those students get the best education that it is possible to give them. In other words, whilst the Russians might believe in equality of opportunity, and equality of everything on an economic basis, they believe that the student with brains should be given special consideration, or the opportunity to which he is equal.

So, although I was never bright enough to attend Modern School, I was extremely sorry, and indeed sad, when I read that it had been decided that this school's status should be changed. Indeed, I might add that I was amazed when I remembered what Government it was that was carrying out this change, for this school has given to many children, whose parents are in the lower income group, a fantastically good education; an education as good if not better than those children could have secured anywhere else in the world. Children from distant parts of the State have been given an opportunity to be educated in the city, where they have been able to take full advantage of the opportunities offered, because they have had the brains to be able to gain admission to Modern School.

I have covered several points this evening; but obviously I have not dealt with everything that one should deal with when one realises all the matters that need attention in a province with such diverse interests as those in the South-West province. I trust that some of the points I have raised will receive the sympathetic consideration of the Government and with that hope I support the motion.

On motion by the Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham, debate adjourned.

BILLS (6)—FIRST READING.

1, Constitution Acts Amendment.
2, Legal Practitioners' Act Amendment (No. 1).
3, Reciprocal Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act Amendment.
4, Housing Loan Guarantee Act Amendment.
5, State Housing Act Amendment.
6, Plant Diseases Act Amendment.

Received from the Assembly.

House adjourned at 8.2 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 2nd September, 1958.

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CONTENTS—*continued.*

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

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS.

Postal Votes.

1. The Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Justice:

(1) How many applications for postal votes were received during the Legislative Council elections last May?

(2) Were any substantial numbers of such applications filled in so that the ballot papers were to be addressed to a place other than the address of the applicant?

(3) If the answer to No. (2) is in the affirmative, were any considerable numbers of such ballot papers to be addressed to the same place, or places; and if so, in what numbers and to what places?

(4) Were any applications received too late to enable ballot papers to be despatched to applicants in time for them to record a valid vote? If so, how many?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 2032.

(2) No.

(3) No. Answered by No. (2).

(4) Ballot papers were despatched to all electors whose applications were received prior to 6 p.m. on the 9th May (the day preceding the election). Whether ballot papers would be received in some cases would depend on locality and postal facilities available. It is estimated that approximately 50 electors may not have received ballot papers in time to record a valid vote.

GOVERNMENT VEHICLES.

Use in Labour Day Procession.

2. Mr. WILD asked the Premier:

(1) How many Government-owned vehicles were made available to trade unions and other non-Governmental organisations for use as floats or for other purposes in the last Labour Day procession?

(2) On what basis were these vehicles, if any, made available; i.e., who bore the cost of petrol, drivers' wages, etc.

(3) What was the total cost, if any, to the State Government?

(4) Will he list the organisations so assisted?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Three.

(2) Any costs for petrol and drivers were met by those to whom the vehicles were lent.

(3) Nil.

(4) Amalgamated Engineering Union (2 vehicles) and Carpenters' Union (1 vehicle).

WATER SUPPLIES.

Flat Rate Throughout the State.

3. The Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Premier:

(1) What consideration, if any, has been given to the proposal, the subject of which was moved by the Hon. E. Nulsen on the 31st August, 1949:

> That in the opinion of this House, all Government controlled water supplies in Western Australia should be on a flat charge basis, so as to ensure that water should be the same price to the consumer in the country as in the metropolitan area,

and was carried and strongly supported by the present Minister for Lands and other Ministers in the Hawke Government?

(2) In view of the enthusiasm of these Ministers for this proposal, is it proposed to implement the principle?

(3) If not, why not?

The PREMIER replied:

The principle is being gradually implemented and would have been much further advanced had the Government led by the present hon. member for Murray done something about the implementation of the principle.

WOOL.

Costs, Yield, and Price.

4. The Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What are the estimated annual costs of running sheep on a per head basis, and the yield of wool per sheep in the following areas:—

(a) North-West;

(b) Murchison and Eastern Goldfields;

(c) agricultural areas?

(2) What was the average price of greasy wool per lb. in this State for 1957-58?

(3) What was the average price of the last June sale and the recent August sale?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) and (b) No authentic information available.

(c) Reliable average information not available, owing to wide differences from individual farms in management of flocks, breeds, pasture productivity, and interrelation with cereal-growing.

The average yield of wool per sheep of all ages for the four years, 1953-54 to 1956-57, in the districts specified was:—

(a) 8.9 lb.

(b) 9.8 lb.

(c) 9.1 lb.

(2) 60.39d.

(3) June, 1958.—44.93d.

*Aug., 1958.—43.0d.

* Preliminary estimate as final figure not yet available.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

Cunderdin-Meckering Transmission Line.

5. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What was the capital cost, including the cost of the transmission line from Cunderdin, of providing an electricity supply to Meckering?

(2) What is the gross annual revenue received from Meckering consumers?

(3) How many poles are there in the transmission line from Cunderdin to Meckering?

(4) How many consumers outside the Meckering townsite are served by this transmission line?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Works) replied:

(1) £14,120.

(2) A complete year's reading for the Meckering area is not yet available, but the gross annual revenue from existing consumers is estimated at £1,700.

(3) Approximately 150.

(4) Four.

Revenue from Kellerberrin, Tammin, and Cunderdin.

6. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What was the gross income of the State Electricity Commission from consumers in the—

(a) Kellerberrin;

(b) Tammin;

(c) Cunderdin

Road Districts, during the year ended the 30th June, 1958?

(2) What amount was received by the commission for current consumed by—

(a) Cunderdin pumping station;

(b) Kellerberrin booster pump;

during the year ended the 30th June, 1958?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Works) replied:

(1) (a) £25,508.

(b) £1,866.

(c) £62,180.

(2) (a) £54,256.

(b) £10,599.

Cunderdin-Merredin Transmission Line.

7. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What is the total estimated cost of the 66,000-volt transmission line to be constructed between Cunderdin and Merredin by the State Electricity Commission?

(2) Will any portion of this be defrayed from the Commonwealth Government's contribution to the cost of the modified comprehensive water scheme?

(3) Was any portion of the cost of extending the transmission line from Northam to Cunderdin and from Cunderdin to Kellerberrin subsidised from the contribution of the Commonwealth to the comprehensive water scheme?

(4) What is the gross annual revenue expected to be received by the State Electricity Commission as a result of the extension of the 66,000-volt transmission line from Cunderdin to Merredin?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Works) replied:

(1) £184,000 to No. 4 Pumping Station.

(2) No.

(3) No.

(4) £74,000 from No. 4 Pumping Station.

GASCOYNE RESEARCH STATION.

Building of Administrative Offices and Laboratory.

8. Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Is it the intention of the Agricultural Department to erect on the Gascoyne Research Station—

(1) Administrative offices for the various officers stationed there?

(2) A laboratory to assist the advisory officers of his department stationed at Carnarvon?

(3) If the answer is "Yes" to either or both of the foregoing questions, when will the buildings be commenced?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) There is provision to accommodate the necessary laboratory equipment.

(3) Tenders will be invited in October.

LANDS.

Denham Lots 117 to 120.

9. Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Have Denham Lots 117 to 120 inclusive been made available to the present occupiers for selection?

(2) If not, on what date will these lots be made available?

(3) Will he inform the House (if the lots have not been made available) the cause of the long delay in making these lots available for selection?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) According to information filed in the Lands Department, Denham Lots 117 to 120 (inclusive) are not occupied.

(2) If these lots are occupied they will be made available upon application by the occupants.

(3) Answered by No. (1).

DIESEL VEHICLES.

Licence Fee.

10. Mr. W. A. MANNING asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is it a fact that the increased licence fee, imposed on diesel vehicles prior to the raising of tax on diesel fuel, has not yet reverted to the original rate in the case of tractors, earth moving plant, etc., and that such vehicles are now paying both increased licence and fuel tax?

(2) If so, when will this oversight or imposition be corrected?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Licence fees for diesel operated tractors, earth moving plant, etc., have not been reverted to the original rate as the diesel fuel for those vehicles is not subject to the tax of 1s. per gallon.

(2) Further action is not required.

PRE-NATAL CLINIC.

Establishment in Scarborough, Doubleview, Innaloo and Osborne Park Area.

11. Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Will urgent consideration be given to the establishing of a pre-natal clinic in the heavily populated area comprising Scarborough, Doubleview, Innaloo and Osborne Park, thus obviating the considerable inconvenience of travelling by expectant mothers who have other small children?

(2) Where is the nearest pre-natal clinic to serve this district?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) This matter is now receiving consideration by the State Health Council.

(2) The nearest ante-natal clinic that provides a service to those women not under private medical supervision is at the King Edward Memorial Hospital.

OVERLOADS ON AXLES.

Check on Midland Railways Road Transport.

12. Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Police:

(1) Will he inform the House on what dates the Heavy Haulage Squad intercepted the Midland Railways Road Transport vehicles for the purpose of check weighing axle loading?

(2) On how many occasions were overloads on axles found?

(3) What was the amount of overload on each occasion?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

This question was wrongly addressed to the Minister for Police. It should have been addressed to the Minister for Transport. The answer is as follows:—

(1) No record is kept of the number of heavy transport vehicles stopped and checked, unless a breach of gross overloading or axle overloading is discovered, in which case a brief is submitted. Overloading was detected on the following dates:—

The 30th July, 1957.
The 17th July, 1958.
The 12th August, 1958.

(2) Three.

(3) (1) 2,320 lbs. on centre axle.
(2) 9,760 lbs. on rear axle.
(3) 4,530 lbs. on centre axle.

ALBANY REGIONAL HOSPITAL.

Iron and Steel Used in Construction.

13. Mr. HALL asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What quantities of steel and iron, in tons, have been used in construction work on the Albany Regional Hospital?

(2) Are there any stocks held at Albany or metropolitan area, for construction of Albany Regional Hospital?

(3) What ports were used to ship steel and iron into this State for the construction of Albany Regional Hospital?

(4) What is the amount of steel and iron expected to be used in the construction of the Albany Regional Hospital?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Works) replied:

(1) 50 tons round mild steel to foundations, 10 tons of roofing iron to temporary buildings, and 7¼ tons of angle iron to openings.

(2) No.

(3) Fremantle.

(4) 148 tons.

ONION MARKETING BOARD.

Personnel, Age, and Salary.

14. Mr. I. W. MANNING asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Who are the present members of the Onion Marketing Board?

(2) What is the age of each of the members?

(3) What salary does each member receive?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Frederick Mann (Chairman),
Alexander McKenzie Murray,
Frank Telenta,
Frederick Anthony Santich,
John Philip Eckersley.

