I think the amendment will mean unnecessary expense in advertising, and so on.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I was going to raise the same point as Mr. Parker. In many towns on the Goldfields, no paper, other than "The Kalgoorlie Miner", "The West Australian", and the "Sunday Times" circulates. It is an expensive business to advertise in a newspaper, and unnecessary delay and expense would be involved if this amendment were agreed to. Local authorities are composed of business men from the township concerned, and they are not averse to private enterprise. The remaining argument is that the word "supplying" would make it mandatory for the local authority to carry out the work.

Hon. L. Craig: That is all poppycock.

The Chief Secretary: Of course it is!

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I understand that is Mr. Griffith's contention.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: No. I was pointing out the doubt that might be in some members' minds.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: In my opinion, that is an entirely erroneous interpretation of the words. As Mr. Craig pointed out, the local authority would have the job of supplying the services, the workmen, and the materials, and whether they were provided by the local authority or from some other quarter in the town or district would not matter. Mr. Griffith suggested using the word "engaging", but that would not apply, because one does not engage materials.

Hon. H. K. Watson: What about using the words "causing to be supplied"?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I like simple, straightforward language and, in my opinion, the word "supplying" is not ambiguous.

The Chief Secretary: The word covers all angles.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I do not think members need have any qualms about the meaning of the word.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: If the word means what Mr. Heenan has said, why not make a straightout statement that the local authority will advance the money and, on completion of the job, will grant a certificate? I do not think the Committee should be misled by some of these statements, because the language used is quite clear; and if members vote for the clause as it stands, it will mean that local authorities will have to supply the workmen and the materials.

The Chief Secretary: In other words, they would have to do the job, or have it done for them.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Let us state that the local authority will make the advance and the person concerned shall have the job done.

Hon. H. HEARN: I have listened with a good deal of interest to the debate, and so far it has been a matter of lawyer members and others giving an interpretation of the clause. Before this amendment was put on the notice paper, the clause was submitted to legal authorities by the people who are interested in the Bill; I refer to the electrical suppliers and workmen throughout the industry. Those

people are hoping to get the contracts for the work that will have to be done. Now we are told that these are little tuppenyha'penny things. When Mr. Craig spoke during the second reading, he mentioned that his place was rewired 20 years ago, and that the work cost him £70; but now it is suggested that when anybody applies to a local authority to have the work done, it is going to cost £20 or £25.

Hon. L. Craig: I paid for my own.

Hon. H. HEARN: It is the principle at stake. No matter how members may jest when speaking about the interpretation, we cannot get away from the fact that this clause, backed by legal opinion, deals with the question of the local authority carrying out the work.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I have listened to the interpretations given by several members; but, as far as I can see, the words in question mean exactly what they say, and no explanation by any member will convince me to the contrary. I suggest that the word "supplying" should be struck out and the words, "causing to be supplied" inserted in its place.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: What is the difference between "supplying" and "causing to be supplied"?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The word "supplying" restricts the local authority to supplying the work itself, but "causing to be supplied" means that it could get someone else to do the work.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: In Fremantle there are ships' chandlers, who contract to supply foodstuffs, etc., to ships. They send out to all parts of the State to get the necessary goods, and then they supply them.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is so.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: A local authority, if it has in its employ competent workmen —as is the case at Leonora, where an engineer and a small staff are employed— would do the job itself. At Esperance, however, the road board does not control the power station, but it would have the task of supplying the labour and materials for the work to be done. I presume it would go to an electrician and would supply him to do the job.