(2) F. Mann, 78 years.
A. Murray, 52 years.
F. Telenta, 65 years.
F. Santich, 39 years.
J. Eckersley, 39 years.

(3) Members of the board receive no salary for Onion Board duties. They receive only sitting fees as follows:—

Chairman £4 4s. per meeting (limit, £250 per annum).

Members £3 3s. per meeting.

Mr. J. P. Eckersley, being a civil servant, receives no sitting fee.

STATE ENGINEERING WORKS.

Increase in Turnover and Individual Contracts.

15. The Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Will he explain the reason for the increase in the business turnover of the State Engineering Works which according to his reply to parliamentary question No. (7) of Tuesday, the 19th August, 1958, increased from £488,294 for the year ended the 30th June, 1952, to £890,953 for the year ended the 30th June, 1958?

(2) Will he list the individual contracts of a value in excess of £5,000 carried out during the year ended the 30th June, 1958?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Works) replied:

(1) The major reasons for increase in business turnover are—

(a) Increase in all wages and materials cost by approximately 33⅓%.

(b) Major reconstruction work undertaken on s.s. "Delamere" for the State Shipping Service.

(c) General increase in the requirements of all State Departments.

(2)

Customer	Description	Amount £
Fremantle Harbour Trust	100 ton Hopper	5,220
State Shipping Service	Construct Orlop Deck "Delamere"	10,670
Government Stores Department	Steel Pipes (includes additions to original contract)	83,948
State Shipping Service	Instal Shelter Deck, "Delamere"	30,246
State Shipping Service	Modify Crew Accommodation, "Delamere"	5,295
State Shipping Service	Modify 'Tween Deck and Trunk Way, "Delamere"	8,050
Public Works Department —Harbours and Rivers	Rollers for 2,000 ton Slipway	11,828
Public Works Department —Architectural Division	Cupboards, Blackboards, etc., Tuart Hill	7,256
W.A. Government Railways	Rectifying 99 pairs Switch Blades	6,888
State Shipping Service	Ventilation for Cattle Space, "Delamere"	7,027
Public Works Department Harbours and Rivers	Haulage Winch, 600 ton Slipway	9,786
Fremantle Harbour Trust	New Pilot Boat	6,003
Public Works Department Harbours and Rivers	Cradle for 600 ton Slipway	6,515
Government Stores Department	School Desks and Chairs	42,411

MIDLAND JUNCTION WORKSHOPS.

Increase in Turnover and Individual Contracts.

16. The Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) Will he explain the reason for the increase in the business turnover of the Midland Junction Workshops which according to his reply to parliamentary question No. (8) of Tuesday, the 19th August, 1958, increased from £2,409,800 for the year ended the 30th June, 1952, to £4,304,400 for the year ended the 30th June, 1958.

(2) Will he list the individual contracts of a value in excess of £20,000 carried out during the year ended the 30th June, 1958?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) There are a number of factors as follows:—

(a) Reorganisation of the workshops as a result of the report of the 1947 Royal Commission which stated that the workshops as such can only be classed as quite unsatisfactory for the performance of the service they should provide to the railway organisation.

(b) The year ended the 30th June, 1952, was affected by the metal trades strike.

(c) There have been increases in the basic wage from £9 4s. 3d. at the 1st July, 1951, to £13 8s. 6d. at the 30th June, 1958.

(d) Margins under various awards have increased.

(e) The cost of materials is higher.

(2) In addition to the normal activity of maintenance of railway rolling stock and equipment, the following projects were undertaken in the year ended the 30th June, 1958:—

Conversion of nine coaches.

Construction of 50 ballast wagons, 11 brake vans and 40 bogey wagons.

Progress on construction of 10 diesel railcars and 8 bogey cool storage vans.

SCHOOL BUSES.

Operation in Metropolitan Area.

17. Mr. NALDER asked the Minister for Education:

(1) How many school buses operate in the metropolitan area?

(2) In what suburbs or districts do they operate, and to what schools?

(3) Are the buses Government-owned and operated?

(4) If not, are they operated by private contractors or by bus companies?

(5) Is a charge made or a fare paid by the children?

(6) What is the mileage travelled by each bus individually from the starting point to destination?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Five. (Four for spastic children and one for near-sighted children.)

(2) (a) Midland, Guildford, Belmont, Bayswater, Maylands to Mitchell School, Mt. Lawley.

(b) Applecross, South Perth, Victoria Park, Bentley to Mitchell School, Mt. Lawley.

(c) Scarborough, Tuart Hill, Nollamara, Mt. Hawthorn, Bedford Park to Mitchell School, Mt. Lawley.

(d) Mosman Park, Cottesloe, Nedlands, Subiaco, Wembley, West Leederville to Mitchell School, Mt. Lawley.

(e) Maylands, Bentley Park, Manning, Victoria Park to Thomas Street Partially Sighted Classes.

(3) No.

(4) Private contractors.

(5) No.

(6) Each route is approximately 30 miles in length.

PUBLIC WORKS.

Retrenchments and Dismissals in Bunbury Area.

18. Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Have any individuals been retrenched or dismissed from any Public Works project in the Bunbury area during the last four months?

(2) If so—

(a) what is the total number of such persons retrenched or dismissed;

(b) from what projects were they retrenched or dismissed, and how many from each such project and on what date did each such dismissal or retrenchment become effective;

(c) what were the reasons for taking such action?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Works) replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) Fifteen.

(b) The men were retrenched or dismissed from the Bunbury Harbour works.

Two men transferred under arrangement to the Main Roads Department.

Eight men paid off on the 22nd August, and five men paid off on the 29th August.

(c) Limitation of funds available.

PICTON BRIDGE.

Accidents, 1951-1958.

19. Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Police:

How many accidents have occurred at the Picton bridge—over the Preston River—on the main Bunbury-Perth Road for each of the following years:—

(a) 1951;

(b) 1952;

(c) 1953;

(d) 1954;

(e) 1955;

(f) 1956;

(g) 1957;

(h) 1958 to date?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

This question was wrongly addressed to the Minister for Police. The answer is as follows:—

Such records are not maintained at the traffic office, but on the advice of the local authority in the district concerned, the following information has been obtained:—

(a) 1951—No record.

(b) 1952—No record.

(c) 1953—Nil.

(d) 1954—One.

(e) 1955—One.

(f) 1956—Four.

(g) 1957—Eight.

(h) 1958 to date—One.

RURAL & INDUSTRIES BANK.

Personal Loans for Purchase of Goods.

20. Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Premier:

(1) Did he read the report on page 2 of "The West Australian" of Thursday the 28th August last, stating that the Westminster Bank would follow the lead of the Midland Bank in granting personal loans, free of security, for the purchase of goods normally bought under hire-purchase?

(2) If so, will consideration be given to the Rural & Industries Bank adopting a similar policy of lending?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The Rural & Industries Bank already conducts a Personal Loan Department, where credit-worthy people can be accommodated on a personal security basis. The activities of this department will continue on the same basis as heretofore, within the limits of funds available for this class of business.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

RAILWAYS.

Closure of Lines in Wheat-growing Areas.

1. The Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) Was the Minister for Railways correctly reported in the issue of "The West Australian" of Monday, the 1st September, as having told a meeting at Beacon that "the Government had never been satisfied that the closure of the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line, the Hyden line or any other wheat-growing line was a good thing"?

(2) If so, why did the Government shut down these rail services?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

I should like to answer the questions in my own role if I may. With regard to question No. (1), my first reaction is to remark, "How the heck would I know?". On second thoughts, however, I say to the Leader of the Opposition that as the answer can only be known by the Minister for Railways, if he will place his question on the notice paper, it will be referred to that gentleman.

In regard to question No. (2), my answer is "because Parliament, with the almost unanimous approval of the Liberal Party members, resolved that such action be taken."

The Hon. D. BRAND: I would like to thank the Minister for Transport for his courteous reply to my previous question. I took it for granted that, having seen the publicity given to the statement, he would have taken the trouble to find out why the Minister for Railways made such statements.

Mr. W. Hegney: Are you making a speech?

The Hon. D. BRAND: I have said all I want to say in that regard. In view of the statement that the Government had never been satisfied that the closure of the Burakin-Bonnie Rock line, the Hyden line or any other wheat growing line was a good thing, why did the Minister for Transport, representing the Minister for Railways, include the closure of such lines in the motion that he brought to Parliament for approval?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:

I dare say that a respectfully-worded question merits a respectfully-worded reply. I am not satisfied that the Minister for Railways stated that the Government had never been satisfied in connection with this matter. Instead of tilting at windmills in connection with the whole question, I think it would be just as well to find out, from the Minister for Railways himself, exactly what he did say. Therefore, I repeat the advice: If the Leader of the Opposition would like to proceed a little further, he should place his question on the notice paper so that it can receive the personal attention of the man alleged to have made these remarks.

HIRE PURCHASE.

Premiers' Conference.

2. Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

In view of his agreement with New South Wales Premier Cahill's suggestion of a Premiers' conference on proposed hire-purchase legislation, will the Government's proposed Bill be deferred until the conference is held with a view to any legislation introduced being in line with that of the rest of the States?

The PREMIER replied:

I wish to thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for having given me a copy of this question earlier this afternoon. The legislation already prepared by the Government will be proceeded with because I think it will deal with phases of hire-purchase business which would not be the main business to be dealt with at a Premiers' conference. I did notice in today's paper a Press report from Melbourne which indicated that the Premier of Victoria (Mr. Bolte) had claimed that he had the answer to the hire-purchase business problems.

The Hon. D. Brand: I have heard several Premiers say that.

The PREMIER: It is my intention to write to Mr. Bolte for the purpose of trying to obtain from him as much information as he is in a position to give me at this stage in connection with the matter. As a result, it could happen that we would include in our Bill some additional proposals. However, that will depend necessarily upon the nature of the advice which comes forward from the Premier of Victoria.

EMPLOYMENT.

Position at Jarrahwood.

3. Mr. BOVELL asked the Premier:

In view of the effect that the building trade has on employment, would he expedite the calling of tenders for public works buildings in country areas? By way of explanation, Ministers have replied to questions of mine to the effect that in Busselton particularly, and in my electorate generally, additions are to be made almost immediately to the hospital, school, and school quarters at Jarrahwood. It would assist the employment position there if the matter could be dealt with expeditiously.

The PREMIER replied:

Yes.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL.

Introduction.

4. The Hon. D. BRAND asked the Premier:

I think this question should have been addressed to the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government, but perhaps it can be answered by the Premier. The question reads—

> In view of the deliberations during Local Government week (the 28th August-the 2nd September), and the comments by delegates following the talks by Kenneth H. Gifford, Lecturer in Central and Local Government and in Planning Law and Public Administration, University of Melbourne, is it proposed to submit the Local Government Bill to further critical analysis before it is introduced into the State Parliament, even if a delay of one session results therefrom?

The PREMIER replied:

The hon. member was good enough to give me a copy of this question earlier in the afternoon. The Government would not so long delay the introduction of this Bill as to prejudice the probability of Parliament passing it during the current session. In addition, I would point out that I received a letter this week from the Chairman of the Road Board Association of Western Australia (Mr. W. W. Fellows). In the letter on behalf of his own association, and also the Local Government Association, he indicates that some negotiations have been going on with the Mr. Gifford referred to in the question.

He advises that the two associations have agreed to obtain the services of Mr. Gifford for the purpose of enabling him to investigate the proposals which were in the Local Government Bill last year, and to make recommendations in connection therewith to the two associations. In his letter Mr. Fellows has asked that the Government favourably consider delaying the introduction of the Local Government Bill this session for a period of approximately three weeks—that being the period which he considers necessary to enable Mr. Gifford to carry out a thorough investigation of the Bill and for any recommendations which Mr. Gifford might have to be presented to the two associations.

I think the best course for the Government to pursue in this matter is to introduce the Bill at the earliest possible moment. Should the recommendations which these associations will receive in, say, four weeks' time, be thought to warrant an approach by the associations to the Government for amendments to be made to the Bill, such amendments as the Government considers should be made could be made during the Committee stages. Where the Government did not agree with any particular recommended amendment it would be open for members of the Opposition, if they approved of those amendments, to move in Committee for their insertion into the Bill.

We see no reason why the introduction of the Bill should be delayed. We consider that three or four weeks lost at this stage could very well make it practically impossible for both Houses of Parliament to complete consideration of the Bill before this session concludes. The fact that the Bill would not be held up for three or four weeks in its introduction into this House would not in any way prejudice Mr. Gifford's investigation, nor prejudice a reasonable consideration by all members of the House of any recommendation which he might present to the two associations.

I am not well informed as to Mr. Gifford's qualifications although from all accounts they are of considerable magnitude. Nevertheless I should hope that neither the associations, nor we, would wipe off as of no account the local experts on local government in Western Australia; nor that we would all sort of fall suddenly in love with what Mr. Gifford may recommend in his report. I quite agree that any recommendations he might put forward should receive close and careful consideration; but I suggest they should not be accepted willy-nilly simply because they come from Mr. Gifford. When his recommendations come to hand, I think they should be subjected to very close and careful analysis by local government experts in this State, including those in the Department of Local Government; and, of course, those who are members of the various local governing authorities.

WATER SUPPLIES.

Flat Rate Throughout the State.

5. The Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Premier:

In reply to my question No. 3, on the notice paper today, relating to a flat rate for water throughout the State, the Premier said, "The principle is being gradually implemented." Will he tell me how gradual is the implementation, and also what progress has been made in this direction?

I would also draw the attention of the Premier to the fact that in the metropolitan area excess water is paid for at a rate of 2s. per 1,000 gallons. This is a much lesser rate than is paid in the country. If, however, the account is paid before the 30th November there is a rebate, and the actual price is 1s. 9d. per 1,000 gallons. Without considering the merits or demerits of past Governments, will he not agree that this principle at least, in regard to the rebate on excess water, could be applied to country districts forthwith, or in the near future?

The PREMIER replied:

I am prepared to discuss this matter with the hon. member over a drink of water, or, alternatively, to supply the information sought provided the question is placed on the notice paper.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, College Street Closure.

2, Industries Assistance Act Amendment. Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

Third Reading.

THE HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Premier—Northam) [5.5]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Question put.

The SPEAKER: As this Bill requires an absolute majority, I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority present; and, there being no dissentient voice, I declare the motion carried with the concurrence of an absolute majority of the whole number of members of the House.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILLS (4)—THIRD READING.

1, Legal Practitioners Act Amendment.

2, Reciprocal Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act Amendment.

3, Housing Loan Guarantee Act Amendment.

4, State Housing Act Amendment. Transmitted to the Council.

PLANT DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Third Reading.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Agriculture—Merredin-Yilgarn) [5.7]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR. WILD (Dale) [5.8]: I wish to take this opportunity of saying how much I deplored the irresponsible attitude of the Minister the other evening, when speakers on this side of the House saw fit to address themselves to this measure. We cavilled at the fact that the Government had only brought down amendments to satisfy the convenience of the individual in paying his annual fee to the department. In his reply the Minister castigated everybody on this side of the House, adding that we introduced into our speeches matters which were not contained in the Bill.

Mr. W. Hegney: Did you say castigated?

Mr. WILD: Over the week-end I took the opportunity of discussing this matter with the president of the South Suburban Fruit Fly Baiting Committee. It may interest the Minister to know—apparently he does not know; otherwise he would not have spoken as he did—that in the south suburban fruit-fly baiting area, which comprises an area of over 100 square miles, there is only one inspector. In that district there are 1,465 people with anything from one tree to 100 trees or more, which constitutes a commercial orchard.

From those growers the department collects over £4,500; and the Government contributes one inspector and £1,500. When I said the other evening that the fruit-fly menace had increased, and got out of hand, I was speaking from figures. I will go back five years, when six cases of fruit were condemned in the market. The following year 36 cases were condemned; the year after, 32 cases were condemned; and the year before last, 76 cases were condemned. We do not yet know the exact figure for this year, although it has been published by the department that 5,000 cases of fruit from the metropolitan area were condemned in the markets.

I am assured by the president of the association, with whom I discussed this matter this morning, that in the suburban areas there would be many hundreds of such cases. I know of one grower in Roleystone who had 114 cases condemned. In spite of this, the Minister gets up and takes us to task because we said he was not doing his job by merely tinkering with the Plant Diseases Act. Therefore, I say to the Minister that in future before he rises to his feet and takes us to task on this side of the House, it would be better for him to have a talk with some of his senior officers in order to find out exactly what the position is.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BROKEN HILL PROPRIETARY STEEL INDUSTRY AGREEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

In Committee.

Mr. Sewell in the Chair; the Hon. A. R. G. Hawke (Minister for Industrial Development) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Section 3 amended:

Mr. BRAND: I move an amendment—

Page 2, line 9—Add after the word "steel" the words "at the works established at Wundowie."

When speaking to the second reading of this Bill I intimated that before any further large-scale industry was established in Western Australia it should be necessary to give this House an opportunity to

discuss the pros and cons of such a project, whether it be private enterprise or a State concern. As the House is aware, the amending Bill aims to remove the limit of 50,000 tons of iron ore which might be taken from Koolyanobbing in any one year for use at Wundowie for the manufacture of charcoal iron, and allow the industry to remove whatever tonnage is necessary throughout the year.

Whilst we feel it is quite a practical suggestion that so long as Wundowie remains it should be allowed to take whatever raw material is necessary to obtain full production and utilise the plant to its fullest extent, I have moved this amendment to ensure that the iron will be used at that particular locality.

Mr. HAWKE: I have no serious objection to this amendment. In the event of the board of management of the industry, at any time, planning under the provisions of the Act to produce charcoal iron and steel at some other centre than Wundowie, I could not imagine Parliament raising any objection to such a course, because normally the taking of such a course would amount to the processing of additional local raw materials; the increased manufacture of finished products; and, of course, the provision of additional employment of our own people.

Mr. BRAND: I would be amazed—and I am sure other members would be, too—if a proposal for the establishment of an industry involving millions of pounds were not brought before this House for general approval and discussion, particularly if it were being established by the State. It was to ensure that it would come before Parliament—even though it did create employment and was a private industry—that I moved the amendment. I do not think the Premier would dream of allowing such an industry to proceed—particularly if he were sitting on this side of the House—without Parliament being given an opportunity to discuss the various points which might be involved.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I am sorry I cannot agree with the amendment. The Leader of the Opposition talked about what we would do if we were sitting on the other side of the House.

Mr. Brand: It is what you did when you were over here.

Mr. SLEEMAN: We did all we could to prevent this Bill going on the statute book.

Mr. Brand: It went through.

Mr. SLEEMAN: What chance is there of another industry coming here?

Mr. Brand: What is the Deputy Premier doing?

Mr. SLEEMAN: These deposits should come back to the people of this country. Both the Leader of the Opposition and B.H.P. are frightened of another company coming here and setting up a works. We should amend the Bill so that the works at Koolyanobbing come back to the people of the State; we should not have B.H.P. dictating to the people. I oppose the amendment.

Mr. MAY: I am not very happy about this amendment, but at present we are allowed to take up to only 50,000 tons a year from Koolyanobbing. This amendment removes the limit. Why should anybody in this State not be allowed to use the natural resources of the State instead of their being tied up to a company like B.H.P.? Up to date, according to questions I have asked in this Chamber, the value of the iron ore which has been taken is £11,000,000; and, for the best, this State gets 1s. 6d. per ton. Any Government of this State, if it could have had in hand £11,000,000 return for the iron ore which has been sold out of the State, could have established any industry considered worth while.

Sir Ross McLarty: You know it was not practicable for any Government to have received that amount. You could apply the same argument to timber, which is also sold on a royalty basis.

Mr. MAY: The statement was made in the Press and in this House.

Sir Ross McLarty: It was absolutely misleading.

Mr. MAY: I know it hurts the present Opposition members, who realise what they have done to the State.

Mr. Court: Would you rather that the iron ore had gone to Japan and been sold back to us as steel?

Mr. MAY: I do not agree that the natural resources of the State should be handed to any private company from another State.

Mr. Roberts: What about the export of wool?

The Minister for Transport: What about pulling your head in?

Mr. Hawke: How much per ton do you get for wool?

Mr. MAY: At present the iron ore is worth much more than wool. I am dealing with iron ore.

Mr. Brand: Blow up your floats; you are in deep water.

Mr. MAY: I am showing what is being done to the natural resources of this State. It is a crying shame that we should have been tied to a limit of 50,000 tons of iron ore per year, when millions of tons, to the value of £11,000,000, have been practically given away.

Mr. Court: Do you say wool is not realising as much as iron ore?

Mr. MAY: I am discussing iron ore. I realise what all this means to a Government that desires to establish an industry

in the South-West. Cannot members opposite see what could have been done with the money that has been lost to the State?