Hon. H. Hearn: That is an excellent interpretation of what I have said.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If a local authority entered into a contract with an owner to carry out the wiring of a house, and sent a contractor to do the job, would it not be supplying the materials for the job? Of course it would! In quite a number of small towns in the country, electricity is provided by a one-man show. Do members want a local authority in a centre such as that to go over the head of the person running that power house and obtain a contractor from outside to do the work? That is what the amendment will force a local authority to do. The Geraldton municipality does not do any electrical work on the houses themselves. That is done by a contractor. Therefore, the local authority must supply the contractor to do the job. I think the clause, as printed, is perfectly clear and is all that is necessary.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: A local authority cannot do the work because it is only a corporation and not an individual. Therefore, it must get someone else to do the work for it. By doing so, it is supplying that contractor to do the job. It is not necessary for a local authority to supply its own employees.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Clause 3 provides that a local authority can apply for assistance, and Clause 4 says that it shall enter into an agreement. A local authority can enter into any agreement it wishes. Therefore Clause 5 is unnecessary.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: If it desires to raise its revenue from loan funds to meet the expense of wiring dwellings, the clause will be necessary.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

> That in lines 8 and 9 the words "from its ordinary revenue, or if necessary" be struck out.

The board has no right to use its ordinary revenue to wire private dwellings, because it has not raised the money for that purpose.

Hon. L. Craig: Can it not use its discretion?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Under the Road Districts Act, or the Municipal Corporations Act, I do not think a local authority has the power to use its ordinary revenue for this purpose. The board has no right to use general revenue funds for purposes of this kind.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Local authorities have large amounts of money in that particular account to buy supplies of electricity. The money could be used for installing and rewiring. I should imagine that if they did not have an electric light station to supply current the words would probably be "for the purpose of taking a referendum to raise a loan." I oppose the amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Why not leave the matter to the judgment of the local authorities as to which method they will adopt? Some of them may have only the odd application or two and will be able to meet the expenditure out of their revenue. If there were one that intended to do this work on a large scale, it could go to the trouble of raising a loan. I do not think there will be a big call for the use of this provision.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: You do not know what might happen.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so: but I think we should leave it to the discretion of the local authority.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 6 and 7, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. McI. THOMSON (South) [8.25]: Because of the attitude adopted in another place, and the apparent lack of appreciation of the ultimate effect this Bill will have upon the industry of the State, my first inclination was to vote against the second reading, in order to indicate that though this Parliament is anxious to serve the interests and welfare of the people within the State, we desire to have presented to us legislation that has a realistic appreciation of the ultimate effect it is likely to have on the industries of the State which today are carrying an ever-increasing burden.

But to vote this Bill out would not be the fair and reasonable thing to do. I feel that the Bill should be discussed at length in Commmittee, so that it may emerge a saner and more practical piece of legislation than when it first entered this House. If it is passed in its present form, it will mean a further impost on industry of at least £1,000,000, to which must be added the amount at present outstanding on retrospective payments which amount, I understand on good authority, is £560,000. So we are asked to impose upon industry a further £1,500,000 odd.

If we continue to force the cost of production up, it can only mean that we will price ourselves out of the valuable markets we have abroad; in some cases we have already done that. Therefore, it is time that members of both Houses of Parliament realised fully their obligations not only to one section of industry, but to industry as a whole, and we should work to that end. The increased premium rates defined in this Bill will result in an added cost of £250,000 to the goldmining industry, which will have no chance of passing it on. Therefore, it could well mean that those areas on the Goldfields that are producing low-grade ore will be forced to close down or considerably curtail their present activities, thereby putting men out of employment, or driving them to seek work elsewhere, provided it was obtainable. These are important points which have to be considered in the framing of legislation of this nature. I shall not labour the point as it effects the goldmining industry, because other members have spoken about the effect of the increase on the goldmines. I have an appreciation of what the goldmining industry has meant to this State in the past; what it is doing at present; and what it will do in future provided that some protection against increased costs can be given.

Likewise, primary industry in this State is in a similar predicament; but, unlike the goldmining industry, it has not been able to assess accurately the increases it will be called upon to bear. While the impact cannot be assessed, there is no doubt of the resultant added cost of superphosphate manufactured in the factories; of machinery, building materials; and, in fact, of every article used by the primary producer. Those increased costs would have to be borne by him, as also would the increased premium to be paid in respect of his employees.