Mr. HAWKE: I wish to make it clear that the iron ore deposits at Koolyanobbing are in no way controlled by anyone except the State Government and the State Parliament.

Mr. Brand: The member for Collie does not understand.

Mr. HAWKE: Strangely enough, the provision in regard to Koolyanobbing was included by the previous Government in the same Act of Parliament as the agreement made by that Government between the State of Western Australia and B.H.P. in relation to hundreds of millions of tons of iron ore at Yampi Sound. The previous Government must have had legal advice from the Crown Law Department in order to have included the two matters in the one Bill and the one Act; but it seems to me there is actually no relationship between the two.

I quite agree with what the Leader of the Opposition said the other night: that it would have been far better, from a practical point of view, to have had a separate Act in relation to the Koolyanobbing deposit instead of bundling it into the same legislation as the agreement between the State and the B.H.P. The whole of the deposits of iron ore at Koolyanobbing are in the name of the State of Western Australia, and the only legislative control is in respect of the maximum quantity which can legally be taken each year from Koolyanobbing.

Mr. Brand: But that is being removed now.

Mr. HAWKE The legal maximum is at present 50,000 tons, as fixed by Parliament when the 1952 Act was passed. This Bill asks Parliament to increase the maximum from 50,000 to 80,000 tons per year; and, in the event of its becoming law, it will give the board of management of the charcoal iron and steel industry at Wundowie the right to take up to 80,000 tons of iron ore per year from Koolyanobbing, for use at Wundowie. The 80,000 tons per year is the maximum quantity of iron ore which will be required at Wundowie when the present expansion of the plant is completed.

Mr. Brand: But there is no limit in this amendment.

Mr. HAWKE: There is no limit, but the actual maximum which the industry will require, when the present programme of expansion is finished, will be approximately 80,000 tons per year. Should it require 82,000 or perhaps 90,000 tons per year the Bill, if it becomes law, will allow the board of management to take that greater amount and, in fact, to take such total amount as the industry requires in any year in the future.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Since the Premier has explained the position, it has become even more topsy turvy. We are told that the Koolyanobbing iron ore is still in the name of the Government; but in spite of that, we cannot use 1 lb. more than 50,000 tons unless we pass legislation allowing us to do so. The position is ridiculous, and it is another reason why the amendment should not be agreed to. What if some firm wants to start an iron or steel industry at Bunbury, for instance? We would have to tell them to talk it over with the B.H.P.; and even if the Government got a measure dealing with the matter passed through this Chamber, I doubt if it would be passed by another place, although I hope that place will not be there much longer. I oppose the amendment.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3—Section 4 amended:

Mr. BRAND: The amendment I am about to move has exactly the same wording and is for the same reason as that which preceded it. I move an amendment—

> Page 2, line 17—Add after the word "steel" the words "at the works established at Wundowie".

I wish to emphasise the misunderstanding regarding this section of the B.H.P. agreement legislation. Apparently the member for Collie and the member for Fremantle think the iron ore at Koolyanobbing has been set aside for use by the B.H.P.; but that is not so, as that company does not come into it at all. As the Premier explained, the limit of 50,000 tons was arrived at after discussion with the board of management at Wundowie and now that limitation is being removed and the board will be able to use whatever tonnage it requires, provided, of course, we include these words.

Mr. Sleeman: What can they use?

Mr. BRAND: They can use whatever tonnage is required.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I think we should throw this amendment out anyway. It will either destroy the Bill or make it useless. I did not say that Broken Hill Proprietary Limited owned the iron, but I say that it is behind this move, and well behind it. The same position occurred in regard to the oil, the coal, and the Black Diamond leases at Collie. What did the coal companies do then? It is a pity that we have not a coalmine of our own as well as an iron mine. I hope the Committee will turn this amendment down, too.

Mr. HAWKE: The passing of this Bill will give the board of management of the charcoal iron industry at Wundowie the

legal right to take from Koolyanobbing all the iron ore it requires as against the legal limitation of the maximum of 50,000 tons which exists at present. Therefore, from a legal point of view, it is absolutely essential that the Act be amended to allow the board of management to take more than the present maximum of 50,000 tons of ore from the Koolyanobbing deposits.

As a matter of fact, the board of management is at present taking more than 50,000 tons a year from Koolyanobbing; and, to that extent, is breaching the law. However, that situation has come about, first of all, because of the restriction in the Act; and, secondly—and more importantly—because of the expansion of the charcoal iron industry at Wundowie. I have said these few words to emphasise the very great importance of having this Bill passed into the law as early as possible.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

JUNIOR FARMERS' MOVEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading,

Debate resumed from the 28th August.

THE HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [5.35]: This is a very short Bill; and, so far as I can ascertain, sets out to do exactly what the Minister for Education explained to the House on Thursday last. Evidently, the Superannuation Board found that in the Act governing the Junior Farmers' Movement certain words had been excluded which would legally prevent the employees from enjoying certain benefits under some provisions of the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act.

The purpose of this amending Bill is simply to rectify that error so that the staff, as employees of a semi-Government concern, might enjoy, together with all other Government employees, the benefits and advantages of superannuation legislation. Therefore, I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

NATIVES (STATUS AS CITIZENS) BILL.

Second Reading.

THE HON. J. J. BRADY (Minister for Native Welfare—Guildford-Midland) [5.36] in moving the second reading said: Once again I am privileged to introduce a Bill, the passage of which will provide a new order for a group of people who, due to the colour of their skin, are subject to discriminatory legislation and special restrictions.

This Bill is similar to the one I introduced last session, but which, unfortunately, was not completely dealt with due to the pressure of business before the House at the time. Since then, as a result of a motion moved by the member for South Perth and passed by this House, a committee has carried out a very thorough investigation into native matters. Evidence was taken from people throughout the State, as a result of which certain conclusions were reached.

Digressing somewhat, I would like to pay a tribute to the committee for the excellent job done and the fine report it has presented. Let us hope that there will be a favourable response to it from the Commonwealth Government.

At an initial stage of its inquiry, the committee realised it would have to give serious consideration to the very important question of citizenship, and in this regard made the following recommendation:—

> All existing legislation which restricts natives only should be repealed.
>
> The resources of a specialised Government welfare agency should be available to any person of aboriginal or part aboriginal descent for as long as the need exists.

The Committee's remarks on the subject of citizenship are of such interest and have such an important bearing on the subject under discussion that I propose to read that section of the report to the House. It is as follows:—

> Before considering components of the whole problem, reference must be made to one vital factor—citizenship.
>
> Present Position:
>
> In accordance with Section 10 of the Federal Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1948-1955, every aboriginal born in Australia is a citizen of the Commonwealth. Western Australia, however, has enacted special legislation which deprives aborigines and most part-aborigines of some of the normal rights and privileges of citizenship, even though it does not absolve them from most of its duties and responsibilities—including taxation.
>
> Under this legislation, one of the fundamental principles of democracy —that there shall be no taxation without representation—is denied the native living in Western Australia. The State Electoral Act deprives him of the right to vote in State elections, and this at present disqualifies him from voting in the Federal sphere.
>
> In addition, the Licensing Act, the Firearms and Guns Act, a number of other Western Australian Acts and

even the Native Welfare Act itself, all impose restrictions of varying degree on natives as distinct from other persons.

It is obvious, therefore, that although natives in Western Australia may be citizens of the Commonwealth, they are not full citizens of their own State.

They suffer under the further disability that the State-imposed restrictions automatically disqualify many of them from certain very important benefits under the Federal Social Services Act.

The complicated system which the Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act set up in 1944 to enable a native to satisfy a local board that he should no longer be considered a native, does not work satisfactorily in practice. It has the inevitable result, among other things, of implanting in too many minds, native and otherwise, the belief that anyone officially classified as a "native" must be an inferior being. Anything more calculated to destroy the self-respect and self-confidence of such people would be difficult to imagine. Indeed, it provides any native so inclined with a ready-made excuse satisfactory to himself, for his evasion of responsibility and for the squalor of his life.

Intelligent and discerning natives have informed the committee that they, and many others like them, are unwilling to plead for something they consider to be theirs as a birthright.

Suggestions Received:

The majority of submissions made to this committee favoured the granting of immediate and total citizenship to natives. The following is a typical view-point:

> Citizenship is a right and not a gift. Citizenship therefore is a right to which the aboriginal people are entitled and which ought not to be denied them. Here I should quote Article 31 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which Australia is a signatory: "Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country directly or through freely chosen representatives". Article 2 of the same Declaration says: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind such as race, colour and national or social origin, property, birth or other status". It is of paramount importance, I believe, that the Australian people should agree that the aborigines are entitled to citizenship, that it belongs to them by right and not by an act of grace on our part. This is the fundamental moral principle. My second fundamental moral principle is that the test of any society is the care which it bestows on the weaker members of the society. The obvious inference from this is that merely granting citizenship is not enough; simply bestowing the formal right without giving the right some substance through training and equipment for life in the community is to defy the moral principle. I believe that Parliament ought at once to grant right of citizenship, but I believe that this is beginning and not the end of the matter. Once these people are citizens of our community, it becomes our bounden duty to enable them to live as members of an Australian community.

Other submissions stressed the fact that the International Labour Organisation Convention of 1957, provided that indigenous people should "benefit on an equal footing from the rights and opportunities which national laws or regulations grant to the other elements of the population."

The minority who opposed this view did so for three main reasons—liquor, the vote and "readiness".

A.—Liquor: Those who opposed full citizenship on the grounds of liquor gave these reasons for their opposition:

(i) That with citizenship natives would acquire unlimited access to as much liquor as they desired, and therefore there would be a marked increase in the amount of drunkenness among them.

(ii) That the effect of liquor on natives was much more dangerous than on white people, that intoxicated natives were unduly quarrelsome and violent, and that a marked increase in the number of brawls, assaults and similar disturbances could therefore be expected.

(iii) That the white patrons of public houses, especially those in the South-West, would object strongly to natives drinking at the same bars, and that disturbances could ensue and publicans suffer economic loss.

The committee considered these three objections specifically and formed the opinion that although some increase in the incidence of drunkenness might follow universal citizenship, this increase and any disturbances which did ensue would be of a relatively temporary nature and could be dealt with in the normal way.

A most experienced authority on this subject, when asked—

> Do you feel that the existing laws could handle any liquor problem which might result from full citizenship?

replied—

> Those natives who want to drink already get it, so that many of the problems associated with drink are already with us. Natives under the present conditions if they want drink are obliged in many instances to take the cheapest and worst type of alcohol. I feel on the whole that the existing laws could probably handle most of the problems arising from liquor.