But the primary producer cannot pass on those increased costs; he has to accept for his produce what is offering in the world's markets. The two industries I have mentioned were called upon, in the last few months, to bear the brunt of the heavy rail freight increases but were unable to pass on the cost, or recoup a penny of that money. It is clear the Government is indifferent to the adverse effect of the increases on industry. Recently there was a substantial increase in rail freights, and now there is to be another increase in costs.

I would like to refer to the building industry, which will have to find a 60 per cent. increase in premiums. Mr. Barker said that workers were always called upon to stabilise industry, and other sections were not. For his information, and for the information of other members, I will point out that the building industry has clearly demonstrated to the public that it desires to stabilise industry, as illustrated by its withdrawal of the "rise and fall" clause. It has accepted the plea, put forward on numerous occasions by the Premier, that all sections of industry should co-operate in stabilising the economy.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Not all building firms have carried that into effect.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: If the hon. member can give me information where this has not been done, I shall pass it on.

Hon. G. Bennetts: A little while back a Royal Commission inquired into the practices of a building firm.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I am pleased that that industry has done away with the "rise and fall" clause. Is it reasonable, after an industry has voluntarily done this, to saddle it with increased premiums which it is unable to recoup? If it is fair to ask one section to do it, then it is reasonable and fair that the

Premier should appeal to employees for a contribution towards stabilising industry. Members would do well to acquaint themselves of the facts, and not always complain that the working man is the only person who is expected to play his part in stabilising industry.

Hon. A. R. Jones: The wheatgrowers of this State have been doing that for the past 10 years.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I am fully aware of that. The proposed increase will fall heavily on the person endeavouring to build a home, even if it is being built under the self-help system, because materials will be more expensive by virtue of increases in workers' compensation. This Bill with have an effect on all goods. With some other members, I concede that there should be some increase in workers' compensation because of increased living costs. I would point out, however, that it is by these methods that the cost of living is ever going up and up. No doubt that is necssary; but to say that it should be increased by 60 per cent. is not fair or reasonable. If the proposed increase had been 15 or 20 per cent. it would have had a better reception. The more one studies the Bill, clause by clause, the more one is convinced of its total disregard for fairness and reason.

The proposal to grant retrospective payments to an injured worker, after the court has awarded a lump sum in full settlement of the claim, is most unreasonable. This could result in a worker's receiving double compensation, and could lead to no end of abuse. I consider that would be a very dangerous principle to establish, and I hope it will be dealt with in Committee.

Another proposal to which I object is that which would extend to dependants living outside the State the right to claim the full benefits to which a worker living in the State is entitled. That is not a practical approach to the question on the part of those who framed this legislation. We pride ourselves upon the high standard of living prevailing in this State and in the Commonwealth, but if we are going to enable dependants in another country that might have living standards considerably lower than ours to receive compensation, it will have the effect of imposing a still further burden upon industry.

I can find no justification for the suggestion to extend the definition of "worker" to an employee receiving wages amounting up to £2,000 a year. The present amount is £1,250 a year. That has worked satisfactorily, and no sound reason has been advanced for increasing the amount. I ask members who favour such an increase whether an employee in receipt of a salary of, say, £1,500 per annum, would be prepared to pay one-half of the premium to cover his insurance. If so, I should say it would be a practical approach on his part and would be worthy of consideration.

But no! It is a case of all or nothing. If only we could find a spirit of give and take, and a willingness to accept reasonable responsibility, it would be a practical approach to framing legislation. Such a spirit, however, is lacking, and therefore we have no alternative to adopting the attitude I am taking. In the interests of the worker himself, we should not permit such a proposal to be put into effect. I cannot see any wisdom in the provision to require industry to pay compensation to dependants in other countries that offer no reciprocal benefits. There is certainly no necessity for us to grant such a concession at this stage.