In only one situation do we feel that special care may be required in the interests of natives. Those comparatively few fully or partly tribalised aborigines in contact with civilization on the borders of the so-called "desert" have little or no knowledge of liquor and could suffer from sudden access to it. It is not possible to legislate especially for such a small minority, however, and it would not be reasonable to deny a privilege to the large majority on such grounds. We are confident that intelligent co-operation between all persons and authorities concerned and a strict adherence to the relevant legislation (Licensing Act, Illicit Sale of Liquor Act, etc.) would overcome any difficulties which might arise during the period of early contact.

The committee could not obtain any scientific or other evidence to indicate that native physiology varied from that of white people and that natives by virtue of their physical composition re-acted adversely to alcohol. The violence displayed by some natives while under the influence of liquor could well be due to the release of suppressed resentment at their under-privileged position. Citizenship would do much to dispel this resentment.

The committee was unimpressed by the contention that natives would be unacceptable in public bars. They were informed of instances where well-behaved coloured people consumed liquor without incident in country hotels and were of the opinion that any prejudice in this direction would rapidly subside.

The committee therefore considers that the liquor argument for withholding citizenship cannot be strongly supported and should not constitute a major objection to the granting of it.

B.—Voting: The incongruity of extending the franchise to an aboriginal living on the Canning Stock Route or, in fact, to a tribal native anywhere, has often been pointed out.

However, such a right would surely do him no harm. He would know nothing of his new privilege, and though he would be legally required to enrol, it is improbable that he would have anything to fear for some time to come, for failure to do so.

Although natives in settled areas would be required to enrol, it is unlikely that they would all be expected to do this immediately upon their becoming eligible. It seems that a good deal of commonsense is employed in the application of the Electoral Acts, and that a reasonably gradual process of enrolment would be permitted.

This committee believes that these natives, living as they do in a democracy where one vote has exactly the same value as the next, stand to gain a great deal from the franchise.

C.—"Readiness": Throughout our history, whenever anyone has proposed a reform giving more benefits or freedom to certain individuals, there has always been someone else at hand to say: "They are not yet ready for it." Examples have been the freeing of slaves, the introduction of universal education, the enfranchisement of women, etc.

The viewpoint of this committee on this argument is perfectly expressed in the following quotation from Lord Macaulay (though we imply no particular reference to politicians and do not intend the term "slavery" to be taken literally):

> Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learned to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever.

To sum up then, the members of this committee believe that the legal status of natives in Western Australia should not be inferior in any way to that of other members of the community. We feel that to continue to withhold full citizenship from the native minority is un-Christian, undemocratic and un-Australian.

We are satisfied too, that the importance of achieving full civic status has assumed such proportions in the minds of many of the people most concerned —the natives themselves—that supplementary efforts to improve their general outlook (including those recommended in this report) have little chance of real success until they gain that standing.

> We therefore believe that the present legislative restrictions which apply to natives only should be repealed. While we realise that the granting of full civic status will not immediately solve all related problems, we do see it as a prerequisite to their solution. We also believe that the assistance of a specialised welfare agency should be available to any person with any degree of aboriginal blood until the need no longer exists.

In recent years there has been a considerable awakening to the native problem —an increasing awareness on the part of the public that each and every one of us must play a part in the assimilation that will inevitably take place. The question now before us goes far beyond the boundaries of this State. Our native problem has received considerable publicity in other States and abroad—publicity, I regret to say, that has not always been favourable.

I know many people will still claim that legislation such as this is premature—that the natives are not ready for it. If that attitude is to be maintained as it has been for the past fifty years, then I am sure that in the minds of some people the stage will never be reached when it is considered that the native people are ready for what is nothing more than their right as human beings born and bred in this country. The Bill acknowledges the principle of equal dignity and rights as propounded by the United Nations Charter on Human Rights to which Australia is a signatory.

Much has been said about the present Act which enables a native to apply for citizenship. I wonder how many people would like to appear before a tribunal and plead for something which is their birthright and then proceed to satisfy such body that they have adopted the manner and habits of civilised life; that they are not suffering from active syphilis, granuloma or yaws; that they are of industrious habits, good behaviour and reputation and have dissolved all tribal and native associations except for relations of the first degree? Is it any wonder that so many coloured people are shocked and humiliated and therefore reluctant to make an application?

The adoption of this measure will provide an entirely new order.

There is not the slightest doubt that there will be natives who will either require the assistance of the department or be unable to meet the obligations imposed by citizenship and it is for this reason that provision has been made for the declaration of "protected natives" by a magistrate.

The Commonwealth Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1948-1955, provides natives with Australian citizenship as a birthright but several pieces of State legislation take away this right and in fact disqualify natives from certain Commonwealth benefits. As was proposed last session, this Bill seeks to amend the offending statutes —eleven in all—as well as repeal the Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act, 1944-1951, and implement a policy of freedom and equality.

I would not be so naive as to suggest that the proposed legislation will solve all the current problems associated with natives, but I would emphatically state that many of the social and other problems now existent are the result of existing discriminatory legislation. At present natives are without status and many of their actions can be attributed to the absence of dignity and a sense of feeling inferior and having nothing to lose. It will take time to assimilate these unfortunate people but I am convinced that the passage of this legislation will considerably hasten the process. As previously stated the Bill is similar to the measure explained last session and I will not weary the House by covering the same ground again.

Before concluding I will endeavour to allay the fears expressed last year concerning some of the proposals contained in Clause 69. Under the Native Welfare Act the Commissioner of Native Welfare is the legal guardian of every native child with or without parents or relatives until the age of 21 years. This power was given to enable him to act on all occasions in the welfare interests of the children. The passage of this Bill will remove this authority from a large number of children whose parents are not protected; but at the same time it will enable the Commissioner to continue to act from a welfare point of view in the interests of the natives themselves, whether "protected" or otherwise.

Mr. Bovell: This Bill will virtually wipe out the Native Welfare Department.

Mr. BRADY: This Bill will do nothing of the kind; it will preserve the Native Welfare Department as a welfare organisation.

Mr. Bovell: What will be its function?

Mr. BRADY: At present a native child cannot be admitted by a mission without the Commissioner's consent, and the desire is to extend this privilege to all native children whether they are of "protected" native parents or otherwise. It must be agreed that it would be a very retrograde step to pass legislation which would bar all native children, except those of "protected" parents, from native institutions. In the case of orphanages or industrial schools, custody will be subject to a court order as applicable to any other child. Quoting the committee, I repeat—

> . . . to withhold full citizenship from the native minority is un-Christian, un-democratic and un-Australian.

I have much pleasure in moving—

> That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. W. A. Manning, debate adjourned for one week.

NOXIOUS WEEDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Agriculture—Merredin-Yilgarn) [6.2] in moving the second reading said: The most important feature of the parent Act provides that noxious weeds shall be divided into two groups—primary noxious weeds and secondary noxious weeds. Under the category of primary noxious weeds would come Cape Tulip, Blackberry, Mesquite and Bathurst Burr. These and several others are the responsibility of the Agriculture Protection Board.

Under the other heading—that is secondary noxious weeds—would come such weeds as Paterson's Curse and Carnation Weed. These are declared only at the request of the local governing authority and, once declared, become the responsibility of that authority. From time to time the Department of Agriculture has received requests from various road boards to allow them to control a wide variety of weeds, and to give them the authority that they as local governing authorities need to be able to undertake a policy of eradication.

The Road Board Association, as well as a number of road boards—Bridgetown being among them—have from time to time requested power to enable local governing authorities to assist in the destruction of many weeds which have come within the category of new weeds. At the present time the local governing authorities have no legal right to undertake a policy of eradication with their normal road board revenue.

This amending Bill seeks to give to the local authorities the power to enable them to enter into an arrangement with a private person—the owner of the land involved—for the destruction of primary noxious weeds. I would also point out that the local authorities need that power in dealing with any primary noxious weeds which are growing on that portion of ground between the edge of the road and a farmer's property. With the present legal limitations local authorities are not legally permitted to spend their revenue on matters of this kind.

A number of road boards have assisted very materially in the eradication of primary noxious weeds, and have expended their own finances in this direction. I have already mentioned Bridgetown as being one of the authorities concerned; there are also Manjimup and Narrogin. The hon. member for Narrogin would be well aware that Cape tulip has been attacked by the local governing authority in his district, and that that authority has used its own finances in the campaign. So this small amendment merely enables the local governing authorities to spend some of their finances on assisting in the destruction of the primary noxious weeds. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Nalder, debate adjourned.

ARGENTINE ANT ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE) BILL.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Agriculture—Merredin-Yilgarn) [6.8] in moving the second reading said: As hon. members will see, this is a very small Bill which could quite easily be passed without a great deal of debate because of the nature of the amendment it contains. I know interest has been shown by hon. members in regard to the Argentine Ant Act, and what has been achieved by that legislation. Accordingly I propose to say quite a bit about that particular measure, as I think it is most appropriate at this stage.

This Bill provides for a continuance of the Argentine Ant Act, 1954, for one year—that is an extension of the Act complete from the 30th June, 1959, to the 30th June, 1960. Before dealing with the necessity to extend the Act for a year, it may be of interest and desirable, very briefly, to review the conditions which led up to the introduction of the parent Act.

The Argentine ant was first noticed in Western Australia in the early part of the war, not only in the metropolitan area but also in Albany. By 1949 the spread of the nuisance had extended to such a degree that it was placed under the Public Health Department for an attempt, by the methods then in existence, to achieve some form of control, and certain powers were given under existing legislation to assist local authorities. Householders were encouraged to deal with the nuisance on their own properties; local authorities were spraying the streets and public property; insecticide and baits were being supplied at cost price by the Government; and experiments were being undertaken to tackle the problem with the only poison then available which was, to some extent, effective; namely, D.D.T.

However, by the end of 1953 it was apparent that at least 40 square miles of the metropolitan area were definitely infested; but in addition many country centres were also affected and infestations in some of the outports such as Albany and Bunbury were known to be extensive. Some success had been achieved in the experimental activities by the use of chlordane. At that stage it was costing

the Government approximately £25,000 per annum, local authorities were contributing in greater or lesser degree, according to the extent of the infestation, in addition to the Government assistance; and an unknown expenditure was being undertaken by individual householders, a number of whom were spending approximately £5 per annum to keep the nuisance in check. There was, however, no co-ordination and the efforts were being defeated by individuals who allowed their properties to remain infested and reinfest surrounding areas. The area of infestation was rapidly spreading.

As the Argentine ant is not considered to be a menace to public health, but a distinct nuisance and potential danger to agricultural production, it was then decided to hand the control to the Department of Agriculture at the beginning of 1954, particularly as that department had the experience in control measures for this type of pest. It was considered that success in the control and possible ultimate eradication could only be achieved by a carefully co-ordinated campaign which, it was thought, would require a period of five years to cover the known infestation; and which, it was estimated, would cost in the vicinity of £500,000.

A conference with local governing bodies was called and took place in the Perth City Council Chambers in February, 1954. That conference passed a resolution requesting the Minister to appoint a committee to work out the details to submit to Parliament for essential control powers and authority to collect the funds necessary. It is a point of considerable interest that the committee, in addition to the departmental officers particularly concerned, contained representatives of the Local Government Association, the Road Board Association, the Country Municipal Councils' Association, and the Perth City Council, as being the local authority most vitally concerned. This point is made as it is felt that a great deal of credit for the co-ordination and co-operation obtained, which has led directly to the success so far achieved, comes from the constitution of the committee, in which the local authorities and the Government can balance their interests in the form and detailed planning of the campaign.

The parent Act was designed from the recommendations of the committee after close consideration of the requirements which would have to be met if an organised campaign for the control of the ant was to be successful. Basically it provides for the following:—

(a) A control committee representing the Government, the City of Perth, the Local Government Association, the Country Municipal Councils' Association and the Road Board Association, who are responsible under the Minister for supervising the operations and finance.

(b) The levying of contributions on a basis agreed to by all the parties concerned and the method of collection. In brief, this provides for a maximum total collection of £105,000 in any one year, made up as follows:—

State Government ..	£35,000
Agriculture Protection Board	4,000
Local Authorities ..	66,000

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. KELLY: Before tea, I reached the point of enumerating the various contributions to the Argentine Ant Fund. The largest contribution from any one local authority is £26,164 from the City of Perth. Uninfested areas in the South-West portion of the State pay at a rate equivalent to one-third of the infested areas. Areas outside the South-West Land Division do not contribute as the possibility of infestation was not considered serious; although, in fact, an infestation did occur in the Esperance district.

Power is given the committee or its representatives to enter and treat premises and to obtain the co-operation of property owners.

Turning to the results achieved, the committee first planned the sequence of the campaign to obtain maximum control as quickly as possible and at the same time earliest relief to householders. It will be appreciated that in the early stages the risk of reinfestation from the untreated areas was proportionately high. In the first season, therefore, the known infested areas on the south of the Swan River were tackled, the first action being to undertake a detailed survey, ahead of the spray teams, to establish the actual boundaries of the infested areas.

The spraying organisation also needed to be brought into being and it was decided that a number of teams operating under the Government Entomologist, as well as a larger number of teams operating under the local authority whose area was being treated, would be most effective. The local authorities, of course, were recouped in full for the expenditure incurred. This system worked very well as the local authorities had a direct interest, and achieved a high standard of co-operation, particularly as they were able to provide equipment from their own resources to some extent.

Action was taken to prevent, as far as possible, reinfestation from untreated areas and the public responded very well in notifying outbreaks and in co-operation with the spray teams, although there were a few exceptions in this regard. A great deal of specialised equipment, of course, had to be purchased or made.

A disturbing factor was the discovery from the detailed survey that the boundaries of infestation were greater than

had been anticipated. It was planned that the original season would cover 4,800 acres, but an additional 2,000 acres of new infestation in this area were discovered in the detailed survey. The arrangements developed, however, finally resulted in a total area of 7,246 acres being sprayed in the 1954-55 season, which it will be seen covered not only the original area scheduled and the additional 2,000 acres, but also a small portion of the area north of the river scheduled for the next season. A start had been made also with the country districts, new infestations receiving priority. In that season some 10,000 properties and locations were treated at an average of 10.81 man hours per acre, using an average of 66.5 gallons of spray mixture per acre, at an average cost of £11. These figures will become significant.

In the second year of the campaign, 1955-56, spraying was commenced on the eastern and western flanks north of the river, working in towards the city; and on the basis of the previous season, 8,000 acres were scheduled. The schedule also included the treatment of survivals in the 1954-55 zone and provision for control measures by group spraying outside the main operations. The number of teams was increased until a total of 144 men were operating in the various districts. At the end of the season, a sprayed area of 12,142 acres had been covered, including some substantial areas in the country. Considerable progress was made in the Albany and Bunbury areas as well as dealing with new infestations.

In this season some rough country in the metropolitan area was dealt with, particularly the river foreshores at Bayswater and small swamps in the Wanneroo area, for which special equipment had to be devised. Once again the detailed survey showed an extension of the previously known area of infestation and amounted to a total of 2,308 acres. However, from the figures given, it will be seen that not only was this additional 2,308 acres absorbed in the season's programme, but once again considerably better progress was achieved than had been scheduled; and the costs were very satisfactory, being 12,142 acres at an average of 9.3 man hours, 62 gallons, and £10 an acre, which was a significant reduction on the previous season, due no doubt to greater experience and improved organisation.

In the 1956-57 season no target was set, but the area decided upon included 800 acres of infestation at Albany, the remaining area of infestation in the Perth City Council area, including the city proper, the balance of the Swan River foreshore, the Herdsman's Lake area, and as much as possible of the market gardens and nurseries in the Osborne Park area, together with survivals from the 1954-55 and 1955-56 zones.

In this season properties dealt with varied from a quarter-acre to more than 100 acres, and comprised houses, shops, factories, offices, market gardens, nurseries, parks and grazing areas. A total of 8,755 acres was covered. Some more difficult areas were dealt with, particularly the Swan River foreshore from Maylands to the Bunbury bridge and various areas in Mosman Park and Herdman's Lake.

A total of 1,783 acres of additional infestations were noted by survey. Survivals from the two previous years amounted to 165 acres from the 1954-55 zone and 518 acres from the 1955-56 zone, but they followed no recognisable pattern and cannot be ascribed to any particular cause. The costs for this season were also satisfactory, being 8,755 acres at an average of 9.2 man hours, 65 gallons and £11 per acre. Although the man hours had been further reduced the cost per acre had returned to that of the first season.

At this stage, the end of the third season, more than 28,000 acres, approximately 44 square miles or 88 per cent. of the known infested areas in the State, had been treated and on an average basis was well ahead of schedule. The 1957-58 season, therefore, was commenced with the knowledge that the closely settled part of the metropolitan area had been covered, that the major entry infestations were well up to schedule, and there was a prospect that the main campaign would be completed well ahead of schedule, leaving a margin for the treatment of survivals.

The results, however, did not achieve the same rate of progress as the previous seasons, the principal difficulty being the appalling working conditions in the market garden and swamp areas north of the city, particularly in the Wanneroo district. In addition, the new areas of infestation in this locality were found by survey to have increased considerably on the original estimate, being approximately a further 5,000 acres.

It is not possible to by-pass the swamp by putting down any form of enclosing perimeter, as the risk of reinfestation through market garden produce, firewood, stable manure, etc., to clean areas, is considerable. In fact, during this season, a area of 12 acres in the Geraldton municipality was discovered, and there is evidence that this originated from market garden produce consigned from the metropolitan area. This additional outbreak was dealt with immediately, but it is an example of the extent to which a minor infestation can spread.

Although every device or system which could expedite progress in the heavy undergrowth of the swamps was considered, it very largely comes down to manpower and the equipment previously in use to achieve the control necessary. The spray machine must be hauled through the rushes and ti-tree scrub so that direct application can

be made. Apart from the dangers of aerial spraying to the surrounding livestock grazing area, it would not be possible to achieve the direct application necessary by this method. As can be imagined, working conditions for the men in these swamps are physically trying and most difficult, and are reflected in the overall results achieved during the last season.

The area sprayed amounted to 6,542 acres, which is not much more than half of the second season, and the average cost was 15 man-hours, 100 gallons of spray material, and £15 per acre. Even these figures do not reflect the conditions in the swamps themselves, as they are the overall average for the season. In the Oswald-st. swamp, an area of approximately 300 acres, the cost was 48 man-hours, 325 gallons, and £47 per acre.

This reduction in progress, therefore, in view of the area and the nature of the country still remaining to be covered, means that instead of completing the whole of the infested area ahead of schedule, it will now require an extra season in addition to the five years as originally planned, to be sure of covering the known infestation—assuming that the conditions to be faced in the next two years in the known swamp areas from Wanneroo to Yanchep, are the same as were faced in the last season. It cannot be assumed that conditions will be any better; and if the whole of the effort so far put into the control of this pest is not to be wasted, then the additional season's work must be undertaken.

To stop at this stage would mean that half a million pounds and five years' work would have covered 95 per cent. of the infested area; and although the remaining five per cent. will be comparatively costly to treat, unless it is covered it can be confidently stated that reinfestation would quickly occur throughout the State and we would return to the conditions of 1953, the whole of the funds and effort thereby being wasted.

It cannot be stated that the original assumptions were unsoundly based; as, in the first four years of operation, the addition areas of infestation as shown by detailed survey were absorbed in the campaign. The fall back in the rate of progress in this last season is due entirely to the conditions of utmost operating difficulty, which could not have been foreseen when the original scheme was planned. The conditions must be seen to be appreciated.

The position has now been reached when it is clear that an additional season will be required to cover the known infestation. It can be said that the area remaining to be treated has all been carefully surveyed, so that no extensive additional areas of infestation are anticipated. On the information available from the survey, and taking into account the experience of the difficult conditions during the last season, it is expected that the work required to completely cover the known infested area can be met from one additional season. It will be a full season with no margin for cleaning up, as had previously been hoped and the cost will be the same as at present, that is £105,000.

It may be of interest to know that consideration has also been given to the measures necessary to prevent reinfestation after the principal campaign has been completed; and, in brief, these provide for a caretaker committee on the same basis as the present committee, with a small team of skilled operators, who could survey and deal with any minor outbreaks or residues which could occur after the main campaign has been completed.

It is not anticipated that a major infestation could again develop; but in this unlikely event the caretaker committee would be able to recommend early action, on a scale necessary to deal with the size of the outbreak and to recommend the amount of additional finance, if any, required for that outbreak. The Government has agreed to meet the caretaker costs up to £5,000 per annum, which it is anticipated will be adequate, as the retention of the skeleton organisation should prevent reinfestation reaching major proportions.

The Government at this stage, however, is contributing substantially. It is the largest contributor to the present control fund, paying in £35,000 annually in cash, and providing officers and services from the Department of Agriculture, worth at least a further £5,000 per annum. It must be remembered that the Argentine ant is of high nuisance value and could be of some economic importance; but it is not a menace to health and it is therefore the responsibility of the local authorities rather than the Government to ensure its control.