I now come to the proposal that a worker shall be deemed to have suffered personal injury by accident arising out of or in the course of his employment when he suffers an injury on his journey to obtain a medical certificate or to receive medical or hospital treatment. On numerous occasions we have discussed the question of compensation for a worker injured on his way to or from his employment, but on this occasion we are being asked to agree that if a worker receives an injury while on his way to obtain a medical certificate, it shall be the responsibility of the employer to compensate him for the accident that has befallen him. Even members who are prepared to support other provisions of the Bill must concede that this is going far beyond the realm of what is fair and reasonable. The Chief Secretary might well suggest to the Minister in another place that, if there is a genuine desire on the part of the Government to ensure that an employee in such circumstances is protected, the man should take out his own cover. Surely he could be expected to accept responsibility for his own protection, seeing that for the expenditure of probably not more than £1 a year, he could obtain adequate cover!

The compensation proposed for total incapacity appears to be out of all proportion to the amounts provided in other States. This, too, is a matter that might well receive attention in Committee. To me, and doubtless to other members, Clause 9 is one of the most objectionable provisions in the Bill. The desire of members should be to ensure that private enterprise is given fair and equitable treatment; and to provide that employers shall place their insurance with one insurer, but not more than one, is not fair and equitable. If employers do not desire to place the whole of their business with the State Insurance Office, we should not compel them by legislation to do so. They should be free to place their insurance wherever they desire and, holding that view, I shall oppose that clause in due course.

There is another clause in the Bill that might well have been omitted. I refer to the provision prohibiting legal representation on appeals unless both parties consent. This is an infringement of the right of the individual. An employer should have the right to engage whoever he wishes to look after his interests. Whatever proceedings at law employers may be required to face up to, they should have the right to employ such representation as they think fit without seeking the consent of the opposing party. This is something which should not be countenanced. It infringes the right of the individual to do whatever he thinks fit in the interests of the section of industry he represents. It is this sort of thing that permeates the Bill.

It is disturbing to have such legislation introduced and pushed through as it has been, the attitude of the Government being, "This is what you will have, and nothing else." Thank Heaven this State has a House of review, which will deal with the measure on its merits! I have been fair enough to say that I am prepared to allow the Bill to go into Committee. Therefore, the House will function as it should, as a House of Review, and deal with the legislation as it sees fit. If ever legislation has been introduced that would encourage malingering and absenteeism, and kill thrift, enterprise, and the duty of a man to give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, this is it! The measure is a clear indication that there is no desire to encourage these things. This is a tragedy, but it is identical with the unfortunate attitude of many people in our industries today, which is, "Let us get the most that we can for the least effort." When we give that encouragement by this type of legislation, what else can we expect? I reluctantly support the second reading, with the hope of improving the Bill as it passes through Committee.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [8.53]: I support the second reading of the Bill because the principle of reviewing the Act from time to time in order to adjust values in accordance with the altered value of money was established by the previous Government. It was my responsibility some little time ago to introduce a similar Bill with that very object in view. When that measure was introduced, we thought we had made a generous provision for any likely adjustments in the near future, and we did not anticipate having to review the Act again for some time. We certainly did not anticipate that we would have to consider such a steep increase in benefits—which we frankly think is beyond the capacity of industry to bear—in such a short time.

Hon. G. Bennetts: For the death of a miner, or what?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: We have to remember that industry can bear only so much, and the values of disabilities have been assessed under previous measures. Whilst we are agreeable to review those values at the present time, most of us consider that the values set out in the Bill are excessive. One point that struck me was that the Bill had been discussed pretty fully in another place. The Government, while holding only just enough seats to command a bare majority of the House, ran its Bill through in total disregard of the volume of opinion expressed by the other side; and despite the fact that the remainder of the members represented practically half the total electorates.

The Chief Secretary: Is that any different from what any other Government has ever done?

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I heard Mr. Tonkin say once that a Government can do anything when it has the strength.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: That may be admitted in theory; but I think a reasonable Government would say, "In the circumstances, we will be prepared to give consideration to the points of view you put forward."