The Government considers, therefore, that it should not be expected to find any more than its present proportion of the cost of extending the campaign, and it is proposed to extend the present Act, in toto, for a further year, which is now obviously necessary; which, of course, in addition to the control powers, extends the financial obligations of all the contributing parties for a further year on the present scale. If the infested area has then been satisfactorily covered, the caretaker arrangements will be introduced as mentioned earlier. This will then relieve the local authorities of further contribution, unless an unlooked-for major reinfestation occurs, which will be dealt with in the light of its particular circumstances.

It will be of interest to members that the local governing authorities have been kept continuously informed of the progress of the campaign and through their respective organisations have agreed with the necessity to extend the current Act in its present form. Resolutions to that

effect have been carried by the Local Government Association and the executive of the Road Boards Association. The Perth City Council, although the largest contributing local authority, has now confirmed that it is agreeable to the extension by one year. The local authorities are aware that it is essential to complete the campaign.

It must be remembered, however, that there is now no margin; and although not anticipated, it might be that working conditions may be even more expensive than have so far been experienced. It could also be that one or both of the next two summers might not be as suitable for ant spraying as was the case in the last four years. Spraying cannot be effectively undertaken in wet weather; and if there should be any extensive periods of broken weather during the summer, the completion could be further delayed on this account. However, although such delays mean that the labour must be paid for, and to that extent are expensive, should weather interference be so severe as to extend the spraying period beyond 1960, it can be assumed that the funds required to complete the campaign will have been contributed within that period.

I think I have told the House sufficient to indicate that the seriousness of this problem, although diminishing tremendously, is still such that the position must be watched closely. For that reason I ask the House to extend, in its entirety, the legislation under which this scheme has been operating for the last four years. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Owen, debate adjourned.

VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Agriculture—Merredin-Yilgarn) [7.50] in moving the second reading said: Section 17 of the principal Act provides for the appointment of vermin boards or road boards to operate as vermin boards. This practice, of course, has been in operation for many years and in several districts works quite satisfactorily. However, in recent times there have been one or two boards whose activities have been somewhat restricted by the conditions set out in Section 17 of the Act.

Port Hedland Road Board was one of the boards so affected. At that centre the personnel of the road board was identical with that of the vermin board. Of course, hon. members will say that such a position is not unusual because in most districts the road board members are also members of vermin boards. In this particular instance, however, the whole of the Port Hedland Road Board was comprised of residents of the township only and as such they found it difficult to give the attention necessary to deal with vermin matters in the district as a whole. So it was unanimously agreed by the board members and the residents of the township to dissolve the existing vermin board and appoint a new one, the members of which would be in the position to deal with certain vermin matters in outlying districts.

This move was, of course, supported by all those residing in the district, and, in consequence, a new vermin board was constituted. Subsequently, however, the Crown Law Department was acquainted with this move; and, as usual, it disagreed that the course followed was the right procedure to adopt to rectify the position; and, as a result, this small amendment has now been prepared.

The Crown Law Department pointed out that although the Act gives power to revoke the appointment of any vermin board and to appoint another board, there may be some doubt as to whether this would apply specifically to road boards which have been appointed as vermin boards. The doubt is whether the power is restricted to the appointment of boards which have been elected specifically as vermin boards. In practice, this doubt may raise difficulties in the event of a board being revoked against the will of its members who may then object to handing over any assets to the new board, and also the difficulty of collecting outstanding rates or debts either by the old revoked board or by the newly-elected board.

As I have said, the Crown Law Department has suggested an amendment to the Act and recommends a Bill to provide—

(a) at any time to dissolve a vermin board without abolishing its vermin district;

(b) whether the board so dissolved is the board of a road district appointed under Section 45 or not to direct that there shall be a board for the district and appoint the first members of that board in accordance with Section 17 (1)—the first members of a board shall be appointed by the Protection Board by declaration—of the Act, and

(c) on the dissolution of a board, to transfer, vest, or apportion its property, assets and liabilities in such a way as it deems just, and to settle, adjust and finally determine rights, liabilities and questions which may arise in consequence of the dissolution.

Therefore, I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Hon. A. F. Watts, debate adjourned.

LAND TAX ASSESSMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

THE HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Treasurer—Northam) [7.56] in moving the second reading said: In 1956, Parliament passed amendments to the appropriate Act to enable a tax to be imposed on improved rural lands. An amendment to the Bill was moved and carried in the Legislative Council to restrict the operation of the tax until the 30th June, 1958. As a result, the tax is now no longer legally enforceable.

Consequently, this Bill is being introduced for the purpose of continuing the tax in operation and there are no limits proposed in the Bill as to the period during which the tax—as re-imposed—will operate in the future. I am advised by officers of the Treasury Department that this tax is now worth approximately £300,000 a year to the General Consolidated Revenue Fund of the State. Against that there is to be calculated approximately £100,000 which was not received during the period this land tax on improved rural lands was in operation.

That was the amount of money involved in the vermin tax legislation which remained suspended during the time the tax on improved rural lands was in operation. The Government would propose to continue to suspend the imposition of the vermin tax in the event of this tax on improved rural land being again imposed by Parliament.

I think it is advisable to say that the Government, when it brought the legislation before Parliament in 1956 to re-impose a tax on improved rural land, took the action, mainly, in preference to increasing railway freights in Western Australia. At that time the railway deficit was very substantial and was increasing. As a result it was imperative for the Government to take action through Parliament to obtain increased revenue. After giving the question of increased railway freights, as against a tax on improved rural lands, long and careful consideration, the Government agreed that the better of the two methods would be to impose a tax on improved rural lands, and to raise additional revenue by that means as against increasing railway freights.

At the time I introduced the legislation in this House in 1956 I gave reasons explaining why the Government thought the method which it chose was the better of the two methods to which I have referred. There is not any doubt about the need for this particular amount of revenue to be reserved to the State. There is not any doubt about the need for this taxation to be collected in this financial year, and I should say for several financial years in the future. To those who might say that the tax is not reasonable and that it is sectional, I would say that the farmers generally in this State receive very substantial benefits from the activities of various Government departments.

I have already referred briefly to the Railway Department, the operations of which are still carried on at a very great loss. We all know that most of the services given by the Railway Department are given to people living in the country areas. We also know that the heaviest losses incurred by the Railway Department are incurred in connection with some of the commodities which it carries to the farms and carries back from the farms. Therefore it can be said that the operations of the Railway Department are carried on at least to some substantial extent in the form of a direct subsidy or an indirect subsidy, whichever way one cares to put it, to the farmers who occupy improved rural lands and who work those lands for the production of the various types of primary commodities.

In addition, the water supplies provided by the State to country areas have been very substantially extended in recent years, with the result that the net loss to the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the State has now risen to the very high figure of £1,750,000 per annum. None of us would condemn or criticise the incurring of those heavy losses, in the carrying on of essential water supply services to the country areas, because we know that indirectly the value of these water supply services to the people in the country, who are fortunate enough to have them, is very great indeed, and undoubtedly permits a much greater production of wealth from the land than would otherwise be possible.

Mr. Perkins: More of that water is used in the towns than on the farms.

Mr. HAWKE: I understand that this particular figure which I have quoted has direct relationship to the water which is made available for farming purposes and not the water which is made available to country townships. It is quite easy to understand that water supplied by the State to farming properties would have to be supplied at a very heavy loss; therefore I think we might all agree that it would be better to have this tax on improved rural lands continued, rather than to have any upward adjustment in railway freights, and rather than have any very substantial upward adjustment in the charges which are imposed for water supplied to country areas.

I could go on to point out that the services which the Agricultural Department now gives in this State impose a net cost upon the Consolidated Revenue Fund of approximately £1,000,000 per annum. So it can be seen very clearly that the farmers who occupy improved farming properties, and who carry them on, receive very much more back in return for the land tax they pay.

I am not saying for one moment that this tax is the only tax which farmers are paying. We know very well they pay many other taxes, including income tax. I suppose in that direction we could say the more income tax they pay the better it is for the State as a whole, and probably the better for themselves individually.

Mr. Bovell: A number of farmers have not sufficient income to pay income tax.

Mr. HAWKE: I quite agree with the member for Vasse that there are unfortunately some farmers in Western Australia who are not in the position of being able to make very much money at all. In some instances I think some farmers would be losing money. However, that applies to all sections of the community: there are some such people in every section. Even in the commercial sections of this city there are people who in some years make a loss. But taking their operations over a period of years their losses would in all probability be more than balanced by the profits or surpluses which would be made.

In any event, as I said two years ago when dealing with this legislation, the State taxation authorities are always prepared to give sympathetic and practical consideration in regard to this tax, as they are in regard to any other type of State tax, to persons who are facing temporary and real hardship.

There are some other, more or less minor, provisions in this Bill to which I will make brief reference. There is in the Act, as hon. members know, a 50 per cent. penalty in regard to land tax for what are known as absentee owners. This provision in the principal Act has always been interpreted by the officers concerned as being a penalty which was not applicable to companies carrying on operations in this State and owning land here, even though their head offices were not situated in Western Australia.

However, a recent court decision on this point has laid it down that companies in that category were legally to be regarded as absentee owners. The decision places a legal obligation upon the State officers in charge of this legislation to impose a 50 per cent. penalty upon companies such as those to which I have referred. It is not desired that this penalty should be imposed; and therefore there is an amendment contained in the Bill which aims to alter the appropriate section of the Act in such a way as to establish without doubt on a legal basis a situation which was thought to have existed legally, and a situation which was always recognised in regard to the non-imposition of the 50 per cent. penalty on those particular companies. Therefore, if this provision in the Bill is accepted by Parliament, the situation in regard to such companies will remain as it has been for many years past.

A further amendment in the Bill seeks to correct an anomaly established as a result of the measure that Parliament passed in 1956. To me this amendment appears a bit complicated, so I intend to read the proposal in order that it will be correctly stated in Hansard, and in order that members who are listening will hear the explanation of it correctly and, I hope, be able to work out, instantly as it were, what it is all about. If they succeed in doing that I would offer, in advance, my cordial congratulations to them.

Section 9 of the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act, 1907-1948, divides land into two broad classes for the purpose of ascertaining whether the land is deemed to be improved. The two classes of land are, firstly, primary industry land; and secondly, other land. Primary industry land is deemed to be improved if improvements have been effected to an amount equal to £1 per acre, or one-third of the unimproved value of the land, whichever is the lesser, or to the amount prescribed by the Land Act. Other land—that is land not used for the purposes of primary industry—is deemed to be improved, if improvements have been effected to an amount of not less than one-third of the unimproved value of the land, with an upper limit of £50 per foot of frontage.