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: The Government last year did not once give that consideration in connection with the Arbitration Bill.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: We thought the proposals put forward were necessary to meet the conditions of the case.

The Chief Secretary: That is what the present Government thinks about this.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: We are faced with the task of reviewing the Bill, and we are going to carry out that task to the best of our ability. As has been mentioned, the Bill, in essence, is a Committee measure. The various points on which we agree or disagree can be thoroughly thrashed out when it reaches that stage. It is my intention to mention a few points which have not been touched upon by previous speakers; or, at any rate, not in the same way as I shall deal with them. We have been told that the proposals contained in the Bill, if agreed to, will mean a cost to industry of, roughly £1,000,000 a year. That is proved by the amount of premium income at the present time, which is a little over £1,500,000. A 60 per cent. increase on that would be £940,000, plus the unknown quantity to cover the to-and-from-work clause, which would definitely bring it up to the £1,000,000 which has been assessed.

In his excellent speech, Mr. Jones rightly pointed out the effect these proposals would have on primary industry. He said that while our primary industries of agriculture, wheat, and wool had undoubtedly enjoyed a prosperous time during the past few years, there were indications that the prosperity was coming to an end; that costs had caught up with returns, and that the future of both wheat and wool on the world's markets was something that could not be looked forward

to with any degree of confidence. Australia is essentially a primary producing country, and Western Australia, proportionately, has the largest export quota of any State in the Commonwealth. So the impact of these costs on our primary industries is something we have to view with serious concern.

Reference was made by Sir Charles Latham to the prosperity loading on top of the needs basic wage. He pointed out that the needs wage was £9 9s. 11d., plus a prosperity loading, giving a total basic wage here of £12 6s. 6d. He also pointed out that in Western Australia we have 10s. 6d. more per week in the basic wage than have the other States or the Commonwealth. In New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania, the State basic wage is the same as the Federal basic wage. In Queensland, the State basic wage includes an extra 1s., but just re-recently it has added another 3s.

It is not surprising that this prosperity loading has had a spiralling inflationary effect; and that is what I am afraid will happen with these increased benefits, which are additional to the wage the employee earns, and which have to be met by the employer. They might—not to the same degree perhaps—have a similar inflationary effect. A prosperity loading of 5s. per week was added to the basic wage in 1938; and as the war years followed, and people worked harder and for longer hours, that extra 5s. had very little effect on the economy of the country which, apparently, was able to absorb it. There was an inflationary trend of only three per cent. during the years 1938-1947; but in the latter year they added another 5s. per week, and the inflationary trend immediately stepped up by 10 per cent. per annum. For 1950, when the extra £1 per week was granted, the graph shows an immediate upward trend of 30 per cent. per annum, which was arrested only when the present Commonwealth Government took fiscal restrictive measures in order to reduce the amount of money in the country and bring about some degree of equilibrium.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Because they had imported so many luxury goods from overseas.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: There were, coupled with that period of inflation, such things as the higher costs of imports, and higher prices for exports, the scarcity of labour and materials, and so on. At that time there were employers, and even States, competing and bidding against each other to get their quotas of men and materials with which to carry out necessary work. Then there were the different benefits given by the various Arbitration courts—long service leave, overtime penalty rates, the 40-hour week, public holidays, and so on. All those things were bonuses to the employees, and had to be met out of the income that the employer had to earn.

If we examine the statistics in the year books and other returns, we find that while the employee's share of that volume of production rose an appreciable amount during that period, the employer's share was reduced, and out of that reduced take he had to pay higher taxation, which considerably hampered his ability to build up capital reserves with which to expand his industry and provide future employment. That is the story of the financial trend during those few years. We now realise that our prosperity is not quite what it was, and that we must review the position and see whether we can continue to pay these benefits as we have in the past.

The Tariff Board, in the light of the increasing cost of producing certain articles, has repeatedly been asked to allow import duties on imported goods so that the local article could compete, and it rather caustically remarked that local productivity was pricing itself out of overseas markets because of its very high costs. In the monthly review of business statistics for September of this year the average weekly wages, as taken from the payroll tax were, for the whole of Australia, £38,183,000 per week; and for Western Australia £2,413,000 per week—an approximate total of £125,000,000 per year for this State and, for the whole of Australia, an approximate total of £1,985,000,000.

Those are the figures of wages actually paid out; and to a certain extent it is on those wages that these benefits will be assessed, because, according to the scale of wages of the employee, under the proposal in the Bill, so will his compensation, if he suffers injury or is off work, be assessed. In its review when it decided to drop the quarterly adjustment of the basic wage, the Federal Arbitration Court remarked that the purchasing power of the present basic wage was 25 per cent. higher than that of the basic wage at the time of the 1934 decision. That all points in the one direction. It indicates that of the prosperity that we have enjoyed in the last few years, the worker has had his full quota, and the time has now come when we must examine seriously proposals which would have the effect of increasing the rake-off that the worker in industry receives—

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Why use the word "rake-off"? It is wages for services rendered.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Exactly. It could be termed "share" or "quota". The term used does not matter. No one denies that the worker is entitled to his full proportion, but we must remember that, as a community, we have to provide equitable shares for the other partners in industry, and for the building up of capital reserves by which alone we can expand industry and provide future employment.

I turn now to the goldmining industry. I speak feelingly, as an ex-Minister for Mines, and I can sense some of the anxiety which the goldmining companies must feel when faced with proposals such as that with which we are now dealing, particularly after they have been called upon to meet substantial increases in freights. I am assured that the freight increases will mean £90,000 to the industry, and that the proposed increase in compensation payments will mean £250,000 a year to it. For some years this industry has been on the breadline—as an industry—and many of the mines are by-passing ore reserves because they are below the payable point. The richer mines are carrying on, but the industry as a whole is facing a critical period of its existence.

We, in Western Australia, are particularly concerned at the position of the goldmining industry, which, for many years past, has been the backbone of our economy. About 60,000 people are dependent, directly or indirectly, on the industry in this State: and if, as the result of these higher costs, some of the mines are forced to close down, there will be a bad psychological effect upon the industry as a whole, and it is certain to have a frightening effect on possible overseas investors who may be thinking of entering the industry here.

We have to thank the industry for the assistance it gave Australia in the first great depression in 1893, and again for largely aiding our recovery during the depression of the 1930's. If, being unable to carry this load of costs, some of the mines are forced to close down, we, as a State, will be faced with a serious problem in trying to absorb and house the people thus displaced. Seeing that there are so many Goldfields members in the present Government, I am surprised that they did not take serious cognisance of this position before proposals of this nature were actually brought forward.

The activity of the previous Government in trying to help the industry by getting gold premium sales for it was mentioned by Sir Charles Latham. As this industry was of more concern to Western Australia than to any other State in the Commonwealth, it was my job, as Minister for Mines, to lead a delegation to Sir Arthur Fadden in Canberra in connection with the permission to sell gold on the free market. We put up four proposals altogether. The first was that we should be able to sell on the open market; the second was that we should get the Commonwealth Government to back our efforts to have a revision of the price of gold; the third was a request for an automatic formula of assistance; and the fourth was that the financial representative from the Commonwealth to the international monetary conference should be accompanied by a technical adviser selected by the gold industry. They acceded to our request to have a technical adviser appointed, and gave us their assurance that they would support representations for an increased price and for the privilege of selling gold on the free market.

Unfortunately, the conference allowed sales for dollars only; and although that helped considerably, it was not as helpful as we had hoped. The prospects of a revision in the price of gold, which seemed fairly bright some twelve months ago, have apparently receded into the background since then. But I have been assured that the premium sales have represented to a number of mines the difference between a company being able to keep going and having to close down.