In the amending Bill of 1956, the distinction between primary industry land and other land disappeared. It could now be argued that improvements to the value of £1 on suburban land could render that land improved land; and, therefore, it should be taxable at the lesser rate of tax. The amendment in the Bill before us provides for the restoration of the position as it existed prior to the amendment of 1956. As a result primary industry land will be taxable in the form I mentioned a moment ago, and other land will be taxable at the higher rate, unless improvements to the amount of one-third of the unimproved value have been effected.

The only other provision in the Bill, to which I think I should make reference at this stage, is in respect of Commonwealth legislation. Members will recollect, when the Bill was before Parliament in 1956 that certain provisions were made, and certain concessions granted, to persons in receipt of benefits or payments under Commonwealth social service legislation. The clause in the present Bill dealing with that aspect only brings up to date references to the Commonwealth legislation in question. The measure makes no alteration whatever to the concessions and benefits which Parliament gave to those classes of persons in the amending legislation of 1956. I move—

> That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Agriculture—Merredin-Yilgarn) [8.16] in moving the second reading said: In the 1956-57 fire season the Bush Fires Board was most concerned that when very severe fire conditions arose in the height of the summer during the prohibited burning time and also, possibly, during the period shortly after the prohibited burning time, although there were provisions in the Bush Fires Act which severely restricted the use of fire, there were quite a number of fires for various purposes which could be lit without any permit or notification to any person. The fires to which I refer are camp fires and the incineration of house and garden refuse, provided certain precautions were taken.

The board considered there would be very great advantages in the use of the emergency provisions in the Bush Fires Act to prevent, completely, the use of fire outside, when extreme conditions prevailed. The recent summer period proved a long dry one, during which on a number of occasions extremely severe conditions occurred, and it was necessary to invoke the emergency provisions.

The Bush Fires Board was of the opinion that considerable benefits were obtained as a result. On the 18th February, the Weather Bureau warned that there was every indication that some of the most severe conditions of what had been a difficult season were likely to occur throughout the State. By this date the prohibited times had ended in some parts of the State, but were still in force in others. Very early on the 19th February the Weather Bureau advised that it had issued dangerous fire hazard forecasts for all districts in the agricultural areas, and throughout the South-West.

This meant that, in those districts where the prohibited burning time had ended, and burning could be carried on under permit, the arbitrary provisions of Section 18 of the Bush Fires Act would suspend the permit and prevent burning. There is no power for any authority to vary these provisions. Because of the seriousness of the warning, and also because the forecasts issued by the Weather Bureau automatically prevented all burning under permit, it was considered only proper that an emergency ban should be imposed to prevent the lighting of any of the classes of fire which did not require a permit.

There was a considerable amount of ill-informed criticism of the use of the emergency ban on this occasion. The very severe weather conditions did develop in the northern areas, but did not move to the south as the Weather Bureau had anticipated. However, the emergency ban was not allowed to prevent any burning for agricultural purposes of itself. In any district where the Weather Bureau reduced its classification of the hazard below dangerous, the ban was immediately lifted so that it should not interfere with agricultural operations. In actual fact, so far as the Bush Fires Act was concerned, it would have made no difference whatever if no emergency ban had been applied, as all burning for agricultural purposes would have been stopped by the automatic provisions of the Act.

The Bush Fires Board fully agreed that the arbitrary provision in the Act could operate in an unsatisfactory way under some conditions in some parts of the State, although it was also strongly of the opinion that the provision was still necessary in respect of some districts where fire prevention control and organisation was still at a comparatively low standard and which posed something of a threat to neighbouring districts.

The Bush Fires Board was not prepared to recommend the repeal of the provisions which it still feels to be necessary in some cases. It was of the opinion that the only way of meeting this problem was to extend power to an experienced officer in the district of each local authority which the board considered had achieved a reasonable standard of fire prevention and control, so that he could allow burning on days of "dangerous" fire hazard in his area. The fire hazard forecasts are by no means a complete index of fire danger, as they only take factors into consideration which it is anticipated will govern the inflammability of the types of fuel available.

In other words, a fire hazard forecast issued by the Weather Bureau is an index of inflammability. Although it has naturally a considerable part in assessing fire dangers, it is not, by any means, a complete index. There has been much ill-informed criticism of these forecasts due to the fact that it has not been clearly understood what is actually being forecast. It is not regarded as in any way practical for forecasts of fire hazard to be assessed locally, because the fire hazard is largely dependent on future temperatures and humidities which may be governed by conditions hundreds of miles away. On the other hand, actual fire dangers can be assessed only in the light of local knowledge, and this is freely admitted.

There has never been any intention of making use of the emergency provisions unless it is expected there will be extreme weather conditions over very wide areas. It will always happen, of course, that in dealing with such a wide area, there will be some sections where there is little fuel, and fire danger will not be extreme whatever the weather conditions. Where the safety of very extensive areas of the State is concerned, however, there will always have to be some inconvenience caused to some people in the interests of the community as a whole.

The amendments proposed to the Bush Fires Act will enable local authorities to nominate to the Bush Fires Board an experienced fire control officer and also a deputy to act in his absence, who can decide, when "dangerous" fire hazards are forecast, whether burning operations, or some of them, may be proceeded with in his own district. The board considers this privilege should not be extended indiscriminately, but to those districts with a considerable awareness of the fire dangers and which have organised themselves to a good standard in this connection.

It has been claimed that a considerable responsibility will be cast on the officer concerned, and provision is made, if the local authority so wishes, to appoint an advisory committee. It is provided, however, that in the event of a disagreement between the officer appointed and the committee, the officer may disregard its advice. This is an obviously necessary provision unless the power is vested in a committee. All decisions in such a matter must necessarily be taken with considerable urgency and other than consulting on the telephone, it is not considered it would work practically unless vested in one person.

It will be remembered that during the last summer season there were quite a number of districts that were disadvantaged by the conditions imposed by the Weather Bureau on days when the fire hazard was considered dangerous, and burning operations were automatically suspended in all districts of Western Australia.

Appeals were received on behalf of many settlers in different parts of the State who were affected. I might say that appeals came from some members of this Chamber. A great deal of consideration was given to the possibility of relieving the extreme conditions that applied where differing climatic conditions, even on the same day, could vary very considerably from the conditions as broadcast under the authority of the Weather Bureau.

It was decided that a second look be taken at the legislation as it then stood; and, with that in mind, the amendments I have forecast in this Bill were considered by the Bush Fires Protection Board. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Perkins, debate adjourned for one week.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Lands—Merredin-Yilgarn) [8.27] in moving the second reading said: This Bill proposes to amend Section 8 of the Land Act, 1933-1958. Section 8 of the Act deals with the acquisition of land by the Governor. It gives the Governor the power to acquire from any person, with his consent, any land it is thought advisable to acquire for any purpose, by purchase or exchange.

In the case of purchase and exchange of land where the estimated value of the property exceeds one hundred pounds, it is necessary to refer the matter to a board which advises the Crown. This board is constituted under Part VIII of the Land Act. It consists of not more than nine persons appointed by the Governor and incorporated under the name of the Land Purchase Board.

Following a recent exchange of land, it was suggested by the Lands Department that an amendment to Section 8 of the Act was long overdue. The department is of the opinion that a much higher figure than "one hundred pounds" is necessary. and suggests "four hundred pounds" as a maximum estimated value of land to be referred to the Land Purchase Board.

Mr. Bovell: Who decides in relation to the amount under £100—the Under Secretary for Lands?

Mr. KELLY: Yes; that is ordinary office routine. For the information of members, I might state that this provision becomes necessary because of the tremendous change that has taken place in money values since it was first implemented. The provision we are now seeking to alter was placed in the Land Act in 1898; and, although the Act was amended in 1933, nothing was done about relative money values. Therefore, the £400 which is now suggested would be more in keeping with present-day values. I think that it was at Onslow where the most recent case took place that highlighted this present anomaly and where a delay of almost two months was occasioned because of the fact that a property on taxation value, was worth £805—I think, from memory—when the Act only provided for £100. This piece of land that was valued by the Taxation Department at this figure was urgently needed to replace land which had become badly eroded and on which it was no longer possible, because of storm conditions, for the owner to erect, or re-erect, a cottage. It was desired to give him another block of land to replace the badly-eroded area, and it took over two months to get that legislation through. It was considered that the amount of £100 was rather an anomaly.

Mr. Bovell: Are the taxation values used as a basis for valuation?

Mr. KELLY: Yes, they are the guiding factor. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Bovell, debate adjourned.

RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Lands—Merredin-Yilgarn) [8.33] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to change the bank's balance date from the 30th September, as provided in the Act, to the 31st March in any year. The Chairman of Commissioners of the bank has listed the following advantages to be derived from this proposed change:—

(1) Enable the laying of the bank's balance sheet and the Auditor-General's report on the Table of the House whilst it is in session.

(2) Permit the printing and distribution of the balance sheet before it becomes stale.

(3) Coincide the balance with the end of one season and the opening of another and thus allow in the report authoritative comments to be made on the past season and seasoned estimates for the forthcoming one.

Although the bank has customers in all walks of life, the largest individual group consists of farmers. There are many others who, whilst not themselves farmers, are closely associated with the farming industry and have parallel needs for banking services. There is every reason to think that the bank's traditional association with the farming community will remain a feature of its activities for many years to come. In these circumstances it is fitting that the bank's financial year follow the farming year as nearly as may be practicable; the proposed date of the 31st March is clearly more appropriate than the 30th September. Tied up with the closing of the bank's financial year is the annual report to Parliament as required by existing legislation.

It is intended that the bank continue to furnish annual reports to the Minister but now by the 31st May instead of by the 30th November.

Customarily the major part of the annual report has dealt with the activities of farmers, their financial results and so on; it can be expected that future reports will follow a like pattern but the change of date will enable the reports to be more up to date than hitherto as regards the results of the previous season. The new date of the 31st May will also enable inclusion in the report of an authoritative indication of farmers' plans for the forthcoming season, more particularly as regards cropping programmes in the wheat growing areas. It is pointed out that the early assent to this Bill will obviate the possibility of two balances at the 30th September, 1958, and the 31st March, 1959.

This is a very small Bill. The explanation that I have given covers the whole of the explanation needed and I commend it to hon. members. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Bovell, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.37 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 3rd September, 1958.

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