The second matter which Sir Charles Latham mentioned was the assistance we were able to get for the Big Bell mine. I can tell the story of that because, again, I had to visit Canberra to see what aid we could get from the Federal Government before we could promise the Big Bell people the help which they requested. This was not an easy job, as those who have been to Canberra well know. There one comes up against the Civil Service, and it is very hard to get through the ring of civil servants to interview a Minister, particularly the Prime Minister, and that is what I had to do before I could get any satisfaction with regard to the proposals I wanted to submit. I do not say that the Federal Government was not sympathetic; it was. But while it was prepared to help a State or an industry, it was difficult for it to help a single business proposition, because that would immediately leave the way open for any kind of business experiencing difficulties to make a similar application. It was felt that a precedent might be established.

Finally, after a personal talk with the Prime Minister, which lasted for about a quarter of an hour, I was able to pass on the proposal of my Government that it would do the necessary work of adjustment if only it could get the promise of the Federal Government to make good the expenditure which the State was prepared to incur. At the time, the sum which the Commonwealth was able to offer us was not sufficient for the company's needs, but some nine months later negotiations were reopened on the basis of that offer. Once more I had to make personal representations to the Prime Minister, and I am happy to say that we were able to promise the company £100,000, spread over two years, and the Big Bell mine is still operating today. But for that effort the company would have gone out of existence.

The general consultant was kind enough to say that, but for me, the company would not have been provided with that financial assistance, and I am inclined to think he

was right. Thank heaven the mine is still operating, and I am hopeful that it will continue to operate. But I am anxious lest these extra costs which the mine will have to face will make the position even more precarious. So it is with special regard for our primary industries, and industry generally—and particularly our goldmining industry—that I suggest that, when we reach the Committee stage, we must seriously consider the proposals contained in the measure, and try to bring them within the range of the capacity of industry to absorb. I support the Bill.

On motion by Hon. L. A. Logan, debate adjourned.

BILL—ADOPTION OF CHILDREN ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [9.15] in moving the second reading said: The amendments asked for in this Bill are very desirable. They were discussed with the Minister for Child Welfare in the previous Government and received his complete approval. Briefly, they seek to enable satisfactory reciprocal arrangements to be entered into with the Child Welfare or equivalent Departments in other parts of the British Commonwealth, and also to enable orders for adoption made outside Western Australia to become operative here. As members know, our Child Welfare Department is capable and kindly, and achieves excellent results in adoption matters, as well as in other aspects of child welfare work.

The first amendment empowers the Minister for Child Welfare to make reciprocal arrangements for the registration of adoption orders with the Minister or other appropriate authority administering the law relating to the adoption of children in any part of Her Majesty's Dominions, as well as in any other State or territory of the Commonwealth. There are reciprocal arrangements at present with the other States and the Territories of the Commonwealth. A birth certificate can now issue for an adopted child in its new name, if the child is adopted pursuant to the law of this State or the law of any other State or Territory of the Commonwealth. The present position is that reciprocal arrangements do not apply to any other part of Her Majesty's Dominions, so that if a child who was born in New Zealand, is legally adopted in this State, the adopting parents cannot obtain for the New Zealand register a birth certificate amended to show the parents as being the adopting parents.

The other amendment provides that where a child who is born in this State, but whose birth has not been registered here, is adopted in this State or in any other part of Australia or the British Commonwealth with which reciprocal arrangements have been made, the Registrar General may register the birth of the adopted child in its new name instead of its natural name.

It is my intention in Committee to move for certain amendments to the Bill. These have been asked for by the Secretary of the Child Welfare Department and the Registrar General, and have been agreed to by the Government. These amendments were requested after the Bill had been drafted and we thought we could get over the difficulty by the means suggested. These amendments are on the notice paper.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The Bill should be sent back to the officer concerned and the measure introduced next year.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not think it was the fault of the officer concerned, but some new information came forward and some further information can be given during the Committee stage. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. F. Griffith, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.19 p.m.